



Local Food Access and Active Transportation: Policy Opportunities for the Woolwich Community

*Woolwich Healthy Communities Partnership Steering Committee
Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership*

Ellen Desjardins RD PhD, Project investigator

January 2014

CONTENT	page
Introduction and Purpose	3
Sources of Information and Methods	4
Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews: Summary	5
Farms and Farm Businesses	5
Foodlink Waterloo Region	7
Neighbourhoods and Workplaces	8
Trail Links to Local Food: Success Stories	10
Trails, Tourism and Business	11
Youth, Schools and Families	12
Community Actions	15
Relevant Background Documents and Policies	19
Conclusion	25
Appendix A: Participant input at Community Forum	27
Appendix B: Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles	30

Acknowledgements

Woolwich Healthy Communities Partnership Steering Committee:

Carol Popovic RN, Region of Waterloo Public Health
 Ruth Dyck RN, Region of Waterloo Public Health
 Laurel Davies Snyder, Township of Woolwich
 Gloria Yeung, Woolwich Healthy Communities Trails committee
 Barb Taylor, Woolwich Healthy Communities coordinating Committee
 Anna Contini, Foodlink Waterloo Region
 Dennis Martin, retired dairy farmer

Township of Woolwich

Region of Waterloo Public Health: Katherine Pigott, Manager, Healthy Eating and Active Living;
 Sharlene Sedgwick Walsh, Director, Healthy Living Division

Foodlink Waterloo Region

Woolwich Community Health Centre, St. Jacobs: Joy Finney

We express our gratitude to the many people who granted their time for interviews, participated in focus groups and contributed to the roundtable discussions at the St. Jacobs Community Forum on November 25, 2013.

This study was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

About the Healthy Communities Partnership

In May 2010, Region of Waterloo Public Health (Public Health) was asked by the Province to establish a Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership (Partnership) to improve population health outcomes through the development of local healthy public policies in six health promotion priority areas – physical activity, sport and recreation, injury prevention, healthy eating, tobacco use/exposure, substance and alcohol misuse, and mental health promotion. The Partnership was formed in late 2009 and developed a twofold vision: to create a strong voice for health promotion in Waterloo Region, and to reflect the diversity of our community in decision making.

In March 2011, a Community Picture was released and identified three priority actions for the Partnership:

1. Implement the *Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region* which includes food skills and food access. Ensure that the plan addresses issues which contribute to the viability of local farms and to ensure access to healthy eating options through the implementation of regional and municipal planning, human services, and zoning support.
2. Improve the affordability and availability of physical activity, sports and recreation opportunities, including active transportation, at the neighbourhood level and region wide (including formal and informal).
3. Use social determinants of health approach to address the underlying contributing factors associated with mental health and to advocate for stakeholders to adopt and fund such an approach.

Three existing and nascent networks stepped forward to guide next steps regarding these priority actions. The Waterloo Region Active Living Network, the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable and the Mental Health Work Group agreed to act as the respective leads, for food system, physical activity and mental health priorities.

Readers with questions regarding the Partnership or this report are welcome to contact Katherine Pigott at kpigott@regionofwaterloo.ca or [519-575-4400 ext. 5415](tel:519-575-4400).

The perspective and recommendations expressed in this report belong to the consultant and do not necessarily reflect the perspective of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care or Region of Waterloo Public Health.

Introduction

In September 2013, Woolwich Healthy Communities (WHC) Partnership and the Waterloo Region Healthy Communities Partnership were awarded a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care grant to determine policy opportunities for improving access to locally-produced food and active transportation (walking, biking) in Woolwich Township. It was seen by these groups as a chance to create dialogue in the community on some important themes, and to identify concerns as well as capacities and priorities for moving forward in ways that would also enhance tourism and local business. The WHC Partnership Steering Committee, an ad hoc group comprised of interested stakeholders, was created to oversee this project as it was carried out between mid-October to mid-December, 2013.

The project revolved around community consultations, including several meetings, six focus groups, interviews with twenty one people, and a community forum. The solicitation of responses was an iterative process, in that the community forum provided feedback and further input to prior information from the focus groups and interviews. This project reached out to a broad group of food system and active transportation stakeholders, as well as policy-makers. It focused on a base of existing, functional initiatives and enterprises in Woolwich Township, and sought out ways, from a community perspective, that these could be strengthened through local policies.

In this report, individual quotes have been highlighted throughout the *comments summary* section to illustrate specific issues through the voices of several key stakeholders. Analysis of the comments yielded four key action themes, each of which are paired with a set of community-based goals and tasks to enhance access to local food and active transportation in Woolwich Township. Relevant background information from ten reports and policy documents is provided at the end, followed by concluding notes.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to consult with key stakeholders and other residents in the Woolwich community, in order to document their input and to identify potential policy avenues that will (a) enhance access to locally produced and processed food throughout the Township, and (b) encourage the regular use of active modes of transportation (walking and cycling).

This enhanced policy environment is to be respectful of the nine Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles, listed below.¹

1. Build a feeling of community
2. Give voice and choice
3. Support farming
4. Support local business
5. Treat waste as a resource
6. Improve community amenities
7. Improve the quality of the environment
8. Provide for people's basic needs
9. Honour the past, safeguard the future

¹ For the expanded version of the nine guiding principles see Appendix B, page 30.

Sources of Information and Methods

Information for this study was qualitative in nature. Six focus groups were held in Woolwich, with thirty four participants in total. Participants were invited personally and through flyers distributed electronically and posted in public places. They were aimed at four specific subgroups, namely:

- Farms and food businesses (2)
- Neighbourhoods and workplaces (2)
- Youth, schools and families
- Trails, tourism and business

The focus groups were not audio-recorded, but organizers took detailed notes while the interviewer led the discussion. A set of general questions were posed regarding active transportation and the buying/selling of local food (along the line of recent trends observed, challenges faced, opportunities for change, and specific examples and stories); but the direction of the discussion was driven in large part by the participants' interests. At the focus groups, participants were given the opportunity to submit other ideas, stories or information anonymously on paper, in case they did not have a chance or inclination to state these points to the whole group. Ethics forms were explained by the organizers (a promise that their responses would remain anonymous and that they were under no obligation to answer questions) and were signed by participants. Ethics forms were kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed upon completion of this project.

Twenty-one key informant interviews with key Woolwich stakeholders were carried out in person and by phone. They included people who could speak for the Township, policy makers, trail and cycling group members, teachers, environmental health advocates, food retailers, distributors and business owners. Some of these interviews set the stage for questions asked at the focus groups, and others supplemented or strengthened the main comments from the focus groups.

Another source of information originated from the round table discussions at the November 25th Workshop in St. Jacobs, as recorded by facilitators. This input aligned with the *four themes* that emerged from focus group and interview analysis. Workshop participants also were encouraged to record input or feedback on wall charts. These data were re-worked (keeping their intent) into *Community Actions* according to the main four emergent themes (pp. 20-23). The original feedback was included in Appendix A to retain the voices of participants.

Overall, the information gathering process was designed to allow Woolwich residents and stakeholders to speak freely about their experience and ideas. For this reason, focus group and workshop participants were not named in this report. However, quotes that have been highlighted throughout this report, and attributed to specific people, were stated with their permission.

The qualitative data from the focus groups and interviews were analysed with the aid of NVivo10 software. The summary of comments and the themes that emerged, the community actions and the report content were discussed with the Woolwich Healthy Communities Partnership Steering Committee members at regular intervals, to take into account committee members' input as the project progressed.

The information from these sources is summarized together in the next section, under the four subgroups mentioned above.

Comments from Focus Groups and Interviews: Summary

The following synopsis captures the main points, ideas and observations *as they were articulated by participants* in the focus groups, interviews and at the workshop roundtables (Woolwich, October-November 2013). There is repetition of several observations and suggestions among the focus group summaries; this was not viewed as “redundant” for this report, but as indicative of the commonality of certain ideas.

1. Farms and Food Businesses

1. General observations about farming and food business:

“Our CSA (Community Shared Agriculture) has doubled its original number of shares in five years.”
-Dale Stevanus,
Stevanus Family Farm,
Bloomingdale

(a) Consumer interest in locally-grown food has grown considerably and consistently over the past 5 years.

- “People are driving the distance” to Woolwich restaurants, markets, farms, stores; they are using the Foodlink map and spreading information by word of mouth. Tourists on the trails are coming to local restaurants. Some locations are gaining a reputation among tourist companies.
- Customers are asking where food comes from and want to know how it is produced.

(b) Woolwich producers are experiencing rising markets and retail opportunities for most products meant for local sale.

- EPAC (Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative) and Jay West continue to expand with customers and sales. There is potential to sell more, to markets locally and all over Ontario. It is good quality produce; they are often getting better prices. EPAC also sells to food services of the Universities of Guelph and Waterloo.
- Some farmers are selling directly to restaurants.
- Rural farm stores are stocking a greater variety of foods, regularly selling produce and products from neighbouring farms, and are seeing a rise in customers.
- Urban grocery stores are carrying local foods, which is a good trend for both farmers and consumers.

What has helped to make this happen?

- It’s the high quality of locally produced and traditionally processed food that many people value.
- EPAC serves the farmers by being their marketer; Foodlink also helps with marketing and should be supported.
- Farmers are taking on the role of educating consumers and building trust relationships with them.

“We are in a different playing field from big retail. So if we are to make it with local food from farm to fork, we need a new model where we extend the season and add value to food by canning and freezing -- with our own processing facilities and our own abattoirs. We need to join forces and create synergies even more than before. If we build on farmers’ trust and traditional flavour quality -- that’s a niche that the big guys can’t do.”

-Gerald Kara, farmer and retailer, Kara’s Smart Foods

2. What can be done, at the policy level, to encourage more local food (or new types of food) to be produced, processed, distributed and sold within the Township?

“Our local processors and rural stores are offering superior quality, and it’s building a wide reputation. At first customers find it a novelty, then it becomes normalized and they are willing to pay a fair price.

-Kevin Stemmler, Stemmlers’ Meats and Cheese, Heidelberg

(a) Municipal tax rates for small local food businesses should take into account the considerable economic, employment and health benefits that local food businesses provide to the municipality. Taxes and fees should be fair so that farmers can “crack the door”; for example, they could be scaled to the size of an operation. Farm viability and local food-related entrepreneurship should be promoted, not discouraged, as stipulated in the new *Local Food Act*.

(b) Municipal support for a food processing facility

A local, multiple-use food processing facility would be beneficial to farmers, offering the value-added service of sorting, washing, cutting, bagging and packaging in a commercial, inspected kitchen (available for smaller-scale processing as well). Larger-scale canning, drying and flash freezing could be done, and proper storage facilities offered. It would increase the potential to sell local produce, in easily usable form, to universities, hospitals, schools, restaurants, markets, retirement homes, daycares, workplaces and other institutions. It should be run for and by the local community, so that it enhances, rather than exploits, the local food sector.

“If we had a produce packaging facility in Woolwich, we would get better quality control. Distributors and restaurants would be more comfortable to buy from us, and we could market more local produce. But the farmers themselves should benefit, so investment should come from the community.”

*-Nelson Wideman,
Jay West, St. Jacobs*

“After we made the first batch of jam at the inspected kitchen of the church many years ago, there was such a demand we knew we were on to something. When we built the canning kitchen for Country Flavour, we worked with the health unit to meet all specifications for a proper commercial, inspected kitchen. Soon we were preserving fruit and other produce for neighbouring farms, and now we often hire 3 or 4 more people to meet the demand. The operation is rural and relatively small, and the work is done by hand, but Country Flavour pays industrial taxes, which are high.”

*-Herman Brubacher, farmer,
West Montrose*

3. The issues of competition

Rural farm stores and temporary markets, if they abide by food safety rules and are inspected, should not be seen as “competition” for larger grocers, markets and superstores.

Superstores, however, provide an unfair price advantage for local produce, and they control local food production for their corporations. Local farmers and smaller-scale local food retail cannot operate at lower prices offered by superstores, and their high quality merits higher prices.

4. The Elmira farmers market should be expanded and should have a permanent venue.

5. Signage for rural food retail is needed along roads, trails and at entrance to towns, to show what each village has to offer and to promote agri-tourism. Decisions need to be made regarding who will manage, develop, pay for and install signs.

6. Farmers need to know who to talk to when they have questions about land use, inspection, creating new businesses and other policies. There should be clear rules, made available to anyone in readable form, about the local by-laws, licensing fees, processing rules and the steps to take to start a business legitimately. Enforcement of these rules should be fair and consistent.

7. Farmers and farm businesses should be consulted when municipal decisions are being considered that have implications for their community and livelihoods.

*“Entrepreneurs who want to start a new project or local food business should begin by first discussing it with planners; they will facilitate development according to existing by-laws. **We can help to make it happen.**”*

- Laurel Davies Snyder and Jeremy Vink, Woolwich Township

Foodlink Waterloo Region: Facilitating the Local Food Network

Foodlink Waterloo Region is an award-winning, non-profit organization, recognized as a pioneer of the local food movement. Since 2002, Foodlink has worked with the mandate to:

- promote healthy, local food
- add value to local agricultural production
- improve consumer access to local food.

Foodlink’s board members are farmers, food processors, distributors, retailers, restaurants and other rural and urban stakeholders who have an interest in promoting the local food sector. Foodlink projects connect the local food chain from production to consumption, by building sustainable relationships and by making locally-grown food more viable to produce and easier to buy. Foodlink is seen as a leader by other agricultural regions across Ontario and Canada; several regions have replicated the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map.

The Foodlink website (Foodlink.ca) serves as an extensive source of information about local farms and food businesses. It features an interactive, on-line map that enables consumers to search by food product, business name or closest distance. There are also recipes and a local food events calendar.

Tools of connection and information produced by Foodlink are:

- **Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map:** This year-round guide to local food features over 100 local farms and food businesses, including those in Woolwich Township. Approximately 40,000 copies of the paper map are printed and distributed annually.
- **Local Harvest Newsletter:** Entire issues of this on-line newsletter are devoted to detailed profiles of local farms and food-related businesses, including their history, products, and operations. Many newsletters specifically focus on types of locally-grown or processed food, such as tomatoes, apples, barley, eggs, preserves, chicken and summer sausage. Over 50 past issues can be accessed through http://www.foodlink.ca/index.php?p=local_harvest
- **Social Media Initiatives:** Foodlink employs a variety of social media tools including Facebook, Twitter and a ‘Local Dish’ blog to broaden its reach of the local food message. Foodlink has also developed a local food app which was launched in the spring of 2012.

2. Neighbourhoods and Workplaces

1. General observations:

- There is growing interest among consumers, including tourists, in locally-produced food.
- There has been a major increase in cycling in Woolwich over the past several years.
- There are now more places where people can buy local food (e.g. farm stores, community shared agriculture (CSAs), roadside stands, grocery stores in Elmira, restaurants that serve local food, chain stores selling “Elmira’s Own”). People are frequently using the Foodlink map.

“It just makes sense: people want local products, and we have the opportunity to provide them through EPAC and other local vendors.”

*-Doug Pagett, manager,
Foodland, Elmira*

2. Challenges:

- In spite of good trails in the countryside and fairly good sidewalks in town, it is difficult to reach some food destinations by active transportation. Some newer subdivisions are not bicycle friendly (built with safe bicycle use in mind).
- St. Jacobs is a “food desert”: an area that lacks healthy food retail that is accessible for people who regularly walk to buy food.
- Elmira lacks specialized produce stores – perhaps because rents are too high. The outdoor Elmira farmers market is great in the summer and fall, but small temporary markets would not likely be accessed by enough people to be profitable.

3. What can be done, at the policy level, to encourage more local food access through active transportation in Woolwich?

(a) **Signage** to farms, food stores and restaurants is necessary for people who use trails and roads. Signs should be close to the road, at entrances to towns, and on trails, with distances to food venues. Signs are especially important where trails cross roads or stop and continue at another point. Signs could use a recognizable local logo. Funding and a coordination body is needed to develop a system of signage.

(b) Enabling healthy local food in neighbourhoods

“My employer allows extended lunch hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays to walk in the community. We also provide “veggie bowls” for one dollar every day – it has become the trendy purchase to make.”
-St. Jacobs resident

- **Regulations:** To promote local food, farmers and business people and other entrepreneurs need to understand local land-use policies. They need clear and fair regulations applied consistently and fairly, not too restrictive.
- **Workplaces** should adopt policies that build a culture of active transportation and healthy eating (e.g., one workplace hires to a person to cut up local vegetables)
 - A committee could be established to get a grant to properly investigate barriers and opportunities for **smaller scale food stores in towns** -- ones that can provide year-round produce and can be reached by walking or cycling. Perhaps food co-ops could be investigated.
- **Community gardens** at schools should be promoted in our policies.

“The local food movement has worked by everyone helping each other. Since 1989 our store has kept expanding as people demanded more local and traditional products. People are coming from nearby but from far away too, and I often think, ‘they put in extra effort to get here’. They say they like to buy food from people they know. We’ve noticed an upswing in home cooking among young mothers – they want to know what’s in their food – so we supply baking ingredients. We now employ 20 staff. We actually need more local food shops in town, but taxes are high, even for warehousing food off the main road.”

-Elmeda Weber, Kitchen Kuttings, Elmira

4. Enabling a culture of active transportation

- On-road cycling is not safe because many vehicle drivers do not give bicyclists enough space or pay attention to them. If there were more bike lanes and off-road paths, people would cycle more. More cycle paths must be created to specific destinations like food stores, schools and workplaces, as well as links between trails.
- Clear guidelines should be made available regarding who maintains various sections of trails (on public and private land).
- Significant paved shoulders should be mandatory for all new roads and re-surfaced roads.
- Regular snow clearance, and fines for not clearing sidewalks, should be in place.
- Bicycle racks should be available everywhere.

“I buy from the farm stand up the road – I can walk there in a reasonable amount of time, in relative safety. I support them because I live close to them and I don’t want their livelihood threatened.”
-Conestogo resident

Trail Links to Local Food -- Success Stories in Woolwich Township

-from a submission by Ann Roberts

Demand for new residential developments with trails

Since the late 1990s, developers are increasingly finding that new home buyers are looking for access to local trails. Township planning staff have been instrumental in requesting trail links within new residential developments. In Elmira, pathways were built by the developer of the north-west residential development. The Lunor development in Elmira plans a continuation of the Elmira Ring Trail to be linked with the Kissing Bridge Trailway/Trans Canada Trail. This will provide quick and safe links to school, the downtown area and also the Saturday Elmira farmers market. It will also allow people to bike or hike west to Wallenstein, Linwood and Millbank and east to West Montrose, Ariss and Guelph. People can buy local food from roadside stands close to the trail and from village restaurants, stores and bakeries. The newest residential development in St. Jacobs is advertised as "Jacobs Trail". It links with the Water St. trail as well as the Health Valley/Trans Canada Trail, leading to the St. Jacobs farmers' market. Breslau's Hopewell and Riverland residential developments both promote trail systems paid by the developer – indicating the popularity of trails.

Trail link between the Village of St. Jacobs and the St. Jacobs farmers' market

The St. Jacobs farmers' market is easily accessible from St. Jacobs using the Health Valley/Trans Canada Trail. It is a wide, off-road, stone dust trail, a 10-minute bike ride or 30-minute walk from the north trail access point in St. Jacobs beside the Conestogo River. It is common on a market day to see cyclists and walkers on the trail with their purchases.

Support for trails from volunteers and the Municipality

Trails have been popular in Woolwich for a very long time. The Mill Race Trail in St. Jacobs was constructed in the mid-1800s, and the Health Valley Trail dates back to the earliest days of the village of St. Jacobs. The Grand Valley Trail and Avon Trail footpaths were developed in the 70s, the Lions Lake trail at Floradale in the 80s, and the Kissing Bridge Trailway in the 90s.

Trails were originally developed and maintained by volunteer groups, and strong volunteer commitment continues today. With the arrival of the Trans Canada Trail in Woolwich in the late 1990s, the Township became involved and hired a part-time trails coordinator on staff to organize their development and maintenance. Trails under Township responsibility are built on both public and private land. For trails on private land, the Township establishes agreements with landowners to provide liability insurance coverage, and to cover costs for trail development and maintenance.

Woolwich Township's commitment to trails is echoed in their Official Plan:

Settlement development: *We value (a) being able to walk or cycle to many of our daily destinations; and (b) streets, parks, trails and neighbourhoods that are safe, healthy and attractive "people places";*
Transportation: *We value an appropriate transportation system meeting the needs of cyclists, buggies, pedestrians and motor vehicles.*

The Township's commitment to trails is also embedded in its Strategic Plan:

Growth management goal: *Continue with trails development as part of the local community planning process and involve community organizations in focus group sessions to ensure that sustainable community development and environmental stewardship remain priorities.*

3. Trails, Tourism and Business

1. General observations:

“Cyclists and hikers on the Lion’s Lake trail, including tourists, are coming to my restaurant when they pass through Floradale”

*-Bonnie Lou’s
restaurant, Floradale,
Ontario*

- There are more bikes on the road now than ever before, for both recreation and transportation. Trails and local food are clearly an attraction for both residents and tourists.
- Some roads have improved to make cycling more desirable. Paved, wider shoulders on highways are important for safety, making cyclists feel more comfortable. However, some other roads (e.g., King St to the St. Jacobs market) are not good for cycling as the shoulder is not wide and directions are not marked at crossings; it is therefore confusing and dangerous.
- Cycling and walking can become a mind-set or habit; one to two kilometers to get somewhere is doable.

2. What can be done, at the policy level, to make it easier for people to cycle regularly and to access local food by cycling?

- Municipal policy should stipulate that more paved shoulders should be created on roads for cyclists. Paved shoulders in subdivisions should be protected rather than destroyed.
- Linkages between trails and roads would increase the number of people who can bike to the market.
- Liability issues for trails and tourists buying food on farms should be clarified.
- The Welcome Wagon is sent to every newcomer to Woolwich – they could distribute a **trails map** that indicates where residents can purchase local food; it could be available online as well.
- More bike racks are needed everywhere, including at markets.

Signage for trails

- Many people don’t know about trails or don’t use them because of lack of signage, and sometimes road crossings and intersections are difficult and dangerous to navigate.
- Standardized signs at entrance to towns should be fair to all businesses. They could show symbols for food, washrooms, water, accommodation, even a QR code (Quick Response code; a two dimensional bar code which is readable with an electronic device like a mobile phone with an appropriate application)
- Signs on roads and trails should enable bikers to find and buy food on farms and in villages that they pass. E.g., Cyclists on New Jerusalem Rd (to Elmira) pass four roadside stands; they could prepare in advance.
- There could be maps at kiosks on the trails. Signs on trails should indicate distances.

“Most people don’t know that you can cycle to the St Jacobs market on an off-road trail from St Jacobs. The problem is crossing the busy intersection just before the market, which has no signs. Cycling to the market from other directions involves on-road cycling. Some roads have been widened, but others not.

-Resident, St Jacobs

3. Ideas for action to enhance trails for residents and tourists:

- An **action plan** for a provincial-level signage *pilot project* in this area should be drawn up, with members from existing trail groups, Foodlink and planners.
- A **grant proposal** could be made for Regional and Provincial funds, by showing support for the Ontario Cycling Strategy and Regional Cycling Plan. A *signage template* could be prepared, followed by public feedback. The trail associations in Woolwich could **advocate together** for funding, for example from Regional and Provincial governments, to promote active transportation.

4. Ideas for improving local food businesses in the Township:

- ♦ Food safety is important. Farmers are seen as a trustworthy source of food, and that should be protected. But... sometimes regulations are seen as overly strict, bureaucratic hurdles that can “often stop a business idea before it can even get started”. There is uncertainty about existing regulations, and **public education** is needed about laws and by-laws regarding food processing.
- ♦ A **larger, licensed community canning kitchen or co-op** should be built to encourage more local food processing within the regulations. The ability to buy produce that is cleaned, sorted, boxed and organized could help local business. Foodlink could help obtain funds for a business plan or feasibility plan, for example from the Local Food Fund.
- ♦ A **permanent Elmira market** would be great for residents to buy local food regularly by walking or biking, all year round.

4. Youth, Schools and Families

1. General observations:

“School Hike Day was started in 2006, and now 700 students from four Woolwich elementary schools participate every Earth Day. Hiking on the trails is sometimes paired with science or even tree-planting. It brings about a love of being active outdoors and familiarity with our many trails. What we need is a larger network of dedicated teachers and volunteers who continue to make this event grow each year.”

-Nancy Stayzer, retired teacher, Elmira

- Many people want to establish a “culture of physical activity” and “culture of healthy eating” at schools.

- Students at one high school did an audit of walking, cycling, and access to local foods as part of a class project. They developed a nice display for it. They showed that walking and biking opportunities were thought to be quite good and the infrastructure was safe and improved, but some areas were unsafe due to lack of crossing signs and students crossing the street between parked cars. The quality of food at schools showed a mixed response.

2. Active transportation to school and at school

- Elementary schools are generally close enough to walk/bike to, but the reality is that for high schools, most students are bussed from neighbouring towns and rural areas.

- Some teachers have initiated activities, for example “speedwalking”, and the use of trails by the cross country team.

3. Food at schools and a culture of healthy food

(a) Challenges

Provincial school food and beverage policy (PPM150) and school board food procurement policy

These policies were brought in to apply nutrition standards and create efficiencies, but it resulted in changes to the school food environment. Some well-liked foods were no longer permitted in publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario, and many students stopped using the cafeteria. Some public schools still have weekly pizza/sub or hot dog days, which do not meet standards. Several schools no longer have vending machines; those which do offer baked chips, sugar-free candy, but no fresh food. When cafeteria school food is too expensive or unpopular, many students go out of the school for lunch.

Decision-making structure

Teachers have no control over food in school cafeteria. The school board must approve of all school food procurement and requires affordable procurement opportunities. Programs vary by school. At elementary schools the parents can form networks and can influence school food via the parent council. At high schools, parents seem less interested.

“We used to cook 400 hot meals every day at the school, using healthy, local farm ingredients like fresh eggs and vegetables, and meat from Stemmlers. It was very popular among the students and staff... and even with charging a low price, the program paid for itself. Most schools still have the industrial kitchens, so they could bring back culinary programs. What goes around comes around!”

-Delores Strauss, former cook at Elmira District Secondary School

(b) Some school food programs are in effect

- Students can pre-order milk in some schools; “Remember Me” lunch program three days/week at John Mahood School; “Lunch lady” once a week (\$5-6); can pre-order meals online.
- **Nutrition For Learning (NFL)**: None of the elementary schools in Elmira have a NFL program. NFL introduced a snack program at EDSS four years ago: in the morning, students can receive a fruit or vegetable, protein or grain (cheerios and milk), apple or orange, pepperette, bagel with cream cheese/applesauce. Initially it served 100 students per day, but now reduced to 8 – 20 students per day; especially for chocolate milk.

4. Possibilities for healthy food, food skills and community involvement at schools

(a) Local food in schools

- **Schools might be interested in purchasing healthy, affordable, local food** if they were given information about what could be offered, where and when to get it, the cost, and the fit with regulations of PPM150.
- Policy that enables paid work and positions is needed to encourage active transportation and healthy eating, rather than relying on individual initiatives.
- A program similar to the milk program could be developed, i.e. preordered bags of grapes, carrots, breakfast bars, granola, and apple chips from local producers. A paid coordinator is needed to broker these connections.

(b) Culinary arts

Example: Fergus school with chef Chris Jess who runs “The Food School”, a culinary arts class with industrial kitchen

<http://foodschoo.ca/assignments/kitchen-map/contact-details/chef-instructor/>.

(c) Community gardens and greenhouses

- No Woolwich schools have community gardens. Community partnerships and volunteer teachers and parents are needed for this.
- Elmira District Secondary School has a greenhouse where students can grow produce, learn about environmentally-sustainable solutions, and participate in the community. Their training is integrated with several other school subjects.
- Teachers can attend professional development through the Ontario Council for Technology Education (OCTE).

“A high school greenhouse and workshop can create a space, a connecting point, for youth to work with the community. With our SHSM (Specialist High Skills Major) program, youth have gotten involved with local landscape companies, nurseries and the horticultural society to help create visible projects. For example, some students have constructed community gardens signs, and others have planted trees in habitat locations in Elmira. Students from our ELAWS Mennonite Program planted a tree snow break just outside town. There was also an opportunity to learn about a geothermal energy system that we installed to maintain the temperature in the school greenhouse. This type of practical training makes youth feel involved and take ownership of community-based and environmental issues, and it creates chemistry between tradespeople and students. In this sense it becomes a crucible for local economic development, and a stepping stone towards personal health.”

-Randy Dyck, teacher, Elmira District Secondary School

Community Actions

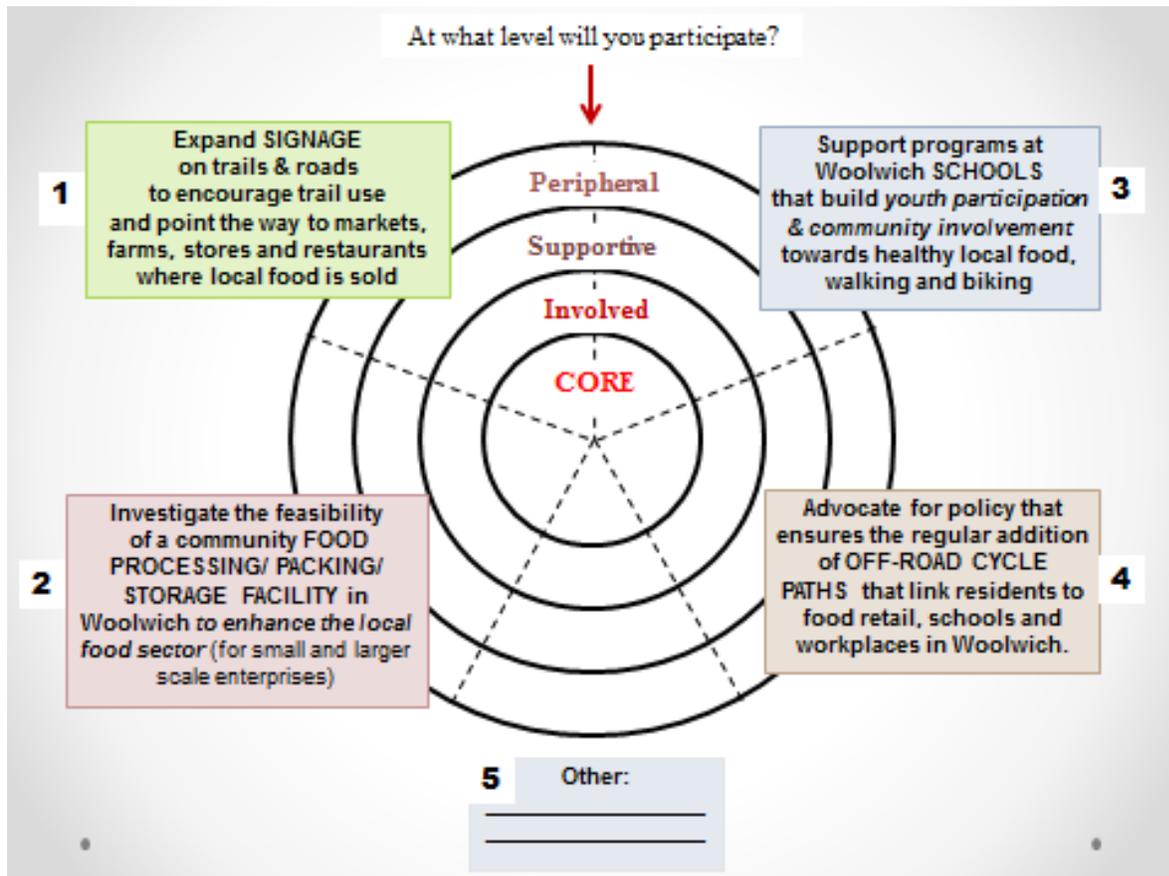
Overall, four main action themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the focus groups, interviews and other community feedback that was summarized in the previous section.

It was important that these actions or policy-oriented areas reflect the “voice and choice” of residents, and at the same time lend themselves to feasible implementation by building on existing enterprises, strategies and committee work. The themes follow other *Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles* as well, in that they aim to build a feeling of community, support farming and local businesses, and improve community amenities for active modes of transportation and access to locally-produced food.

Figure 1 below superimposes the four action themes on a “stakeholder wheel”, which indicates various possible levels of involvement for individuals. It was in this manner that the themes were presented to, and further discussed by, participants at the Woolwich Healthy Communities forum on November 25, 2013. Thirty-nine people took part in four discussion roundtables corresponding to the four themes. A fifth or “other” theme was open to participants if they felt that any important area of action was not included in the first four, but none was identified during the forum.

Action #4 is directly policy related; actions #1 and 3 suggest policy directions through developing consistent standards across the Township and local schools; and action #2 would require adherence to local land use policies.

Figure 1: Themes for action towards local food access and active transportation in Woolwich Township



What follows is a set of goals and corresponding tasks that emerged from the participants in this project, according to the four main themes of action. These are by no means the only areas that need attention in Woolwich Township, but they are a feasible starting point. Participants' ideas as they were expressed at the November 25th Healthy Communities Forum are listed in Appendix A.

1. Expand SIGNAGE on trails and roads to encourage trail use and point the way to markets, farms, stores and restaurants where local food is sold.*

Potential Goals	Tasks
Agreement on community signage composition (inclusiveness and fairness), information messages (e.g., history, signs pointing to local food retail, distance markers, etc.), consistency of icons, logos and format	Form a coordinated group key stakeholders which has the authority to make decisions and move forward: terms of reference, membership, roles and decision making process (including public consultation)
Agreement on various formats for sign information: trails signs, town-entrance signs, kiosks, maps, electronic links	Consider partnerships, including funding partnerships, schools, local businesses, etc.
A work plan for signage implementation and creation of maps	Create a communications plan that specifies how information and concerns about signage and trails will be shared on an on-going basis between community groups and the Municipality
Agreement on responsibility for ongoing development, maintenance and updating of signs	Create a plan based on existing trails, roads and paths as well as food venues, to determine where signs should go, and prioritize the needs. This plan could take the form of municipal policy if it sets standards for the Township
Acquisition of funds to achieve signage installation	
Creation and installation of road, trail and town signs to facilitate active transportation and links to local food venues in Woolwich Township	Prepare a work plan and budget for the cost of labour, materials, installation, etc. Ensure that signs meet regulatory standards Estimate and apply for funds from appropriate grant programs or other sources of funds Prepare an evaluation plan to document costs and benefits (including use of trails and local food venues by residents and tourists)

***Note:** Woolwich Township Council is in support of this type of initiative. They already have an internal Sign Committee which deals with sign by-laws and other signage issues. A possible next step could be to build a community team to get this project going with other stakeholders. Potential funding for this could include the Rural Economic Development (RED) Program, RTO funding, etc.

-Laurel Davies Snyder, Woolwich Township

2. Investigate the feasibility of a community food processing/packing/storage facility in Woolwich to enhance the local food sector (for small and larger scale enterprises)

Potential Goal	Tasks
A feasibility study and business plan for a community food processing/packing/storage facility in Woolwich, suitable for both small and larger scale enterprises	Form a steering committee of community business people, Foodlink, and other stakeholders who have an interest in, and expertise about, such a facility
	Consult with municipal planners regarding location, zoning, etc.
	Apply for funding for the study
	With help from funded expert group, research the products and their value-added potential, and determine what products are in demand by potential users (e.g. hospitals, schools, universities, retail, etc.). Determine costs, equipment, etc. (all elements of a business plan.). Include a planned space for a community kitchen for smaller scale food preserving, catering, training, etc.

3. Support programs and policies at Woolwich schools that build youth participation and community involvement towards healthy local food, walking and biking

“Community gardening can create a lifelong interest in healthy food and outdoor activity. There are new, efficient models of gardens like square food gardening, which is scalable and uses less space.

*-participant,
Woolwich Healthy Communities forum*

Potential Goals	Tasks
<p>Program possibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouses, community gardens (e.g., square food gardening; junior garden club with Elmira horticultural society) • School meal programs provided by community cooks and sourcing locally-produced food • Culinary programs at school where students can learn to cook healthy meals, prepare meals for school cafeterias and learn culinary skills for jobs • Curricular and extra-curricular activities, e.g., planting trees, building signs • Cycling, walking, running, in-line skating on trails 	<p>Create community-school partnership to move forward: membership and roles (e.g., TWEEC, Woolwich township, parents, principals, youth, local businesses, Woolwich community services, etc.) and potential funders.</p>
	<p>Devise a plan to prioritize needs and coordinate efforts among schools towards specific program(s) and policies to support those programs</p>

4. Advocate for policy that ensures the regular addition of segregated cycle/walking paths that link residents to food retail, schools and workplaces in Woolwich.

“A lot comes back to safety. If we don’t feel safe on bikes, we won’t use the routes. You then tend to just get elite cyclists using the roads. Segregated trails are best, especially with good maps and signage.

-Participant, Woolwich Healthy Communities forum

Potential Goals	Tasks
<p>Safety is seen as paramount and is recognized in policy. Cyclists and pedestrians feel safe during all seasons, leading to increased active transportation. Segregated cycle paths are recognized as the safest strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a communications plan that specifies how information and concerns about cycling and walking issues in the Township will be shared on an on-going basis between community groups and the Municipality
<p>Linkages between existing trails are built, and increase trail use to get from one destination to another without going on roads</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a committee/partnership (including bicycle groups, Walk-Cycle Waterloo Region) that collaborates with the Township, Public Health and all relevant community groups to move forward:
<p>New housing developments are walkable and cycle friendly and link to trails</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ initiate a research project that documents existing practices and prioritizes needs ➤ access funds to create new maps that show walk and cycle-friendly routes
<p>Danger spots for cyclists and pedestrians are identified, prioritized and addressed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ advise on new policies, land use and road issues ➤ advise on budget implications of segregated walk/cycle paths
<p>Land ownership issues and regulations regarding trails and linkages, including liability, are clarified</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ coordinate planning ➤ determine policy options and craft wording ➤ advocate for policy to Township Council ➤ take into consideration any new regional and provincial guidelines and/or regulations that are relevant to Woolwich
<p>Woolwich Township explores the need to adopt a <i>Transportation Master Plan</i> on a community-by-community basis. This plan could include a linked trailways policy, pedestrian charter, bikeways and trails master plan, and sidewalk maintenance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake public education about the benefits of active transportation and possibilities in Woolwich (can happen immediately) • Plan a township-wide evaluation of changes in active transportation over time

Relevant Background Documents and Policies

The community actions that emerged from the Woolwich Healthy Communities project can, according to the Township's discretion, align with or build on the information from other recent, relevant reports and policy documents that range from the municipal to regional to provincial. This section features excerpts from ten documents or policy statements that pertain to issues of food and food business, active transportation and local food access. Taken together, this material provides a broad context of opportunities, challenges and policy environments that can inform and reinforce the activities suggested by this project.

The following documents are highlighted below:

1. *Woolwich Community Health Centre: Community Needs and Capacity Assessment* (October 2010)
2. *Supporting Advocacy on Municipal Official Plans: A Report to the Healthy Communities Partnership* (K. Long, April 2012)
3. *Planning Food-Friendly Municipalities: A Report to the Healthy Communities Partnership* (K. Long, 2013)
4. *Blueprint for Physical Activity Action in Waterloo Region: A Report to the Waterloo Region Active Living Network* (Eys, Benson and Surya, August, 2013)
5. *Region of Waterloo Walk-Cycle Master Plan*, Draft September 2013
6. *Building capacity for Policy Work: What Helps and Hinders Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Good Mental Health for Residents of Wilmot Township* (Coppola and Associates, Inc., May 2013)
7. *Taking Regional Action? Understanding Networks in the Local Food, Green Energy and Creative Sectors in Waterloo Region* (Vinodrai, Mathu, Ross, Robson, Scott and Parker, 2012)
8. Waterloo Region Food Charter (2013)
9. Ontario Local Food Act (2013)
10. *Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2021* (Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy, 2012)

1. **Woolwich Community Health Centre: Community Needs and Capacity Assessment** (October 2010)

<http://www.wchc.on.ca/media/WCHCcommunityassessment2010.pdf>

Data were collected through written surveys sent to all Woolwich households (1400 surveys were returned), 24 focus groups and eight informant interviews. This report provides a good overview of the Woolwich population demographics, supplemented by trends over time from the 1996, 2001 and 2006 census data of Statistics Canada.

Farming - Opportunities: The agriculture sector contributes in a major way to the economic vitality of the Region of Waterloo. Over the past twelve years, aided by promotion of a healthy local food system and farm viability by the Region of Waterloo Public Health and Foodlink Waterloo Region, “there has been a significant growth in support for buying locally grown food within the Region of Waterloo” (p.56). This trend may have contributed to the increase of land area used for vegetable production in the Region of Waterloo by 129 per cent between 2001 and 2006 (compared to a 9 per cent decline in Ontario and a 6 per cent decline in Canada during the same period).

Farming – Barriers: In the focus group farmers reported that with greater regulation and associated costs, farm viability is becoming more and more difficult.

In spite of the increase in local food sales and business, it was reported in focus group discussions that some farmers are struggling to sustain their farm. Increasingly farmers need to have off-farm jobs to support the farm, and the business of farming is becoming increasingly stressful with the increase in regulation, bureaucracy and international markets, all of which are beyond the control of the farmer.

Farming – Community actions: Increased government support and less regulation are identified by focus group participants as ways to support farmers. Additionally some farmers indicated that support groups can help to relieve stress. Advocacy to support local farmers is important to maintain our local food supply and support farm sustainability” (p.93). Supporting local farmers will enable farmers to sustain their farms while providing greater benefits to society by supplying locally grown foods and through the economic benefits of agricultural jobs (p.94).

Nutrition and the Food Environment: An estimated 63 per cent of WCHC survey respondents did not meet with Canada’s Food Guide recommendations, largely due to an inadequate number of fruit and vegetable servings per day (p.65). Policy change to create a more supportive food environment (i.e., increased access to affordable healthy foods would enable individuals to improve their diet (p.66).

Active transportation - Opportunities: Focus group participants identified that they felt fortunate to have over 80 km of trails in Woolwich Township. Outdoor activities are valued by many and would be enhanced with connections between trails, and more bike lanes on streets and roads (p.67). “Woolwich Healthy Communities has done significant work in the area of trails development. These groups are vital in our community to identify and work on the physical, environmental and social determinants of health which will be increasingly important as our population grows over the next decade (p.86).

Active transportation – Barriers: “Unshovelled sidewalks are a common complaint in all communities with residents of all ages concerned about falling. Young working families struggle to find time to exercise, even though they know it is important to their health. Some students benefit from walking to school if they are within walking distance, but most students are bussed to school due to the rural environment.”

Active transportation and healthy eating: A growing population of seniors in Woolwich requires special attention to their access to healthy food and possibility for walking to their destinations to stay healthy (pp. 94-95).

2. Supporting Advocacy on Municipal Official Plans: A Report to the Healthy Communities Partnership (K. Long, April 2012)

Active transportation – Municipal policies:

- In Table 1, an analysis of municipal plan policies in Waterloo Region shows that the Woolwich official plan includes moderate support “to ensure that bikeways and pedestrian walkways are integrated into and designed as part of new road and other infrastructure projects”.
- Regarding walkability, the Woolwich plan includes strong support in terms of “design measures which promote pedestrian safety and security”.
- For pedestrian linkages, the Woolwich plan strongly supports “linking all residents with important destinations”.

3. Planning Food-Friendly Municipalities: A Report to the Healthy Communities Partnership

(K. Long, 2013) – related to temporary markets

Access to local food – Municipal policies:

- *Land use or zoning by-laws in Woolwich*
Temporary markets are permitted in areas zoned as C1 (Commercial Core) and C3 (Settlement Commercial) only.
- *Municipal licensing in Woolwich*
By-law 116-2004 Business Licensing By-law applies to *food vehicles* (must conform to health regulations); *refreshment vehicles/chip wagons* (annual fee is \$1,100); and *outdoor vendors* (must conform to health regulations and fire regulations; annual fee is \$265).
- *Recommendation*
That a request be made to Woolwich Council that temporary farmers' markets also be permitted in residential land use zones, or that wording be made similar to that in Wellesley Township Zoning By-law 28-2006, 4.44: "Nothing in this By-law shall prevent the use of land or the use or erection of a building or structure for: b) A farmers' market held not more than two days per week in any zone, with a building permit required if market is larger than 108 sq. ft.."

4. Blueprint for Physical Activity Action in Waterloo Region: A Report to the Waterloo Region Active Living Network (Eys, Benson and Surya, August, 2013)

Active transportation – Barriers and Opportunities

- Barriers to active transportation mentioned in focus groups were lack of safety of bike lanes next to fast-traffic car lanes and lack of connectedness of trails and roads throughout the Region. The report (and responses from focus group members) focused more on recreational facilities than on active transportation opportunities.
- A recommendation that emerged from the analysis was to educate people about the opportunities for physical activity (this could include routes available for active transportation), as well as about the numerous community groups dedicated to active transportation that people can join.

5. Region of Waterloo Walk-Cycle Master Plan, Draft September 2013

<http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/gettingAround/resources/WalkCycleWRPCC1DisplayBoards.pdf>

Active transportation – Policies and Policy Opportunities

- *Underlying principle:* Promoting and integrating active transportation contributes to “an inclusive, thriving and sustainable community committed to maintaining harmony between rural and urban areas” and will help to “plan and manage integrated, accessible and safe multi-modal transportation systems that provide transportation choice, and promote sustainability, a healthy population and the effective movement of goods.”
- The City of Waterloo adopted a *Transportation Master Plan* in 2011, which included a complete streets policy, linked greenways policy, pedestrian charter, bikeways and trails master plan, and sidewalk maintenance. The City of Kitchener adopted a *Cycling Master Plan* and a *Community Trails Master Plan* in 2011; they also have a pedestrian charter. The City of Cambridge adopted a *Cycling Master Plan* in 2009 and a *Community Trails Master Plan* in 2010.
- The Townships of Woolwich, Wilmot, Wellesley and North Dumfries are supportive of policies to encourage more cycling and walking. A number of Regional roads have paved shoulders for cyclists. Woolwich has eleven trails totalling more than 80 km.

- Over the next two decades, the Region aims to increase the number of trips made by walking by about 25 per cent and more than triple the trips made by cycling. The Region has developed “*Context-Sensitive Regional Transportation Design Guidelines*” (March 2013), in order to “enhance, develop, promote and integrate active forms of transportation by providing a comfortable built environment.” It includes a decision-making framework to determine optimum elements that make up streetscapes, roadways and boulevards.
http://regionofwaterloo.ca/en/doingBusiness/resources/2013_Context_Sensitive_Regional_Transportation_Corridor_Design_Guidelines_reduced_file_sz.pdf

6. Building capacity for Policy Work: What Helps and Hinders Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Good Mental Health for Residents of Wilmot Township (Coppola and Associates, Inc., May 2013)

Areas of overlap of findings from community consultations (focus groups and stakeholder interviews) in Wilmot Township with those in Woolwich Township:

- ***Active transportation recommendations:*** Promote interconnected trails; add bicycle lanes on all local roads as they are resurfaced; promote more signage for trails and better promotion of existing trails; install bike racks at public buildings, businesses and other key locations (p.14).
- ***Local food access and healthy eating issues:*** No mention was made of promoting locally-produced food, except to encourage its sale in Wilmot grocery stores, and to permit local farm stores in Wilmot to include a percentage of produce from other farms for sale in addition to their own – both of which are already in place in Woolwich.

There was a concern, similar to that expressed for Woolwich schools, that Wilmot school nutrition programs were over-regulated with respect to the types of food options that could be offered at school (p.16).

7. Taking Regional Action? Understanding Networks in the Local Food, Green Energy and Creative Sectors in Waterloo Region (Vinodrai, Mathu, Ross, Robson, Scott and Parker, 2012)

<http://env.uwaterloo.ca/u/sdscott/documents/2012vinodraiaetaledcotakingregionalaction.pdf>

This study, based on 86 key informant interviews and a review of the policy literature, identified several findings related to ***local economic development around food and farming:*** (pp. 6 – 9)

- Value is created through the quality associated with how and where a product is produced. For this reason, trust is important.
- Networks need to be horizontal (rather than focused on a single commodity or crop) and place-based, including a diversity of actors.
- The Waterloo Region’s Mennonite presence and a long history of agriculture and food provide the basis for today’s local food system. However, economic development efforts have focused on the Region of Waterloo’s strengths in high tech industries and ...traditional food processing and have overlooked artisanal processing and small-scale production. This misses the potential value and contribution of the local food system to the regional economy.
- Local food systems require a local food-processing infrastructure. Federal and provincial food safety regulations and land use policies are there for good reason but should be re-considered or modified for special circumstances so as not to prevent on-farm value-added opportunities.

8. Waterloo Region Food Charter (2013)

http://www.wrfoodsystem.ca/files/www/Waterloo_Region_Food_Charter_final_Apr8.pdf

Vision: A healthy, just, and sustainable food system is one in which all residents have access to, and can afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way, and that supports our rural communities. Such a food system promotes social justice, population health, and profitable farms, reflects and sustains local culture, and supports ecological viability.

To achieve this vision for a healthy food system, there is a need to carry out food system planning, and to establish principles that govern food-related decisions. The Waterloo Region Food Charter defines a common vision, and provides a foundation for a food system strategy.

Because we believe in fair, environmentally sustainable, livable, and economically profitable rural and urban communities...

1. - we support connecting people to our local food system

- by enhancing knowledge about, and engagement in, the food in our communities

This includes:

- empowering people to participate in the local food system
- improving our skills for growing, preserving, and preparing food
- educating ourselves and others about the food system
- encouraging respect for food and the ecosystems to which it is bound
- supporting the expansion of food grown or raised in urban and rural areas

2. - we support community economic development

- by building the processing and distribution infrastructure required to make local foods available for local residents and global trade

This includes:

- prioritizing local processing, distribution, and retailing opportunities for small- and medium-sized businesses
- encouraging public institutions to buy local and environmentally sustainable food
- by encouraging policies and other initiatives which enable profitable livelihoods for local farmers for generations to come

3. - we support access to healthy food

- by protecting farmland from urban development
- by supporting policies and other initiatives that ensure that everyone has access to enough nutritious food

This includes:

- championing adequate incomes for everyone, so that all residents can afford to buy healthy food
- encouraging the local production and processing of foods that contribute to the nutritional health of citizens
- ensuring walkable access to venues that sell healthy foods
- ensuring the widespread availability of, and access to, locally produced and culturally appropriate food
- ensuring the availability of healthy, affordable food choices in workplaces and public institutions

4. - we support ecological health

- by promoting and supporting food production and processing methods that reduce greenhouse gas emissions; use less fossil-fuel energy; sustain or enhance wildlife habitats, watersheds, biological and seed diversity, and soil health; and that optimize or reduce the use of local natural resources to ensure long-term ecological sustainability
- by ensuring access to a safe and sustainable water supply for all residents of Waterloo Region
- by encouraging the reduction of food waste and excessive food packaging, and supporting initiatives that strive to reduce or reuse food waste, such as composting

5. - we support integrated food policies at all levels of government

- by encouraging joined-up policies across local, provincial, and federal levels of government that aim to ensure that healthy, environmentally sustainable food is available to everyone
- by recognizing the importance of comprehensive food strategies and policies that promote a profitable, viable and ecologically sustainable food system

9. Ontario Local Food Act (2013)

http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/bills/bills_detail.do?locale=enandIntranet=andBillID=2754

Purpose

1. To foster successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario
 2. To increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food
 3. To encourage the development of new markets for local food
- “Ontario has a highly productive agricultural land base... and knowledgeable, innovative farmers, food processors, distributors, retailers and restaurateurs
 - These resources help ensure that local food systems thrive throughout the province, allowing the people of Ontario to know where their food comes from and connect with those who produce it
 - The variety of food produced, harvested and made in Ontario reflects the diversity of its people. This variety is something to be celebrated, cherished and supported
 - Strong local and regional food systems deliver economic benefits and build strong communities”

10. Food and Farming: An Action Plan 2021 (Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy, 2012)

http://www.gtaaac.ca/pdfs/Action_Plan.pdf

Woolwich is part of the “Greater Golden Horseshoe” (although not part of the 36 municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe), and this report lists key challenges and opportunities faced by the food and farming business that were also stressed in the Woolwich focus groups.

Farming and Food Businesses - Challenges included:

- Lack of public awareness about the opportunities and advantages associated with the food and farming cluster
- Multiple, disjointed regulations and policies detract from the ability to do business effectively

Farming and Food Businesses - Recommendations included:

- Increase access to locally grown food, promoting a consumer culture of quality over price and celebrating regional product;
- Continue to link food, farming and health in educating consumers
- Identify gaps and inefficiencies in the current food value chain;
- Align policy tools and their application to enable food and farming businesses to be increasingly competitive and profitable. Harmonize and improve policy tools (e.g. provincial policies, official plans, taxation, regulations, fees) for consistent implementation responsive to the needs of food and farming businesses.

Conclusion

Context

The background information from the above ten documents/policy statements provided context for this project. Notably, there is significant overlap between the findings, recommendations and policies from these documents and what has emerged from the consultations in the current project.

In terms of health behaviours, it appears that Woolwich residents, similar to Ontarians as a whole, consume diets which are inadequate in fruit, vegetables and whole grains (Woolwich Community Health Centre Report, 2010). They also stand to benefit healthwise from more physical activity, especially walking and cycling, which can be incorporated into daily routines. The food environment and the cycling/walking environment are instrumental in enabling these behaviours. The food environment itself is influenced by existing local food supply chains, which are comprised of local agricultural production, food processing facilities, distribution channels, and retail outlets of various sizes and types.

A look at these environments in Woolwich Township reveals a strong base upon which to build. The Township has an enviable network of trails and several widened roads. It has municipal policy that expresses support for active transportation. To encourage more cycling and walking, especially for everyday pursuits, it was noted that trails must be linked and signed, and more segregated paths built. Woolwich Township also has a vibrant local food economy that is expanding in response to customer demand, enabled in large part by local food distribution and processing businesses. However, the viability of farms and smaller-scale food businesses was seen as an on-going challenge. Reports from municipal and regional perspectives mentioned the need for revised policy tools (e.g., regulations, fees, taxes) that are tailored to the needs of smaller-scale operations and more consistently coordinated between government agencies.

Overall, positive policy environments seem to be in place, especially at the regional and provincial levels, that support urban and rural planning to enable active transportation as well as a strong local food economy in Waterloo Region and Ontario.

Summary of focus groups and interviews

Observations and comments from the interviews and focus groups were categorized by the four topics of farms and food businesses; neighbourhoods and workplaces; youth, schools and families; and trails, tourism and business.

It was clear that both the demand and supply of locally-produced and processed foods has been on the rise for several years and is continuing to do so. This expansion has resulted in more local employment and growing tourism related to traditional, regional food venues. Farmers and business owners noted, however, that further expansion was often hindered by fees and taxes, land use policies and other regulatory restrictions that were felt to be in need of review. Many expressed a need for better access to, and greater clarity of, policy regulations; but for their part, township planners noted that they were there to facilitate and provide guidance for development initiatives. Competition from large retail stores featuring lower food prices was a major concern for smaller-scale local producers and retailers; nevertheless, there was considerable strength and momentum in the smaller-enterprise sector. Schools seemed to be at an impasse in terms of sourcing high quality local food, in the face of budget cuts as well as provincial policy meant to exclude certain foods deemed “unhealthy” from the school environment. Here, however, several ideas were suggested to move forward.

In terms of active transportation, Woolwich's broad network of community trails offered plentiful recreational possibilities, which could become more useful if trail linkages were made and signage improved, especially with a view to enabling connections with local food at various types of venues. There were many stories of local business people, teachers and other local "champions" who demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit that exemplified what could be done in the Township.

Overall, if local food is to be more accessible by active transportation, the policy stage needs to be set for more local food venues (such as temporary and permanent markets) and more off-road cycle paths – both of which are challenging and require further discussion and debate.

Community Actions

Outside of the more challenging solutions, four feasible community-based opportunities emerged from the analysis that could yield significant, short-term improvements to healthy food access and active transportation.

Action #4 is directly policy related; actions #1 and #3 suggest policy directions through developing consistent standards across the Township and local schools; and action #2 would require adherence to local land use policies.

1. Expand signage on trails and roads to encourage trail use and point the way to markets, farms, stores and restaurants where local food is sold.
2. Investigate the feasibility of a community food processing/ packing/ storage facility in Woolwich to enhance the local food sector (for small and larger scale enterprises).
3. Support programs and policies at Woolwich schools that build youth participation and community involvement towards healthy local food, walking and biking.
4. Advocate for policy that ensures the regular addition of segregated cycle/walking paths that link residents to food retail, schools and workplaces in Woolwich.

There was clear support for these four action categories at the community forum, as a large number of residents participated in the roundtable discussions on how to move these actions forward. For example, there was an appetite for planning a local food processing plant to serve community needs, large and small, in which Foodlink was willing to play an initial role. Additionally, the various trails committees planned to coordinate their efforts to enhance the trail system for residents and tourists. Ideas for improving food and active transportation at schools abounded. The action plans were summarized in terms of goals and tasks.

It is strongly recommended that changes and actions resulting from this community consultation be documented and revisited in a few years' time, in order to determine to what degree success has been achieved for all stakeholders. The importance of such record-keeping lies in the inherent bonds between municipal policy, community infrastructure, the business environment and individual behaviours. Ultimately, the physical and economic health of the Township stands to gain from actions taken.

Appendix A

Notes from the four themed discussion groups at the November 25, 2013 Forum in St. Jacobs

1. Support programs at Woolwich schools that build *youth participation and community involvement* towards healthy local food, walking and biking

1. High School:

- a. Greenhouse
- b. Community partnerships*
- c. Signage
- d. Community gardens
- e. TWEEC – tree seedling and live snow fence
- f. Woolwich township
- g. Children and youth
- h. Children have energy and lifelong interest/behaviour
- i. Extra curricula's are difficult
- j. Co-curricular(in-class) are easier to implement
- k. Questions summer greenhouse involvement
- l. Junior garden club exists within the Elmira Horticultural Society
- m. Public school more environmental involvement
- n. Secondary schools more interest
- o. More efficient urban gardening (think differently)
- p. Mel Bartholomew (US) square foot gardening
 - i. Smaller space and controlled gardening
 - ii. Scalable
- q. Woolwich Community Services coordinates community gardens – one on first street
- r. Can experiment academically
- s. Greenhouse could start a community garden – When?
- t. Elliot Coleman (Maine)- 9 months of year round gardening

2. **Next Steps:** There is interest from the group to strike a school garden working committee right away, with support from Woolwich Community Services.

2. Investigate the feasibility of a community food processing/ packing/ storage facility in Woolwich to enhance the local food sector

1. Business-driven feasibility study: immediately
 2. Research product and value added cost – determine what product are they looking for
 3. Source funding
 4. Get up to speed on local government funding
 5. Investigate institutions (hospitals, schools)
 6. Determine what are we making and for whom?
- There was support for a feasibility study by the Executive Director of Foodlink, possibly seeking funding from the OMFRA Local Food Fund.
 - Considerable discussion revolved around what model or type of processing facility could be considered, and how this could work given existing community needs, marketing trends and investment possibilities. It was strongly felt that this facility should be community owned/operated to avoid exploitation by a single business owner.

3. Advocate for policy that ensures the regular addition of off-road cycle paths that link residents to food retail, schools and workplaces in Woolwich.

1. Not certain that additional off-road cycle paths are realistic
2. Blend trails with less used roads and have a mix of trails, roads and paths – have signage
3. Need for trail/road system to be looped – end at the start points with varying levels of distance/challenge – would be especially helpful for tourists/newcomers
4. Provide maps of where to go
5. Trans-Canada – Mill Race Trails are multi-use but narrow for both walkers and cyclists
6. More safety needs to be considered on trails e.g., dogs a problem – bite
7. Need more support from the municipality to close the gaps – they have the expertise and tools needed to help design trail loops that are safe. E.g. Henry St. is ok to use on weekends but during the week becomes a truck route – Three Bridges is ok on weekends but not during the week
8. Healthy Valley Trail goes to Old Country Rd but trail users have lost rights to use the connector trails from the landowner – horses are still allowed to use it.
9. Landowner issues remain – trust, distress to their animals, animals on the trails
10. Municipality can help with mapping and plugging into different levels of government
11. Government can identify right of ways that are open to the public. The Region/Township must have these areas mapped
12. Floradale Lake (Woolwich Reservoir) to Elmira needs a linking trail
13. Require new developments to insert walking/cycling paths in their plans that establish links to existing trails.
14. Concern about narrowing roads for crossing islands, e.g., Church Street – need to also consider needs of cyclists with these designs
15. Require new roads to be built with a shoulder width of three feet wide and linking cycling paths
16. On-road cycling has some maps but want easy access to planners in the Township to work together
17. Cycling group should get together with trails group for some planning
18. A lot comes back to safety. If we don't feel safe we won't use the routes. You then tend to just get elite cyclists using the roads. Need to increase safety on trails and roads (especially those on the cycling map) and post clear signage
19. Research where cyclists are – Are there more cyclists on the roads where the shoulders have been widened? Several members felt that there has been an increase in the numbers of cyclists using the road between St. Jacobs and Elmira since the shoulder has been widened.
20. Many Old Order Mennonites are cycling - Who and why did they pave wide shoulders – to accommodate buggies. This is a good example and should do everywhere
21. Traffic Act should be changed to make it legal for cyclists to drive on the shoulder and regulations for building of roads to include a three foot paved shoulder. (Wellington hesitant to pave wide shoulders as they do not want increased cyclists)
22. Education of drivers and cyclists – include cycling into drivers' education.
23. Suggestions for ways to promote and raise money for trails: When events such as the Trigators, the Steaming Nostrils, or the 5-10 k run are held in the Township, ask the organizers to include information about Woolwich trails in their event packages. Have a Trails booth at the events to promote the Woolwich Trails Network and to promote bike safety. If the events are charged a fee, a percentage could go to trails and/or bike safety.
24. Need more collaborative planning, where planning, transportation and public health departments work together with community groups so that we aren't working in silos.
25. Strong appreciation for the work of the Township Trails Coordinator.

Priority areas that can be addressed now:

- On-road cycling/ trails to work with Township to create looped maps and plans for paths/trails;
- Have clear signage on trails which includes a map of suggested trail linkages;
- Require new developments to establish walking/cycling paths to link with existing trails;
- Work on a plan to link a trail from “Floradale Lake” (Woolwich Reservoir) to Elmira.

4. Expand signage on trails and roads to encourage trail use and point the way to markets, farms, stores and restaurants where local food is sold

1. Recognizable, consistent icons for food, restaurants, markets, trails so people will recognize them
2. Use distance/directional markers on or with signs
3. More frequent signs needed in areas where route is unclear
4. Clarity – how increase consistency of signage? Should this be a Region-wide program or should we start locally and work upwards? Who decides this?
5. We think it's best to start with Woolwich – determine style and signage program to occur over time and work away at it a bit at a time as priority, funds and abilities dictate
6. How to link the info people need (direction, location, distance amenities) best? Using current technology? People then print hard copies if desired to take along, more safe on bikes. Signage with options for route length and direction at trail heads and other key points along the trail. This way people can choose options along the trail and make better decisions with regard to the difficulty, length, type and amenities of their walk, hike, or ride
7. We need to provide for all types of users regardless of age, and familiarity with locale
8. Lots of people will plan a trip before they come if from afar. Make more information between sites like trails/food/restaurants linked, so they can plan and map a trip
9. How to eliminate excess costs in a program like this. Signs are expensive, need maintenance and updating. Stewards...who looks after this? Look for funding partnerships for payment of pre-established signage. Individual landowners, groups, businesses may help. Program like “adopt a road” maybe people can “adopt a sign” and be a steward of a sign, an area, or section of trail
10. Who is responsible for program coordination. Design, choice of signage? Needs?

Priority areas that can be addressed now:

- Start with Woolwich signage, identify gaps. Subcommittee to poll users, visitor? Survey?
- Decide who is responsible for coordinating, determine design, types, costs.
- Find ways to keep costs low. Funding partnerships.

Gallery Questions/Suggestions (*flip chart on wall for spontaneous ideas*)

- 1. How can we get more healthy local foods into schools?**
 - a. Market cooking a viable course option
 - b. Teach courses in preserving local healthy food for off season use
 - c. Get kids talking about food in their lunches that taste “good and fresh”
 - d. Healthy dialogue with school/parent councils- establish partnerships
- 2. How can we get healthy local foods into our neighborhoods?**

-Allow temporary stands in conjunction with other uses or on their own
- 3. How can we get more people to cycle/walk regularly?**
 - a. More promotion re: trails and increase safety on the roads
 - b. Trails to places we need to go
 - c. Sidewalks on one side of the street, paved pathways on the other side for cyclists
- 4. What can we do to encourage easier access to healthy local food?**

-Smaller retailers in town centres
- 5. How can production/processing of local foods be made easier?**
 - a. Educational seminars to interested individuals
 - b. Engage students in the educational systems
- 6. What would get more people to use Woolwich trails?**
 - a. More promotion/education re: trail locations
 - b. Encourage business, clubs, churches, etc., to sponsor walks/hikes
- 7. Would you use trails more if local food booths were available?**

Yes – I would combine the time I'd spend to get exercise with chores I need to do

Appendix B: Woolwich Healthy Communities Guiding Principles

This group of questions should be used in making decisions. They are meant to be used together. Each question is equally important. They are not listed in any particular order.

Is this decision/plan likely to:

Build a Feeling of Community?

Create more opportunities for friendly interaction and neighbourly support among people in Woolwich Township? Support churches, service organizations, neighbourhood groups, cultural activities? Promote interaction among individuals living in the Township?

Give Voice and Choice?

Encourage all those affected, including people often left out, to participate in making decisions that affect them? Increase people's capacity to choose what's best for them?

Support Farming?

Provide opportunities for people to pursue farming, either full-time or part-time and/or pursue other agriculture-related activities for pay or leisure? Increase the amount of food produced and available for purchase within the Township?

Support Local Business?

Increase the quality and quantity of products and services made available to Township residents by local businesses? Increase locally available employment opportunities that include fair wages and safe and healthy working conditions? Help bring sustainable business opportunities to Woolwich Township?

Treat Waste as a Resource?

Promote the 5 R's by – Re-using local resources as much and as many times as possible? Reducing the amount of waste going to landfills and other waste disposal outlets? Recycling what cannot be reused? Replacing what has been taken (e.g., agricultural lands), so that the amount of local resources is not being diminished? Use waste products or waste treatment processes for Replenishing resources that have been damaged or degraded?

Improve Community Amenities?

Promote public transit, bicycle use and other non-car modes of transport? Make main streets, byways, trails and neighbourhoods safe, healthy and attractive 'people places'? Provide good housing to people of all income levels? Ensure that people have good access to shops and stores where they can buy basic necessities?

Improve the Quality of the Environment?

Create a clean, green township? Improve soil, air and water quality in rivers, streams and wells? Preserve and maintain woodlands, wetlands, river edges, habitats and corridors for wildlife and wild plants? Encourage environmentally sound practices by businesses, industries and individuals?

Provide for People's Basic Needs?

Change people's capacity to provide for their own basic living requirements? Give access to – adequate food, clothing and shelter, clean water, soil and air, educational opportunities, assistance with care for dependent or ill family members? Provide sources of productive, safe and satisfying work with an adequate income?

Honour the Past, Safeguard the Future?

Preserve and maintain cultural resources, including rural landscapes, wild lands, buildings and streetscapes that connect people to their history and to local cultural heritage? Consider the needs and interests of future generations, so that quality of life and choice for our children's children is assured?