

Food Systems

2024 Parkdale Community Planning Study

Assets (2)

1. Network of formal and informal organizations addressing immediate food access needs
2. Local food distribution and food production initiatives

Needs (2)

1. Food security solutions, including those focused on affordability and living wages
2. Resources and funding to support food sovereignty initiatives

Directions (5)

1. Co-ordinate existing food service programs and mutual aid initiatives to ensure consistent access to food for local community members
2. Expand education, resources, skill-building opportunities, and initiatives that promote food sovereignty
3. Expand community food growing spaces and create a support network for local growers in the neighbourhood
4. Continue to build community food hubs that support food security, health, and economic

development through a shared-use community kitchen

5. Establish an IBPOC-led co-operative or worker enterprise to support the local food system

The COVID-19 pandemic played a major role in driving inflation in food prices - the cost of food bought at major grocery stores has been rising about 9% per year since 2020. Simultaneously, these major supermarket chains and their CEOs are making billions, prioritizing profits and passing costs onto consumers. People in Parkdale face challenges affording nourishing and wholesome meals, as almost 12% of South Parkdale residents over 15 are on social assistance like OW and ODSP. While 38% of food bank users shared that their main income comes from social assistance, an increasing number report being employed. In turn, the Parkdale Community Food Bank has been serving 7,000 to 8,000 families per month, a notable leap from 1,500 families per month during pre-pandemic times.

This dramatic increase in food bank service users underscores the pressing need for comprehensive action to address both immediate food needs and the underlying causes of food insecurity. Parkdale residents and food service providers advocate for support beyond band aid solutions, calling on government and the private sector to address the root causes of food insecurity by implementing a minimum living wage of \$25.05 an hour and raising the rates of social assistance payments. The overarching goal of this community plan is not only to ensure food security through access to food but also to promote food sovereignty, empowering both producers and consumers to transform food systems to be more equitable, community-centered, and locally controlled.

Parkdale already boasts networks dedicated to addressing immediate food access needs, complemented by food production initiatives such as community gardens, the Parkdale Food Network,

Mutual Aid Parkdale, informal mutual aid networks, and nearby proximity to the Ontario Food Terminal for local grocers to buy fresh produce.

To build upon these strengths, Parkdale should aim to promote equitable local food systems by coordinating existing food service programs, supporting food sovereignty initiatives, expanding community gardens, addressing class and racial inequalities in the food system, and supporting local businesses. The community plan's directions call for expanding education, resources, and skill-building opportunities that promote food sovereignty, as well as expanding community spaces for growing and preparing food, including gardens and accessible community kitchens. This could include food production workshops, as well as intergenerational and intercultural knowledge exchanges on food traditions. Affordable cooking classes and food handling certification courses would support this learning. Additionally, community members can organize to demand that developers create or fund community benefits that promote food sovereignty, such community gardens or kitchen spaces.

A holistic approach is needed to address both immediate food needs and the underlying structural causes of food insecurity. By prioritizing food sovereignty and advocating for crucial income supports, we can create a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable food system that supports the health and well-being of all community members.



Zorida inside Mandala Foodstore buying tsampa after learning about it at a 150 Dunn cooking workshop led by Sonam Yangzom.