

Multi-Sectoral Perspectives on Regional Food Policy, Planning and Access to
Food: A Case Study of Waterloo Region

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

There is increasing interest in linking food system policies and land use planning practices to healthier diets and healthier communities. Little is known about the process of regional food system policy making or the impact of planning and policy decisions in shaping community food environments, including healthy retail opportunities. The Region of Waterloo's (ROW) Regional Official Plan (ROP) was adopted in 2009 and includes a progressive commitment to support the regional food system through actions to facilitate access to healthy, local food. The policies point to the multiple health, environmental, and local economic benefits of a strong and diverse regional food system and include efforts to: protect the Region's agricultural land; permit a full range of agriculture- and farm-related uses on agricultural land (to support farmer viability); provide a mix of uses, including food destinations, within close proximity to each other; permit temporary farmers' markets; and support community and rooftop gardens. The purpose of this research was to examine Waterloo Region's policy and planning environment as a case study for 'what works' with respect to potential points of intersection for improving public health goals and addressing other community priorities. This was achieved by obtaining multi-sectoral perspectives on the ROP's regional food policies, current food system planning practices at the local level, and access to food.

The objectives of this research were: (1) to examine the process of food system policy making in Waterloo Region through multi-sectoral perspectives and to identify the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers at the individual-, organizational- and system-levels; (2) to identify current planning policies and practices that affect the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail outlets; (3) to describe the role and motivation of new and existing regional food system participants, including the Region's Public Health (PH) and Planning (RP) Departments and other key food system stakeholders, in contributing to food system change; and (4) to develop a conceptual framework to illustrate the process of food system policy making and features of food system change at the regional level.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews (n=47) were conducted with regional decision makers (n=15); regional and local staff experts in public health and planning (n = 16); and regional food system stakeholders (n=16). Food system stakeholders included local food producers, retailers and distributors, and representatives from other levels of government and community interest

groups. Participants were recruited primarily through expert and snowball sampling and a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was established with academic experts and representatives from PH and RP to help guide early stages of recruitment and research. Two interview guides were used and adapted from earlier tobacco policy work in the Region. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and constructivist grounded theory methods were used to code and identify emerging themes from the data.

Key overarching themes and sub-themes related to food system policy making and food system change included: “strategic positioning” and its underlying sub-themes of “aligned agendas”; “issue framing” and “visioning” which emerged as important ways to influence and affect policy and environmental change. The significance of “local and historical context”, “partnerships”, “multi-sectoral participation” and “knowledge transfer” also contributed to an improved understanding of food system change in Waterloo Region. “Legitimacy” was noted to be a concern in the absence of an appropriate mandate to address food system issues however by engaging in “partnerships”, one’s ability to participate ‘legitimately’ in food system change improved. An important finding was that “food access” had different meanings to participants and may reflect the various lenses through which local food system concerns are viewed.

A number of key facilitators of food system policy making were identified and included: food system champions; politically astute leaders; a common issue frame; a collaborative partnership between PH and RP; external partnerships with the community; and food- and agriculture policy networks. Several key barriers to food system policy making included: new areas of practice for PH and RP staff; limited capacity to act without committed partners; inter-jurisdictional relations and tensions with municipal planners; and dominant ‘cheap food’ values. Local-level barriers affecting healthy retail access related to gaps in regional food system coordination and legislative planning support and pointed to an important disconnect between the Region’s vision for the regional food system and the current planning realities at the municipal level. Early signs of policy and environmental change to improve access to healthy food can be seen as evidence of PH’s commitment, groundwork and capacity building efforts over the past decade and their strategic alignment with other regional priorities and partners.

These findings can be used to support ongoing community planning considerations in Waterloo Region and to inform similar food policy and planning initiatives in other jurisdictions.

A G.E.N.E.R.A.T.E. Change Model was developed as an 8-Step guide for multi-sectoral collaboration and policy and environmental change at the regional level. Steps include: (1) ‘grounding the work’ (*groundwork*); (2) *engaging* multi-sectoral stakeholders; (3) *negotiating* positions and partnerships (establishing legitimacy); (4) *exchanging* knowledge (ideas and policy options); (5) *recognizing* points of intersection for policy and environmental change options; (6) *aligning* agendas, establishing a common issue frame, and setting a vision for change; (7) *transferring* expert knowledge to decision makers; and (8) *evaluating* policy and environmental change. At a time when there is mounting interest and consideration of possible food policy strategies at federal, provincial and regional-levels in Canada, findings from this research serve as an important example of how multiple cross-sectoral benefits can be achieved through coordinated and collaborative action.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AM: Area Municipalities

AMWG: Area Municipal Working Group

ARFO: Alternative Retail Food Outlet

CFSE: Community Food System Environment

FA: Waterloo Region Federation of Agriculture

FL: Foodlink Waterloo Region

FSRT: Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable

GRCA: Grand River Conservation Authority

HDPE: Health Determinants, Planning and Evaluation (Division of Waterloo Region Public Health)

OOMs: Old Order Mennonites (farming community)

OPHS: Ontario Public Health Standards

NMI: Neighbourhood Market Initiative (Public Health)

PH: Public Health Department or Public Health staff

PPS: Provincial Policy Statement

RC: Regional Council

RGMS: Regional Growth Management Strategy

ROP: Regional Official Plan

ROW: Region of Waterloo

RP: Regional Planning Department

WR: Waterloo Region

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Obesity and Diet-Related Disease

There has been significant academic and public policy attention concerning population health and disease prevention strategies at the federal, provincial and local levels in Canada and around the globe. Rates of obesity and other diet-related diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some types of cancers have risen to alarming levels among adults, and increasingly among children in both developed and developing nations. Diet-related chronic diseases are associated with poor dietary quality characterized by diets high in excess calories, saturated and trans fat, added sugars, and sodium and low in protective foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes. A substantial body of evidence clearly links healthy dietary patterns to the prevention of obesity and other chronic diseases, and strategies to promote positive changes in overall diet quality have been shown to contribute to significant improvements in population health. The social and economic costs of diet-related chronic diseases of today's adult population continue to raise significant concern among governments and health professionals. In light of the current trajectory of disease rates among children and the potential impact on future generations, there is an even greater urgency to examine broad-based, comprehensive strategies for prevention.

1.2 Population Health Strategies to Address Diet-Related Disease

It has been argued that the most effective strategies to promote population health and prevent disease include cross-sectoral and interdepartmental collaboration between actors in government, non-government organizations and the private sector. While there has been a plethora of activity among health professionals and researchers to identify and address the individual-level influences on food choices (i.e., physiological state, food preferences, nutritional knowledge, perceptions of healthy eating and psychological factors), evidence suggests that although necessary, these approaches cannot fully explain dietary behaviour (Raine, 2005), nor are they sufficient for achieving widespread gains in the nutritional health of the population. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004) and the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2005), the most promising strategies for creating population-wide improvements in eating are

environmental and policy interventions that span multiple sectors. This has resulted in a surge of public health interest and research investment into the examination of larger, upstream determinants of healthy eating.

1.3 Environmental Influences of Dietary Behaviour: A Socio-Ecological Framework

Dietary behaviour is highly complex and results from the interaction of multiple influences across different environments and settings. Experts have used an ecological approach (Stokols, 1992; Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O'Brien, & Glanz, 2008) to guide research and intervention efforts targeting healthy eating. An ecological perspective focuses on the nature of people's interactions with their physical and socio-cultural surroundings (Stokols, 1992) and can help to improve our understanding of the multiple levels of factors and various types of environmental influences that shape eating behaviour. For example, viewed through a socio-ecological framework (Appendix A), macro-environmental influences such as land use and transportation practices, food production and distribution systems, and food and agricultural policies - at global, national and local levels – determine the types of foods that are grown, processed, distributed and sold within various physical environments or settings where individuals eat or acquire food. Despite having a more distal and indirect role, these upstream influences shape the environmental context and conditions in which individuals make food-related decisions (Story, Kaphingst, Robinson-O'Brien, 2008). By exploring the impact of macro-environmental influences on opportunities for healthy food production, processing, distribution and retail activity at the community-level, it may be possible to establish more effective policy and environmental interventions to facilitate individuals' access to healthy food and ultimately, contribute to improvements in health.

As Lytle (2009) notes, ecological models make an important contribution to our understanding of dietary behaviour in that they include considerations of both the physical and social environments, and contexts, wherein individuals make decisions about food procurement and consumption. She also notes that neighbourhoods are being included in most ecological models as an important community-level context for eating behaviour (Lytle, 2009). This has contributed to a mounting body of literature examining the relationship between the availability of

community food outlets and neighbourhood characteristics in specific locations (Morland, Wing, Diez Roux & Poole, 2002; Morland, Diex Roux & Wing, 2006; Zenk, Shulz, Isreal & James, 2006).

At the community-level, urban retail settings consist of conventional food stores such as supermarkets, grocery stores and convenience stores, but also include emerging ‘alternative’ retail food outlets (ARFO) such as urban farmers’ markets, parking lot produce stands, neighbourhood produce wagons and a wide range of specialty stores (e.g., ‘healthy’ butchers, ‘health’ food stores, etc.) (Wegener & Hanning, 2010a). In some farming communities, where access to conventional food stores may be limited by geographical distance, a re-emergence of traditional and novel forms of food distribution has created a new picture of the rural food environment. Various forms of ARFOs in rural areas include large country market stores, livestock and produce auctions, community-shared agriculture (CSA) sites, U-pick fields, roadside produce stands, farm stores and a variety of farm co-operative outlets. From a health perspective, ARFOs are notable in that, unlike conventional stores, they make available a wide variety of healthy, local foods (namely, fresh produce) and restrict the sale of items intended for occasional or limited consumption (i.e., processed convenience foods) which are associated with poor dietary quality. In this way, the emergence of new forms of urban and rural food retail shapes the food environments in which individuals make dietary decisions.

In light of the absence, and potential inaccessibility of conventional food stores in some communities, ARFOs offer an important means of increasing access to healthy food (Wegener & Hanning, 2010a). Similarly, they present an opportunity to engage interested consumers in local or regional food system activity and for some, provide access to foods of greater perceived ‘value’. These food values vary among consumers and may relate to individual or community-level considerations of health, environmental sustainability, ecology or local economic development. Thus, from a health perspective, these settings influence individuals’ eating behaviour by determining which foods are available and by shaping value-based considerations related to food procurement. Importantly, a growing interest in community planning considerations, including access to healthy retail in neighbourhoods, has prompted leading health

institutions, professional associations, government agencies and funders to push for stronger collaboration across professional disciplines, public departments and the private sector as a way to promote ‘healthy’, whole communities. The concept of ARFOs and their measurement as part of community food environments is further elaborated in “Concepts and Measures of ‘Alternative’ Retail Food Outlets: Considerations for Facilitating Access to Healthy, Local Food” in Appendix B.

1.4 Promoting Healthy Community Food Environments: Considerations for Community Planning and Local Food Systems

There is a public health imperative to reduce the rates of obesity and diet-related diseases and to promote healthy nutrition environments – that is, environments which facilitate healthy choices by increasing the availability and accessibility of healthy food (Story et al., 2008). This has led to a stronger research focus on the associations between healthy retail food outlets and individuals’ dietary behaviours and food choices. From a public health and policy perspective, various forms of conventional and alternative healthy food stores are being regarded with interest, particularly for their potential to promote healthy dietary patterns and facilitate access to healthy food.

1.4.1 Conventional Food Distribution and Healthy Retail Access

Studies show that neighbourhood residents with better access to supermarkets, particularly those offering greater variety and better economic value relative to convenience stores, tend to have healthier diets (Cheadle, Psaty, Curry, Wagner, Diehr et al., 1999; Laraia, Siega-Riz, Kaufman & Jones, 2004; Morland et al., 2002). However, site location decisions made by large supermarket chain operators are often influenced by municipal property taxes and revenue potential. This has led to a growing trend to establish supermarkets outside of city centres (i.e., in areas with lower taxes) and near middle-to-high income suburban areas (Hawkes, 2008). These trends, which affect the closure of small, independent food stores in central locations in favour of large chain stores, or Super Centres, in suburban areas, have been linked to the creation of ‘food deserts’ or

neighbourhoods with little or no access to the foods needed to maintain a healthy diet (Bitler & Haider, 2009).

While multi-national food corporations play an important role in these changes, it is probable that municipal policies and land use practices further impact opportunities for healthy retail access, particularly for people living in rural areas, the downtown core or lower-income neighbourhoods. As such, access to healthy food through supermarkets, grocery stores and other forms of conventional retail outlets may be adversely affected by the community planning process when their establishment and promotion is limited by zoning regulations, competition restrictions or licensing barriers.

1.4.2 'Alternative' Food Distribution and Healthy Retail Access

Alongside supermarkets and grocery stores, 'alternative' retail food outlets (ARFOs) are also an important source of health-promoting food. ARFOs are defined by Wegener & Hanning (2010a) as unconventional forms of local food distribution and retail that are emerging, and becoming increasingly popular in communities. ARFOs include urban farmers' markets, on-farm stores (e.g., country markets), specialty stores (e.g. the 'healthy' butcher), farm stands, community gardens, neighbourhood buying clubs and wholesale produce auctions and are an important source of healthy, local food in communities. Steady declines in farm income over the late part of the 20th century are an important driving factor in the more recent development and increased popularity of ARFOs. In part, new forms of local retail reflect consumer interest and demand but also illustrate producers' attempts to capture a greater share of the retail food dollar through direct consumer sales.

The uniqueness of these developments can be understood in the context of alternative food systems, or 'alternative food networks' (AFN), terms used broadly to cover newly emerging groups of producers, consumers, and other actors that represent alternatives to the more standardized, or 'conventional' industrial mode of food supply (Murdoch, 2000). A food system is comprised of all the entities and activities related to the supply of food, including agricultural production, food processing, distribution, retail and consumption (American Dietetic

Association, 2007). As Jarosz (2008) notes, in global terms, the conventional food system is characterized by substantial distances between points of production and consumption and by a lack of environmental sustainability due to heavy reliance on oil in production and transport. In contrast, the emphasis of ‘alternative’ or *local* food systems is on promoting opportunities for regional food system stakeholders (including producers, distributors, retailers and consumers) to participate locally as change agents by advocating for the use of environmentally sustainable methods; minimizing waste and overconsumption of fossil fuel; and addressing the food-related needs of *all* residents in the community (Raja, Born, Kozlowski Russel, 2008). Thus, local food distribution and retail activity through ARFOs can be seen as a critical feature of the local food system.

1.4.3 Consumer Values and Community Planning Considerations to Promote Local Food Systems

There has also been an important shift in consumers’ interest in the production and distribution of food. This shift has been fuelled, in part, by the emergence of a growing “food elite”, which as Holloway and Kneafsey (2000) note, consists of increasingly knowledgeable consumers seeking food products which can be bought direct from producers, or at least traced to their origin. Although growing, this expanding group of consumers is concerned about the farming practices through which food is produced, the processing which food is subjected to, and the health and safety aspects of food (Cook and Crang, 1996). In this way, consumer demand plays an important role in driving community planning considerations to promote local food distribution and retail activity. Thus, combined with community considerations and initiatives to improve geographical access to supermarkets and grocery stores, a more comprehensive planning strategy to promote healthy communities and facilitate healthy retail access should also include opportunities to establish and expand ARFOs.

Specifically, an assessment of the community factors related to the location, promotion and establishment of ARFOs is a critical area of investigation and may help to overcome some of the barriers to increasing healthy food access through conventional retail. Policy and planning

considerations that encourage the establishment of farmers' markets, mobile produce stands or farm specialty shops in harder-to-serve urban areas and low-income areas, particularly where conventional stores are absent, could help to overcome the physical access barriers faced by some individuals and groups. Further investment and support from local and regional governments into *local food systems* could also help to strengthen the local food economy, especially when the process involves participation from committed local producers, independent retailers and consumers. Yet in order to understand how best to facilitate access to healthy food and inform these types of policy and planning decisions, an appropriate assessment of the various policies and practices affecting local food production, distribution and the establishment of ARFOs and other forms of healthy retail is needed.

1.5 Setting the Stage for Environmental and Policy Responses to Promote Local Food System Activity and Healthy Retail Access: Finding Points of Intersection

In 2009, the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research released an influential and timely report outlining specific policies and action for cancer prevention related to food, nutrition and physical activity (WCRF/AICR, 2009). The report identified the role of governments and professional groups in combating obesity and other chronic diseases associated with excess weight and poor diet. Relevant to the current discussion, the Report urged governments to “examine, audit, and revise legislation and regulations so that they protect public health and prevent disease” and “to ensure that built and external environments are designed and maintained in ways that facilitate healthy (eating) behaviour”. What is more, governments were urged to “encourage safe, nutrient-dense, and relatively unprocessed foods and drinks and discourage...fast and other processed foods” (WCRF/AICR, 2009).

Based on this report, the necessary response to rising rates of diet-related disease is unmistakable in that the recommendations clearly signal the interdisciplinary nature of the types of interventions that are needed to have an impact on population health and disease prevention. Specifically, with regard to improving the retail food environment, concerted action between local governments, planning officials and health professionals, along with key players in the food

industry, is underscored as an important strategy to establishing and promoting opportunities for healthy food access. Although local food system activity is not explicitly addressed in the report, the establishment of various forms ARFOs within walking distance from places where residents live and work can help promote healthy weights by providing opportunities for physical activity and recreation. Similarly, ARFOs can be seen as a valuable community response by making healthier choices easier through increased access to fresh, seasonally-available local produce and limiting the sale of energy-dense, processed foods and beverages.

The above recommendations can be seen as important considerations for community reform to promote a healthy community food environment, facilitate local food system activity and support opportunities for healthy retail. Yet, in order to move forward with the types of environmental and policy interventions to improve health, there remains critical policy and practice gaps in our understanding of the roles and motivations of key actors, and necessary resource investments to promote regional or local food system activity. In addition, it is unclear how current policies and planning practices at the local level affect opportunities for healthy retail. In light of the interdisciplinary nature of the recommendations above, there is also an urgent need to examine multi-sectoral perspectives on how to leverage food systems change as a strategy, not only to promote health, but also to achieve other community goals and priorities.

In this way, by identifying potential points of intersection - that is, factors that motivate key players to engage in community planning and policy considerations to promote local food system change – it may be possible to obtain relevant insight into broader multi-sectoral interests regarding food system policy making. Specifically, planners may be motivated to align ‘smart’ land use planning considerations with the goal to increase healthy retail access if this creates opportunities to support the local economy and/or encourages a transit-oriented community. Similarly, local decision makers may be keen to expand local food production opportunities in rural communities if this results in greater agri-tourism potential and/or strengthens the local food industry. Thus, while insight into the potential points of intersection could help to address important knowledge gaps regarding the process of food systems change, it could also contribute to a number of lasting improvements in the community when combined with interest and a commitment from local or regional governments.

1.5.1 Community Planning to Promote Regional and Local Food Systems: An Emerging Area of Research for Professional Planners

Urban design considerations regarding the location and establishment of food stores are not new to the planning profession. However, local food systems and community food access issues have only recently surfaced as relevant concerns among planners. Driven by a regard for community food security, a seminal research paper in 2000 described the results of a survey of senior-level American planners in 22 city planning agencies regarding their views on food system issues (Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 2000). Despite claims that planning is a comprehensive discipline in its consideration of the basic necessities of life - including air, water, food and shelter - the findings showed that very few planners considered food systems issues and only 38% agreed that planners should be “more involved in food system planning in the future”. Food was found to be left out of planning practices based on the following: it is driven primarily by the private market; food is not planners’ turf; food is largely a rural concern; and there are limited funds for food-related planning (Pothukuchi et al., 2000).

Since this seminal study, there has been a renewed interest in food systems issues within the planning profession. Specifically, in 2004-2005, there were first-time special issues devoted entirely to food system planning in academic and professional practice journals (Kaufman, 2009). Topics included community planning to facilitate: equitable food distribution through supermarket access; farm-to-school programs; local agriculture initiatives; and community gardening as well as emerging food system planning issues including: scale versus accessibility of grocery stores; conflict in planning for community food systems; food justice; mobility strategies for accessing food, and strategic collaboration among food system advocates. As a further sign of changing attitudes and practice considerations among planners, the first ever special issues track on food-related topics was held in 2005 at the American Planning Association (APA) National Planning Conference, and due to an overwhelming response, a follow-up track of sessions was included again at the 2006 conference (APA, 2007). Subsequently, a white paper on food system planning was prepared by a newly established Food Systems Steering Committee of the APA and became the impetus behind the APA’s Policy

Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning (APA, 2007), followed by a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report entitled ‘A Planner’s Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning: Transforming Food Environments, Facilitating Healthy Eating’ released in 2008 (Raja et al., 2008). The APA Policy Guide has been recognized as the “most significant indication of acceptance” of food system planning into the planning field (Kaufman, 2009) in that it provides a vision for food system planning and a way to engage planners in food system-related planning activities. The PAS Report provides specific examples of successful food planning initiatives across the United States (US) to illustrate how planners, and other food system advocates can positively shape food environments and facilitate healthy eating. Among a number of cited US examples, the Region of Waterloo Public Health Department, (Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada) was recognized for their early and progressive work in establishing a healthy community food systems plan (Mann Miedema & Pigott, 2007).

While there are fewer developments in food planning policy in Canada, two Canadian accomplishments in the area of food systems include special sessions at both the 2008 and 2009 Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) conferences and a special issue of a professional planning journal devoted to food security as a growing concern for the planning profession (Plan Canada, 2009). These developments, while positive, suggest a lag in Canadian food system planning relative to American counterparts and highlight important areas where the planning profession could play a stronger leadership role in addressing food system issues.

Raja et al., (2008) conducted a more recent nationwide survey in the United States to assess APA members’ roles in promoting healthy eating through planning as a follow-up study to the earlier work of Pothukuchi et al., (2000). The findings revealed that planners’ priorities concerning food system issues had evolved and that planning for farmland preservation now ranked highest in terms of preferences for planning involvement (in the earlier study, only three of the 22 agencies had reported any involvement), followed by promoting food access through public transportation, and planning mixed-use development to include food destinations. The findings also illustrated that while a decade earlier only 27% of the agencies surveyed reported addressing food system issues in comprehensive plans (“official plans” in Canada), over 70% of respondents

now believed that policy development and the inclusion of community and regional food issues in official plans should be an area where planners should be significantly involved. Overall, these trends are positive from both a US and Canadian planning perspective and suggest that, with respect to potential points of intersection, the preservation of farmland and the establishment of food stores as part of mixed-use development may be important driving factors for planners to participate in local food system planning activity.

However, while the findings from these surveys illustrate an important shift in planners' priorities with respect to food system planning, there remains a gap in the literature with respect to the various factors that influence the policy development process and impact if, or *how*, food system planning gets on to the political agenda. In Canada, official plans establish a 20-30 year blueprint for future community growth and act as a guide for local land use decisions in a given municipality. They consist of a series of mandatory elements (mandated by the Province) with the option of further voluntary components to meet specific needs of the community not addressed in the mandatory elements (Public Health Law & Policy, 2009). Thus, it is also not known which factors contribute to decisions by local governments to support food systems planning, or under what conditions policy planners include food system planning as a voluntary element in official plans. More research is needed to explore these considerations for food system policy and planning at regional and local levels.

1.5.2 Local Food System Advocacy: An Emerging Area of Research and Practice for Public Health Professionals

Important tenets of public health practice and health promotion are to build healthy public policy and to create supportive environments. Health promotion policy requires the identification of obstacles to the adoption of healthy public policies in non-health sectors, and ways of removing those obstacles (Health and Welfare Canada, 1986). Public health professionals are motivated to influence and realign land use planning policies, or official plans, so that there is a legislative framework to facilitate opportunities for the location, promotion and establishment of ARFOs (Wegener & Hanning, 2010a) and other forms of healthy retail. Where planners have been slow to act on food systems issues, public health professionals have developed their own plans to

promote a healthy community food system (Mann Miedema & Pigott, 2007). However, in contrast to the policy power of legislative frameworks, these lack planning authority and have little influence on zoning and other land use decisions to facilitate food access.

Public health professionals, including researchers, practitioners, and health policy officials are increasingly interested in local food systems as a way to overcome barriers in access to healthy food, particularly among vulnerable low-income and ethnic minority populations. Public health interest in food systems stemmed from research and practice related to food insecurity. As research evolved and community food advocates and health professionals recognized the importance of environmental determinants of health, a broader view of food security emerged and the emphasis shifted to community food security. Community food security is defined as a situation in which *all* community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (Hamm & Bellows, 2003). In line with planners' increasing regard for local food system activity, public health professionals also began to consider their role in promoting and advocating for a sustainable food system - that is, a system in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated, and related practices are socially just and accessible, and support the development of local communities and economies (Harmon, 2005).

In April 2009, the Airlie Conference on "Food Systems and Public Health: Linkages to Achieve Healthier Diets and Healthier Communities" was convened with 100 principal experts in health, nutrition, obesity, sustainable agriculture, economics, business, marketing and public policy (Story, Hamm, & Wallinga, 2009). The conference was a follow-up to an earlier milestone event in 2007, the Wingspread Conference on Childhood Obesity, Healthy Eating and Agriculture Policy, which addressed the impact of federal agricultural and food policies on public health, nutrition and obesity and considered opportunities to realign agricultural policies with public health goals. Briefly, the purpose of the Airlie Conference was to explore "critical but unanswered questions" related to: 1) the appropriate action and advocacy approaches necessary to "shift toward the promotion of healthy, sustainably produced foods that are as locally sourced as feasible and that are aligned with national dietary and health priorities"; 2) the appropriate

action and advocacy approaches to “ensure a just food supply in which every community has easy access to an affordable, healthy, and more localized food supply”; 3) the identification of “the most strategic changes in policy, governance, and practices that can help this shift occur”; and 4) the identification of “knowledge gaps” and “policy relevant research needs”.

Professional policy and practice efforts to identify and address the linkages between food systems and public health are critical steps to achieving healthier diets and healthier communities. In addition, multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary collaboration as a way to examine the potential points of intersection and policy options for advancing public health and sustainable food systems goals is also a significant early achievement. There has been recent attention on the need for systems thinking (Best, 2007) as a way to address complex food systems concerns. Specifically, according to Best (2007) there are multiple inputs and outputs of food systems, and health and other outcomes must surface as a whole rather than from a focus on any individual part of that system. Thus, research aimed at understanding policy options for food system planning and zoning reform is needed as an important part of a systems approach.

This review has provided the context for food system planning as a potential policy option to create healthier community food environments through opportunities for healthy retail. Greater community planning considerations for the location, promotion and establishment of ARFOs and other forms of healthy retail can help to achieve healthier diets and reduce the impact of diet-related disease while at the same time advancing other community priorities and interests. As mentioned, it is not known which factors contribute to decisions by local governments to support food systems planning, or under what conditions policy planners include food system planning as a voluntary element in official plans. As research and action in this area continues to emerge, the challenges from a health perspective remain clear: that while changes in macro-environmental and policy influences have the potential to significantly impact dietary quality at the population level through improvements in healthy retail, the leverage points for change are largely outside the control and traditional scope of public health practice. What is more, the complexity of the types of strategies and innovations that are needed to address obesity and other diet-related diseases through environmental changes (i.e., the creation of healthy food environments) in

various community settings require far greater resources and capacities than those available from any one sector. Thus, there is a need for multi-sectoral action. Research that examines multi-sectoral perspectives of the facilitators and barriers of food system policy making at the community-level may help to advance such coordinated action.

1.6 A Case Study of Regional Food System Policy-Making in Waterloo Region: Study Background and Context

The project described herein involves a natural experiment in Waterloo Region (Ontario, Canada) consisting of a timely, and progressive policy and planning development. In 2004, in accordance with the provisions of the Planning Act, the Region of Waterloo's (ROW) Planning, Housing and Community Services Department, Community Planning Division (henceforth referred to as the Regional Planning Department, or RP) underwent a review process to prepare and update their regional official plan (ROP). The ROP is a provincially mandated legal document that contains goals, objectives and policies to manage and direct land use change and its effects on the cultural, social, economic and natural environment of a municipality. In Ontario, it is a product shaped by emerging regional and community needs and interests but also incorporates the broad policy and regulatory framework established by the Province of Ontario (e.g., the Provincial Policy Statement and the Growth Plan) (www.waterloo.region.on.ca). As part of a lengthy public consultation and review process, policy planners in RP forecast the various global, national and local changes that affect regional and area land use and develop policies and planning actions to direct activity in these areas.

In June 2009, a final draft of the ROP was adopted by Regional Council and submitted to the Province as a blueprint for practical and balanced regional growth for the next twenty years (www.region.waterloo.on.ca/newrop). For the first time, RP included a brief section on food system planning in the ROP along with a number of "softer" land use planning considerations to improve the liveability of Waterloo Region (i.e., housing, energy conservation, air quality and cultural heritage). Following a short preamble outlining the Region's intentions and commitment to support the regional food system, Section 3F includes a series of food system planning policies and actions that target food- and agriculture-related activity at the regional and local level (Section 3F appears in its entirety in Appendix C). The next section describes the

importance of the Region's actions from a policy, planning and public health perspective, and is followed by a detailed description of the current research.

1.6.1 The Region of Waterloo: Current Directions in Regional Food Policy, Planning and Access to Food

Importantly, the Region of Waterloo (ROW) is one of the first regional municipalities in Canada to include and adopt food system planning considerations in an official plan. The inclusion of food policy and planning actions can be seen, in part, as a reflection of the long-range planning activities of RP's Strategic Policy Group but is also an outcome of intentional and strategic food advocacy activity by the Region of Waterloo's Public Health Department (henceforth referred to as Public Health, or PH) and committed food system stakeholders.

In particular, PH should be recognized for the advancement of early food systems thinking in Waterloo Region. In 1999, the Health Determinants, Planning and Evaluation (HDPE) Division was created as a unique response to the need to address the social determinants of health. Food security became one of the early key focus areas of the Division and staff worked on a number of projects and activities that addressed issues affecting hunger in Waterloo Region. From 2002, the Division conducted and commissioned a series of "food studies" and reports with topics ranging from: food and the regional economy; food and the environment; food access; food and rural health; food and nutritional health status; and food and the built environment (Appendix D includes a complete bibliography of these studies). As the magnitude of the problem became clearer, the Division's focus shifted to include a broader food *systems* approach to addressing food access and food systems thinking came to the front, eventually culminating in the previously mentioned 'Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region' (Mann Miedema et al., 2007) which received international attention in the APA's Public Advisory Service Report (PAS).

Section 3F includes a series of policies and planning actions to strengthen the regional food system by facilitating access to locally grown and other healthy foods. Yet, to fully implement the policies and considerations outlined in the ROP, local planners within the Region's seven Area Municipalities (AMs) will need to consider the ways in which current policies and planning

practices affect opportunities for local food system production, processing, distribution and retail at the local level. It is likely that the outcomes of these considerations, and subsequent actions, will not only improve the opportunities for healthy retail access but may also address the economic and environmental concerns that affect the health of communities. Thus, from a policy and planning perspective, in light of early direction and unique actions towards the inclusion of food system planning policies in the ROP, other Canadian municipalities may be keen to follow the Region of Waterloo's progress in this area.

1.6.2 The Region of Waterloo's Food System Considerations: Relevance to Public Health and Access to Food

From a public health perspective, regional consideration of food access and food system issues in the ROP is significant in that it recognizes that multiple health, environmental, ecological and economic benefits can be achieved by contributing to the development of a strong regional food system. In Section 3F, the ROP outlines a series of key actions and policies that aim to facilitate residents' access to locally-grown and other healthy foods. Of particular interest to this research were the aspects of Section 3F that have the potential to improve public health by increasing consumer access to 'healthy' retail options including food destinations within walking distance (Section 3.F.1c), temporary farmers' markets (Section 3.F.2.), and "agricultural-uses", "farm-related uses" and "secondary uses" (Section 3.F.1b) which can include: on-farm stores, wholesale distribution sites, and produce stands in agricultural areas. These land 'uses' serve as important opportunities to improve access to healthy food for residents of Waterloo Region and have important public health implications. In light of the need for broad, multi-sectoral action to achieve a "strong and diverse" regional food system (and other community goals), of interest was also Section 3F's proposed plan to collaborate with stakeholders (3.F.5) and support for food system planning (policy activity) as a means of improving the regional food system (3.F.6).

Sections 3.F.3 and 3.F.4 outline regional and municipal actions and supports to accommodate community and rooftop gardens as a means of improving access to healthy, local food. Despite important policy and planning considerations involved in granting access to land and providing

government resources and in-kind support, these forms of urban agriculture were not included as a main focus of this research in that they are not associated with ‘retail’ options or with an observable store or structure that can be located among other retail outlets as part of the community food environment.

The food policies and planning actions presented in Section 3F are novel considerations within a land use planning framework and their relevance and implementation potential have yet to be determined at the local level. Once the Region’s policies and planning actions are interpreted, shaped and integrated into the municipal planning frameworks, there is potential to improve the nutritional health of the population by facilitating access to healthy, local food. It is also reasonable to assume that there will be wider environmental, ecological and economic benefits within the Region than can also result in improvements in community health. For example, improved neighbourhood access to healthy food could help to improve opportunities for local food distribution and retail while at the same time encouraging residents to consume healthy food without having to drive. Therefore, the inclusion of Section 3F in the ROP is a significant and progressive accomplishment from many perspectives, but particularly from a public health and environmental sustainability standpoint. It marks the Region of Waterloo as an innovative leader in its integration of principles for a sustainable food system within the community planning process. The recent approval of the ROP by the Province of Ontario in January 2010 offers a timely opportunity to examine the ROW’s policy and planning environment as a case study for regional food system policy making and food system change.

CHAPTER 2: PURPOSE, AIMS, RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore a unique and timely example of food system policy making in Waterloo Region as a potential point of intersection for improving public health goals and achieving other community priorities. Similarly, the research would address important knowledge gaps regarding the process of food system policy making, and the impact of planning and policy decisions in shaping community food environments, including healthy retail opportunities. A goal of the research was to support ongoing community planning considerations in Waterloo Region and to inform similar food policy and planning initiatives in other jurisdictions through practical and theoretical insight from this study.

2.2 Study Aims

There were a number of general aims of this exploratory research. First, by taking advantage of a natural experiment in Waterloo Region, the primary aim was to describe the process of food system policy making through an in-depth qualitative assessment of multi-sectoral perspectives of the policy and planning environment. Specifically, the intent was to identify the various contextual factors, facilitators and barriers in addressing food access in general, and food policy in particular and to explore *the role of evidence* in informing the Region's policy options. In public health discourses, 'food access' often refers to physical and/or economic access to food. In this context, food access was not explicitly defined so that study participants could describe food access as they understood it.

Secondly, the aim was to identify policies and practices at the local level that may inadvertently affect opportunities for healthy retail access in the Region. While the adoption of food policy considerations as part of the ROP is significant in that it presents an important vision for the regional food system, the goal was to better understand the current planning reality at the local level prior to any implementation activity from the ROP. Insight into potential barriers to food system change could shed light on the ways in which policies and planning practices shape the community food environment by hindering or promoting local food production, processing, and

distribution activity as integral parts of the regional food system and important influences of healthy, local food retail. In this study, ‘healthy local food retail’ includes the places where healthy, fresh produce (and other relatively unprocessed whole foods) is purchased by consumers (or other retailers) for at-home preparation, processing and/or consumption.

A final aim of this research was to describe the various roles and motivations of government and community actors in addressing and advocating for food policy and food access in the Region. Importantly, through extensive data collection and detailed in-depth qualitative analysis, key themes relating to food system activity in Waterloo Region can be used to build a theoretical framework for future research and practice in this area.

2.3 Rationale

A population health approach to disease prevention attempts to shift the entire population’s dietary behaviours by making healthier choices easier for everyone in the community. Thus, this research case study can help to further explore planning and policy implications of ARFOs as a means to improve the healthy food environment. Temporary farmers’ markets, produce stands, on-farm stores and other new and emerging forms of healthy retail are important features of the community food environment and can support public health goals to improve food access. Specifically, Desjardins (2010) found that access to a neighbourhood buying club increased residents’ diet quality.

Public health professionals and community advocates have an important role to play in informing food policy and planning decisions. The findings from this research can be used to inform decision makers and planning authorities about the multiple community benefits that can be achieved through healthy public policy making and cross-sectoral collaboration. Similarly, the research can draw attention to priority areas for food policy reform and serve as evidence for future planning and food policy action in Waterloo Region and in other jurisdictions.

2.4 Relevance and Implications

The proposed research is timely in that it aims to assess the current policy and planning environment prior to the implementation of any new actions resulting from the ROP. In this regard, the research contributes a baseline ‘snapshot’, or pre-intervention (i.e., pre-policy)

measure of healthy, local food retail opportunities in the community food environment as shaped by current policies and planning practices. After its adoption by the Province, AMs have one year to bring their official plans in to conformity with the ROP. At the time of this research, AMs are beginning to consider how the ROP's Section 3F can be implemented at the local level. Thus, the baseline data collected as part of this research will serve to answer an important question concerning '*What works and what doesn't?*' with respect to the transfer of regional food policy ideas and planning directives to AMs. Specifically, interviews with regional decision makers, staff experts in Regional Planning (RP), Public Health (PH), local planners, and key food system stakeholders will explore the intended and unintended ways in which current policy and planning practices impact both regional and local-level food environments and help to address important policy and planning gaps in the literature. The research objectives of this study are described as follows:

2.5 Study Objectives

1. To examine the process of food system policy making in Waterloo Region through multi-sectoral perspectives and to identify the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers at the individual-, organizational- and system-levels.
2. To identify current planning policies and practices that affect the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail outlets and to examine opportunities to improve the regional community food environment in Waterloo Region.
3. To describe the role and motivation of new and existing regional food system actors and community participants, including the Region's Public Health and Planning Departments and other key food system stakeholders, in food system change.
4. To develop a conceptual framework to illustrate the process of food policy making and features of food system change at the regional level.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

The following qualitative research is presented based on three main areas of exploration and analysis pertaining to the thesis objectives outlined in Chapter 2. The objectives have been organized according to their relevance to policy (objective 1); planning (objective 2) and public health practice (objective 3). The development of a conceptual framework (objective 4) is an effort to capture important theoretical considerations for further academic study and future community-based research on food system policy and planning. Data collection was initiated in October 2009 upon approval from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics.

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

There are many reasons for choosing to do qualitative research. Of these, as Corbin & Strauss (2008) note, is the advantage of observing the world through the eyes of informants, and making observations and discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge. An important factor leading to the selection of qualitative research methods for the current study was the ability to obtain rich detail on the policy and planning environment in Waterloo Region through critical perspectives of key policy, planning and public health experts as described in their own words. As noted by Creswell (1998), categories emerge from participants and present rich "context-bound" information that can be analyzed for patterns and theories to help explain, or better understand a phenomenon. Viewed through a symbolic interactionist lens, or theoretical perspective, this approach makes it possible to capture and examine the meanings that multi-sectoral participants use to articulate their experiences and interaction with the local food system, particularly as the current system evolves through policies and actions outlined in the ROP. Conceptually, grounded theory (GT) is rooted in pragmatist and symbolic interactionist philosophical traditions (Charmaz, 2006). A GT approach provides a frame for the qualitative inquiry in that methods (strategies and techniques) can be used to help direct attention and provide a framework for interpreting the data on participants' observations and experiences.

3.1.1 Grounded Theory Approach

According to Glaser (1992), GT methods are not necessarily a collection of strategies, but a way of thinking about the data. Specifically, he described GT as “processes of conceptualization”, or “a way of theorizing from data so that the end result is a theory that the researcher produces from data collected by interviewing and observing everyday life” (Glaser, 1992). GT methods informed the strategies for collecting and analyzing data obtained from this research study. Based on their emphasis on exploration and theory generation, the methods lend well to an in-depth investigation of food systems as an emerging area of policy research. This was particularly important because it was not yet known how policy actors and key stakeholders would become engaged in local food system policy activity or further, how the process of regional food system change would unfold. As (Charmaz, 2006) notes, many studies that report using GT methodology “are often prompted by quite general research interests at the outset”. As noted previously, the Region of Waterloo is one of the first regional municipalities to adopt food system policy considerations in an official plan and thus, the research aims were naturally quite exploratory for this under-investigated policy area with potentially significant implications for dietary health.

Contemporary versions of GT recognize the influence and contribution of the researcher to theory construction (Charmaz, 2006). Specifically, GT methods draw attention to the ways in which the researcher experiences and interprets the data obtained from participants based on his/her own experiences and biases. In this way, according to Charmaz (2006), the process of reflexivity is a critical feature of using modern GT approaches in exploratory and theory-generating research.

3.1.1.1 Constructivist Grounded Theory

In contrast to Glaser & Strauss’s (1967) classic GT idea that theory “emerges from the data”, Charmaz’s (2006) constructivist view argues that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are described by research participants who are trying to explain or make sense out of their experiences, both to the researcher and to themselves. According to

Charmaz, constructivist GT: assumes a relativist epistemology¹; sees knowledge as socially produced; acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorists; and takes a reflexive stance toward the researcher's actions, situations, and participants in the field setting – and the analytical constructions of them (Charmaz, 2006). Out of these multiple constructions, researchers 'construct' something that they call knowledge.

Constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it (Schawndt, 1994). Constructivist GT reflects its pragmatist roots and relativist epistemology by assuming multiple realities, and multiple perspectives on these realities. As Charmaz (2006) notes, "data are not separate from either the viewer or the viewed. Instead, they are mutually constructed through interaction". Other contemporary authors prefer constructivist GT (or a constructivist revision of GT) over earlier approaches because it "captures more nearly its characteristic combination of systematic rigour in analysis with the essential creative and dynamic character of the interpretative research process." (Pidgeon & Henwood, 2004).

According to Charmaz (2006), researchers construct research processes and products but these constructions occur under preexisting structural conditions, arise in emergent situations, and are influenced by the researcher's perspectives, privileges, positions, interactions, and geographical locations. She notes that the role of the researcher in the research situation often remains unmentioned or completely ignored, including which observations are made, how they are made, and the views that are formed of them based on these conditions and our grounded theories. Using constructivist GT methods makes it possible to pay close attention to language and look at "taken-for-granted properties" and key words and the meanings on which these terms rest (Charmaz, 2006). For example, in this case, constructivist GT methods might help to examine the assumptions underlying conventional or 'alternative' food system activities across research participants and whether a global or local system is more highly valued over the other. Further, an investigation into multi-sectoral perspectives of "food access" and food system planning in Waterloo Region would allow for the exploration of the meaning of food access across sectors

¹ A view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them

through participant perspectives, and how this meaning shapes their actions and considerations for food policy making.

3.1.1.2 Reflexive Disclosure

I chose to use constructivist GT for the current investigation as a way to explore and generate theory in a new and emerging area of practice and research. First, it is important for me to acknowledge my biases and unique perspectives which have been shaped by personal experiences as a registered dietitian, health researcher and daughter of a recent hobby farmer. At the time I was initiating the current research project, my father had purchased a farm in southern Ontario. He was considering sustainable agricultural practices for food production, and we discussed the challenges of local food production, zoning and land use planning, and regional food system activity at great lengths. Personal interests were complemented by similar academic research pursuits over the past decade which included examinations into the various ways that governments: improve individuals' understanding of national dietary advice (Wegener & Sheeshka, 2005); support joined-up policy efforts between agriculture and health sectors at the federal level (Wegener, 2008); and address food security through planning considerations (Wegener, 2009). This work shaped my understanding of food-related problems and influenced my thinking on the types of interventions and collaborative actions that are necessary for dietary improvements at the population level. Lastly, it is also important that I acknowledge that, while my intent was to investigate meanings and processes around food system planning, I have no formal education in urban or rural planning and needed to depend on the expert perspectives of the participants in this study.

3.1.2 Case Study Design

A case study is an empirical inquiry where the researcher explores a contemporary phenomenon (bounded by time and activity), collects detailed information using a number of data collection procedures, and investigates the phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995). This study was proposed in July 2009, following the release of the Region of Waterloo's Council-Adopted Regional Official Plan (ROP) in June 2009. The Council-Adopted version of the ROP was the culmination of five years of consultation, review and writing activity lead by the Region's Planning Department (RP). This case study examined the five years of food system

policy making activity between 2004 and 2009 but was open to exploring relevant historical factors that may have contributed to early food policy ideas in Waterloo Region prior to the ROP review.

The current research helps to illuminate specific factors among policy actors and key stakeholders that played into the *decisions* to incorporate, and eventually adopt, food system policies and planning actions as part of the ROP. It should be noted that Waterloo Region wasn't 'selected' as an appropriate case location. This research took advantage of an opportunity to examine a natural experiment as it unfolded. Similarly, while the historical and ROP policy making context were important focal points of the study's research questions, the Region was not 'chosen' for these factors ahead of time but rather it was acknowledged prior to initiating this research that there were unique pre-existing features related to regional governance and the Region's natural and community-based resources that offered an interesting case study for food systems investigation.

3.1.3 Community-Engaged Scholarship

The idea of "engaged scholarship" was first described by Ernest Boyer in 1996 (Boyer, 1996) as a way to redefine academic/scholarly work from the application of academic expertise to community engaged scholarship (the latter of which includes a reciprocal partnership between the researcher(s) and the community). Boyer (1996) defines engaged scholarship as the "collaboration between academics and individuals outside the academy" and can include professional 'experts' and other members of the global, national, regional and local community. An important goal of this research was to ensure that the objectives (and subsequent findings) offered practical and relevant insight for future policy and practice considerations by regional staff and decision makers, and further, that other jurisdictions could benefit from an investigation into food system policy making in Waterloo Region.

3.1.3.1 Project Advisory Committee

To increase the likelihood that the substantive and theoretical findings of this research would be meaningful within, and outside Waterloo Region, a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) was established at the outset of this investigation. The PAC was comprised of members of the

academic community, as well as regional planning and public health experts from Waterloo Region. Critical insight into food policy, sustainable agriculture, and environmental influences of dietary behaviour was obtained, in addition to relevant regional insight into policy and planning considerations and key community stakeholders. Including the principal investigator (PI), there were six members in total. An initial meeting with the PAC (held in September 2009) was used to engage project members in the research process by requesting feedback and suggestions concerning: the direction of the proposed research; potential key informants; and draft interview guide and probes (Appendix E). The aim of the PAC was to draw on members' expertise and insight and to ensure that the research would have value to those working to implement policy and planning decisions within and outside of the Region.

3.2 Grounded Theory Data Collection Methods: Strategies and Techniques

This study used various forms of qualitative GT methods of data collection including semi-structured interviewing, document review and observational site visits. The PI's interpretations of the data in the form of concepts and questions guided each step of the data collection and analysis process.

3.2.1 In-Depth, Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

The primary form of data collection was semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key research informants in Waterloo Region. Intensive interviewing provided an open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which study informants had substantial experience, and in most cases, a great deal of insight (Charmaz, 2006). The goal of the interviews was to obtain a breadth of multi-sectoral perspectives concerning the inclusion of food policies in the ROP, related food system activity in the Region, and concerns about food policy implementation at the local level. Specifically, key questions were aimed at understanding informants' roles (i.e., involvement in policy formulation, decision making, advocacy, etc.) and overall contribution to food system planning consideration in the Region. Key focus areas also included participants' perspectives on the current policies and planning practices that were seen to affect the location, promotion and accessibility of healthy food retail in Waterloo Region. However, in light of the exploratory nature of the interviews and the anticipated level of expertise and experience of study participants, every effort was made by the PI to pursue leads by remaining flexible and

allowing unanticipated ideas and issues to emerge. Glaser (1992) argues strongly for this initial type of “generalist position” when defending the logic of GT methods. As he sees it, “the research question in a GT study is not a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied. The problem emerges and questions regarding the problem emerge...[and] out of open coding, collection by theoretical sampling, and analyzing by constant comparison, emerge the focus of the research (Glaser, 1992). Thus, for the purposes of this study, the interviews were guided by the overall aim to explore participants’ perspectives of Section 3F in general, and the process through which these policies and practices were formulated and adopted in particular, while remaining open to other guiding issues that arose during the interviews.

All interviews were carried out by the PI, audio-recorded with a digital voice recorder, and guided by 1 of 2 interview guides (described below). Interview questions consisted of open-ended questions and relevant probes to guide discussion. Informants were given the option of a phone or in-person interview at a convenient location of their choosing. Personal notes were made during the interviews, as appropriate, to record relevant details, identify future probes, and assist with data analysis.

The interview guides for this research were adapted by the PI with permission from University of Waterloo researchers who developed them for their work on the role of issue framing in the environmental tobacco smoke bylaw development process in the Region of Waterloo (Campbell, Burt, Nykiforuk, Mayhew & Kawash, 2005). The original questions and their order were maintained but revised to reflect the interests of the current study. The use of adapted interview guides, that is, one for decision makers (1a) and the other for expected proponents and opponents (1b) (Appendix E), improves the credibility of the current study and helps build the field of policy research by using a similar methodology as researchers working in other areas of public policy. Through an initial meeting with the PAC, and ongoing discussions with individual members, the PI gained a better understanding of the political climate within the Region of Waterloo, obtained further insight into urban and rural planning considerations, and learned more about the organizational structure of the Region in general, and PH and RP in particular. The establishment of the PAC was an intentional step to prepare for the in-depth interviews in that it

sensitized the PI to initial ideas to pursue, areas for questioning, and relevant probes for the interview guides.

3.2.2 Document Review

A secondary form of data collection included the qualitative extraction of data from the Regional Official Plan (ROP). The ROP was reviewed in full, but only Section 3F was discussed with participants in the interview, reviewed for relevant policy language, and closely examined in regard to the overall context of regional planning priorities. A number of PH studies and reports were reviewed and used as a way to understand timelines, historical context, and to inform the PI's understanding of previous work by PH staff. Other online documents, including public comments and delegations during the ROP consultation process were reviewed for context, that is, to sensitize the PI to public concerns and opinions, but no detailed notes were taken and these comments were not used during the analysis stages. Local food distributors' and retailers' promotional materials, as well as email and mail correspondence between the PI and study participants also served as important review documents for this study.

3.2.3 Site Visits/Observation of Local Food Distribution and Retail Sites

Another secondary form of data collection occurred through site visits and observations of local food retail and distribution sites. In light of the study's focus on multi-sectoral perspectives of the local food system, producers, distributors and retailers within the Region were of interest as key informants. In addition, sites for local food production, distribution and retail were also of interest, for observational purposes, as a way to assess the size, location and product availability of healthy, local food within these establishments. Through site visits (locations chosen by participants for individual interviews), the PI could make general observations about the nature of these locations (e.g., rural or urban; on-farm versus community site; driving distance versus walking distance; appropriate signage, etc.) as well as other general observations about the types of food supplied (e.g., fresh produce, degree of processing, growing methods, etc.) and potential clientele (based on pricing and obvious marketing and promotional materials). It should be noted that these observations were all based on the PI's personal observations and perceptions of the conditions and contexts surrounding healthy local retail. However, professional and practical

training as a dietitian was another way of sensitizing the PI to observe and collect data relevant to the objectives of this research. General observations made during site visits were used as a ‘jumping off point’ for relevant probes during the individual interviews (often the site observations occurred formally as a tour prior to the interview, or informally while the researcher was waiting to begin the on-site interview).

3.3 Sampling Strategy and Selection of Research Participants

The purpose of the following sampling strategies was to obtain multi-sectoral perspectives including those of regional decision makers, project- and senior-level staff experts in PH and RP, local planners and community food system stakeholders.

3.3.1 Theoretical Sampling and Purposive Sampling

In general, GT methods use non-probability sampling and more specifically, theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves seeking and collecting new pertinent data (e.g., recruiting more participants) as the analysis proceeds in order to elaborate and refine emerging insights and theory (Charmaz, 2006). This process continues until nothing new is said about the concepts being explored (theoretical saturation).

Theoretical sampling is sometimes contrasted with purposive sampling which involves making choices about cases according to some initial pre-specified criteria. Miles and Huberman (1994) list 16 purposive sampling strategies for qualitative research. Some of their most important examples have looked into *politically important or sensitive cases; confirming and disconfirming cases* (elaborating initial analysis, seeking exceptions, looking for variation); and *extreme or deviant cases* (which may prove to be troublesome, counter to, or enlightening in relation to emerging theory). For this study, quota and expert sampling were used to obtain the perspectives of decision makers and staff experts, while a convenience sample captured the views of regional stakeholders.

3.3.2 Non-Proportional Quota Sampling

Quota sampling was used to target the 16 elected Regional Councillors on Waterloo Regional Council (RC). In quota sampling, participants are selected non-randomly according to some

fixed criteria. In this case, Councillors represented seven Area Municipalities (AM) including three large urban cities (the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo) and four rural townships (the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich). The ultimate goal was to obtain the *politically important* perspectives of all 16 of the elected regional Councillors (henceforth referred to as “decision makers”), including the Regional Chair. However, in anticipation of potential barriers to decision makers’ participation in the study (time; availability; interest, etc.) non-proportional quota sampling was used to recruit a sample that would include the Regional Chair, and a minimum of one representative from each of the Region’s seven area municipalities, for a total of eight regional decision makers. In using this type of quota sampling, the aim was to achieve a relatively balanced sample of rural and urban perspectives. Upon receiving ethics approval, the PI assessed decision makers’ interest and willingness to participate via ‘cold calling’ and email, and secured early interest in the study from 13 of the 16 members of Council.

3.3.3 Expert Sampling and Snowball Sampling

Expert sampling was used to elicit the perspectives of PH and RP staff experts, and local planners. The sampling strategy involved putting together a sample of those individuals with known or verifiable experience and expertise. At early planning stages of this research, names of key planners and policy experts in RP were identified through the ROP’s related reports and consultation documents, and from members of the PAC. Similarly, key PH staff experts were identified through regional reports and publications, as well as through insight from members of the PAC. It was assumed that planners working most closely with the ROP (within RP) as well as public health planners working to raise awareness of food system issues within PH would be appropriate food system and food access content and context experts but that senior-level experts (commissioners, directors and managers) would have the most insight and expertise into regional issues and priorities and would contribute high-level perspectives on the significance and relevance of food system planning in the Region. AM planners (local planners) were targeted for their local level planning expertise and were identified through municipal planning department websites.

Snowball sampling was used to obtain the perspectives of regional food system stakeholders. Specifically, the PI asked members of the PAC and other professional contacts to identify potential participants within their social and professional networks who might serve as suitable informants. This sampling approach began initially through discussions with the PAC and was guided by a list of pre-established inclusion criteria. The suitability of a potential food system stakeholder was assessed using the following considerations: the individual 1) plays (or played) an active role in the production, processing, distribution or retail of local food within the Region; 2) is familiar with Section 3F's policies and planning actions; and/or 3) has contributed, indirectly or directly, to food system ideas or policy options for Section 3F. It was anticipated that this sampling approach would serve to recruit and capture relevant perspectives from key regional food system stakeholders, including producers, processors, distributors and retailers, as well as other stakeholders with a vested interest in food system issues. The Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable (FSRT), a food system networking group established by PH, has a website with the identities of 18 elected members and over 50 interested community members. Several FSRT members were recruited through contact information available from the website. The 'Buy Local! Buy Fresh!' (BLBF) map) was another resource used to identify and contact relevant food system stakeholders. The BLBF! map was developed by PH and Foodlink (FL) Waterloo Region, a non-profit grassroots promoter of healthy local food systems (www.foodlink.ca) to help consumers identify local food producers, processors, distributors and retailers offering locally-grown products in the Region. Several regional food system stakeholders associated with the map were contacted to supplement recruitment leads obtained through the snowball sampling approach.

3.4 Recruitment

All members of RC were contacted by phone or email through personal contact information available on the Region of Waterloo website (www.waterloo.region.on.ca). Similarly, names and contact information of potential staff experts within RP and PH, and local planners within each of the seven municipal planning departments were obtained from websites, personal contacts, and published or online department reports. Recognizing the unique challenges of recruiting regional decision makers and senior-level staff, every effort was made by the PI to accommodate

busy schedules by: following-up immediately on emails and phone calls; remaining flexible in recruitment, scheduling and rescheduling; ensuring complete confidentiality and anonymity; and reinforcing the potential relevance and significance of the study findings to future policy and planning initiatives in the Region. With the aim of appealing to regional interests beyond health, the PI's professional background and training, insight from the academic literature, and early discussions with the PAC helped shape the presentation of the research during the recruitment phase. In general, the recruitment process consisted of: (1) identifying suitable participants; (2) making contact through email, phone or in-person appointment to assess initial interest; (3) emailing a copy of the Research Information Letter (Appendix F) to explain and clarify the research; and for interested participants, (4) scheduling an appropriate time to conduct the individual interview. Once scheduled, the PI made every effort to send out a reminder email 1-3 days in advance to confirm the time and location of the interview.

The same process was used for the recruitment of regional food system stakeholders except that the initial contact and discussion was used to assess potential participants' suitability according to the inclusion criteria outlined above. Only upon meeting one of the three pre-established criteria were individuals asked to participate. While the level of interest and participation in this research could not be predicted in advance, the PI used strong networking skills and a friendly and professional approach to ensure that potential informants were fully informed of the study's objectives, purpose, and the potential impact of the research. The nature of the project was explained, confidentiality assured, and agreement to participate and to permit audio recording were confirmed by signed consent.

Through personal contacts and collaboration with the PAC, early interest and success in securing participation agreement from decision makers and key staff experts were critical first steps in the recruitment process and may have helped to facilitate subsequent recruitment efforts by: (1) shaping the PI's early understanding of those involved in the ROP policy making process (thus limiting misdirected recruitment efforts); (2) raising awareness of the research (thus potentially increasing the level of interest and willingness to participate); and (3) providing an important means of recruiting remaining decision makers and senior department officials. With respect to

the latter, a few final decision makers and senior-level experts agreed to participate after learning that “the majority of Council” and “other senior-level staff” had agreed to participate. Thus, early recruitment ‘groundwork’ may have helped raise participants’ confidence in the PI, the research process and the potential impact and relevance of the findings to the Region of Waterloo, resulting in the achievement of desired quota (regional decision makers), expert (regional and local staff), and purposive samples (food system stakeholders). Consistent with the aim of theoretical sampling, recruitment was an ongoing process during this research. Specifically, as new ideas and concepts were revealed through the analysis of multi-sectoral perspectives, additional participants were recruited to confirm, and further inform the emerging theory.

3.5 Sample Size Rationale

Overall, the goal of recruitment was to obtain between 32-48 interviews in total, or enough to ensure theoretical saturation of themes. While it is difficult to predict how many interviews and/or comparisons within the data are needed before one can assume that theoretical saturation has been reached (that is, that no new or further relevant insights are being reached, and hence the concept is ‘saturated’), a rough estimate was developed based on the sampling strategies mentioned above, and the PI’s considerations of a ‘manageable’ research project. The recruitment goal was also consistent with two other comparable Canadian policy making studies related to the built environment (Grant et al., 2010) and nutrition labelling (Vogel et al., 2010) which recruited 44 and 24 policy makers/key informants respectively.

3.5.1 Decision Makers

As noted previously, while obtaining the perspectives of all 16 decision makers would allow for optimal comparisons, a minimum of one elected representative for each of the seven AMs, in addition to the Regional Chair, was thought to be appropriate for providing a balance of rural and urban decision making perspectives related to the adoption of food system policies as a non-mandatory component of the ROP. Thus, the aim of quota sampling was to obtain, at minimum, 8-16 interviews with regional decision makers.

3.5.2 Regional and Local Staff ‘Experts’

The aim of expert sampling was to obtain 12-16 interviews with regional staff ‘experts’ in RP and PH, and local planners. Potential participants were thought to include: the Commissioners of Planning and Health (i.e., the Medical Officer of Health); senior-level staff including directors and managers of relevant divisions; and project staff involved in policy, planning and/or food system-related work in each of the respective departments. It was estimated that a minimum of 6-8 experts, ranging from project- to senior-management levels and representing either planning or public health practice, would contribute an appropriate breadth and depth of opinion, perspective and insight on food system planning in the Region.

3.5.3 Regional Food System Stakeholders

The aim of snowball sampling was to recruit 12-16 food system stakeholders to provide additional perspective on food system policy making, local level barriers and challenges to healthy retail, and perceived opportunities associated with Section 3F.

For each of the sampling frames, and targeted samples, it was anticipated that the use of GT methods would result in the need to return to the field to recruit additional participants in order to answer analytic questions and fill conceptual gaps that would emerge during data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, the sampling size rationale remained a rough estimate, or guideline for recruitment and the PI maintained flexibility throughout the recruitment, sampling, data collection and analysis stages by cycling back through each of the phases of research. This approach is in line with the fundamental tenet of classical GT, whereby Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress the importance of the close interplay of data collection and data analysis in the search for “theoretical saturation”. The bulk of the research interviews took place throughout November and December 2009. Following preliminary analyses in January and February 2010, recruitment was initiated again in an effort to fill in some of the gaps and to pursue leads and more insight on certain themes, or codes that had been constructed from the data.

3.6 Qualitative Data Analysis

3.6.1 Transcription

Two transcriptionists were hired and asked to sign a formal research contract. The contract outlined the politically sensitive nature of the interviews, and asked the transcriptionists to: ensure complete privacy of the research details; maintain the anonymity of research participants and confidentiality regarding the subject matter, content, and expressed opinions; and to delete any shared audio files following the completion of the transcribed interviews. The contract also outlined and recorded agreement of professional conduct and expectations, fee arrangements, and timelines. Copies of *less politically sensitive* audio files (e.g., those of regional food system stakeholders versus those of senior officials or decision makers) were made by the PI, sent electronically or by secure express post to the transcriptionists, transcribed verbatim, and returned to the PI via electronic mail. For all shared files, participants' identities were protected using an assigned number and letter code. The PI's decision to transcribe the majority of the research interviews was made based on the following analytical and practical considerations: (1) a desire to fully explore not only what participants said about their experiences and perspectives but *how* they engaged the researcher in their understanding and exploration of this throughout the interview process; (2) a concern that a critical key aspect relating to food system planning or the policy process would not be captured, or that significant pauses, hesitations, or other non-verbal voice cues would be overlooked or missed by transcriptionists; and lastly, (3) timing, as funding for the research project was secured only after the research interviews had begun.

3.6.2 Preparing for Analysis

Immediately following the first interviews, the PI listened to the audio files while make hand-written notes. This was done as a way to prepare for subsequent interviews and helped gain early insight into possible themes. During the busiest data collection phases, when transcribing in full or reviewing audio files was not possible, the PI relied on hand-written notes taken during, or immediately following the interviews. These notes recorded common themes, questions, and future probes to explore in subsequent interviews and contributed to the content of various memos throughout data collection and analysis. Later, research funding provided a means to hire transcriptionists, and allowed the transcription process to resume while the PI continued with further data collection and early analysis.

Prior to *formal* stages of data analysis, and to ensure the accuracy of data transcription, the PI listened to each audio-recorded interview while reviewing the respective transcript. Personal notes recorded during each interview were compared to the transcript, and additional notes were made based on comparisons with later interviews, and used for data analysis. Organization and coding of the data was done by hand using the transcripts, as well as with QSR NVivo8® (www.qsrinternational.com) computer software. It has been shown that a combination of computer-assisted and manual procedures is likely to deliver the best results during qualitative analysis (Welsh, 2002). All relevant materials (i.e., personal notes, transcripts, mail correspondence, etc.) were closely examined and entered into the NVivo software program for coding.

3.6.3 Constructing Grounded Theory: Analysis

There are several foundational assumptions that differ among proponents of GT: for example, whether data “emerges” (Glaser, 1992) or whether it is “constructed” (Charmaz, 2006). However, according to Pidgeon and Henwood (2004), those who use some version of the method generally share the following techniques and strategies in common: (1) develop open-coding schemes to capture detail, etc; (2) use a theoretical sampling approach; (3) constantly compare data instances, cases, and categories for similarities and differences (“constant comparison” method); (4) write theoretical memos; (5) make comparisons and use theoretical sampling until theoretical ‘saturation’ is reached; (6) engage in more focused coding of selected core categories; (7) build conceptual models as a way to move analysis from description to theory.

This research aimed to apply each of the above strategies and techniques for data analysis. Specifically, a GT approach using three phases of coding was used. These phases, or different levels of coding and analysis, included initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006). Eventually, through careful attending to coding, it became possible to “shape the analytic frame from which [to] build the analysis” and to “develop generalizable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analyses of actions and events” (Charmaz, 2006). With respect to the latter, the PI’s unique background and experiences (which ultimately shaped what was “attended to”), combined with the interpretation and

constructions of research participants' own realities and experiences, certain ideas and concepts became evident, or emerged "clearly" from the data and were organized into key aspects of interest relating to the goals and objectives of this research (i.e., facilitators, barriers, contextual factors, roles and motivations, etc.). Other points of interest, or emergent themes, were noted, and helped shaped the PI's understanding of the context through which participants' experienced food policy making and 'food access' within the Region. Not all emerging ideas and concepts were explored in full but were recorded, coded, included in memos, but left for future analytical work.

3.6.3.1 Open Coding

As a first step, initial coding was used to sift through the first transcribed interviews (i.e., line-by-line, or incident-by-incident) for analytic ideas to pursue in further data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Specifically, each sentence and paragraph of the interview transcript was examined individually and coded based on the PI's understanding of what was happening in the data. This process involved being open to all possible theoretical directions while using constant comparative methods to compare statements or descriptions of events within the same interview, and across different interviews. Initial coding served to identify important and substantive concepts and categories, and in some cases, exposed gaps or highlighted aspects (dimensions) of the concepts, or categories that required further analysis or additional data for a more complete understanding of these. In some cases, this required going back and reviewing previously coded transcripts or addressing these concepts or ideas in subsequent interviews.

Initial coding, or 'labelling' of concepts and categories was done using a short phrase or word to reflect its content (i.e., "perceived barrier") but also to reflect emerging, and unexpected themes. In light of the collection of a very significant amount of rich interview data, the PI began the formal coding process by organizing the data into initial coding categories according to the subject of the questions within each of the interview guides (see Appendix E). For example, all informants (except decision makers) were asked to consider and identify key drivers, or factors, that lead to the Region's consideration of food policy in the ROP. Thus, all of the responses were grouped into a 'key drivers' category to be examined later in greater detail. This was done for all

questions in each of the interview guides. Upon initial review of the data (transcripts, memos, personal notes), it was clear that many topics, ideas and themes had emerged that did not relate to the specific questions being asked. These large substantive themes were unexpected and unanticipated by the PI, formed the basis of theory generation and were coded under labels such as “key themes” and “key issues”. In other words, all transcript sections that reflected the same theme were coded with an identical label (although some sections were coded under more than one label if, for example these were perceived as both barriers and opportunities). After all unique concepts in the data were labelled, labels were further reduced into categories and sub-categories. Where appropriate, the aim was also to have category labels that came from informants’ own words, or in vivo codes (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the PI would constantly compare new and emerging ideas with those concepts in these categories, or continue to add new concepts under this category umbrella. To keep track of these ideas, themes, and concepts, the PI wrote memos to clarify, question, and attempt to articulate what participants, both collectively and individually, were constructing based on their experience in the research setting, but also through their observations and recollections of their real world experiences.

3.6.3.2 Focused Coding

Focused coding involves using the most important and/or commonly used codes from the initial coding to go through larger amounts of data and from an analytical perspective, requires determining the adequacy of the codes (Charmaz, 2006). Using constant comparative methods, it was possible to fully explore initially coded categories (e.g., barriers and opportunities, key themes, key drivers, etc). The PI began with a broad category (e.g., facilitators) and examined the ways in which these were described, and articulated by participants. Where appropriate, subcategories were created to help understand and describe the types of facilitators that participants experienced based on their role in the Region (i.e., local food retailer versus regional decision maker). Using this approach, it was also possible to examine similarities and differences concerning: perspectives on food policy making based on various demographic attributes (e.g., rural- versus urban-oriented decision makers, position in the food system chain), as well as

aspects of the policy process with respect to whether stakeholders ‘had a say’ or were excluded from regional considerations regarding the local food system and food access.

3.6.3.3 Axial Coding

A basic level of axial coding (the act of relating concepts/categories to subcategories) was used hand in hand with initial and focused coding (Corbin et al., 2008). Similarities and differences between the categories were noted and permitted the categories to be 1) expanded; clustered together based on “closely related concepts” among categories or 2) collapsed. Axial coding was used to answer questions such as ‘when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences’ and as such, provided a frame to apply to show the links between subcategories and categories (Charmaz, 2006).

3.6.3.4 Theoretical Analysis

A final stage of analysis, theoretical coding, was then used to specify possible relationships between categories and to move the analytic concepts from focused coding in a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout this stage of coding, the PI made use of diagrammatic illustrations to portray the interactions and relationship between key concepts. Through a series of iterations throughout the analytical process, it was possible to develop a final GT product, a conceptual framework describing the process and features of food policy making and food system change at the regional level.

3.7 Quality of Data Collection and Analysis

The advantage of GT methods is that in early stages of the research, one can learn about data gaps or unexpected findings and locate or collect additional sources of data to help explain, interpret and understand potential areas of concern as they emerge (Charmaz, 2006). To capture the appropriate depth and breadth of multi-sectoral perspectives, and to address potential areas of data quality concern, each participant was given the PI’s contact information and encouraged to follow-up as additional thoughts, issues or insights arose concerning the content of the interview. In addition, a small sub-sample (n = 5) of transcripts was returned to participants to provide an

opportunity to change and/or clarify opinions and statements, and to provide additional thoughts that may not have surfaced at the time of the interview. Despite efforts to address these aspects of data quality, it was anticipated that the length of time to read over an individual transcript (approximately 15-20 pages) would affect participants' willingness to provide a detailed review of their initial responses. Thus, the PI also used subsequent interviews to confidentially draw attention to, and request additional information and perspectives on events and/or themes as they emerged and to explore unclear findings. In a few cases, where it was clear that findings were unique to a particular individual, the participant was emailed directly to request more information. This resulted in a 'more complete' perspective from the participant, filled in appropriate gaps in the analysis, and improved the overall rigour and trustworthiness of the data.

3.7.1 Ensuring Rigour and Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Inquiry

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), the aim of trustworthiness in a qualitative inquiry is to support the argument that the findings are "worth paying attention to". This is in contrast to other forms of inquiry where an evaluation of the research findings is based on being able to demonstrate validity, soundness, and significance. In the evaluation of a qualitative research project, four criteria of scientific adequacy concerning trustworthiness warrant attention: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). For this qualitative inquiry, trustworthiness was enhanced through addressing these criteria through the strategies detailed below.

3.7.1.1 Credibility

Credibility is an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a "credible" conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants' original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or stated otherwise, that one can have "confidence in the 'truth' of the findings" (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). To help ensure that the analyses and subsequent findings were 'true' to participants' actual perceived experiences, the following techniques were used: a variation of prolonged engagement; triangulation; peer debriefing and member checking. These are described briefly as follows.

3.7.1.1.1 Prolonged Engagement

According to Cowen & Crabtree (2006), prolonged engagement includes spending an appropriate amount of time in the field to learn and understand the culture, social setting and phenomenon of interest. It helps to improve the credibility of the research by making it possible for the researcher to observe various features of a setting, engage in meaningful dialogue with key individuals, and develop relationships and rapport with members of a culture, or societal group (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). Prior to, and throughout this study, the PI spent a sufficient amount of time in Waterloo Region observing the local food culture and identifying the various food system stakeholders and food-related activities.

In light of both my personal and professional interests in food and health, I received periodic updates from family, friends and colleagues regarding upcoming regional food events and initiatives, and it became almost impossible to be a neutral observer of the culture. As a graduate student and nutrition professional in Waterloo Region, I had already made observations of the local food movement in the Region, informally spoken to a range of people, and developed important relationships and contacts with a few key members of Waterloo Region's local food culture. These experiences helped to 'orient' me to the local situation, improved my appreciation of the context, and ultimately, shaped my understanding of the need for research in this area.

3.7.1.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). Originally described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this technique can be used to ensure that “an account is rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed” (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). In light of the study's sole use of qualitative data, a technique of triangulation *of sources* was used. That is, the consistency of different data sources from within the same method was examined at different points in time, between public and private settings, and between individual participants with differing viewpoints (Patton, 1990). The use of triangulation was important in this research for verifying the facts in several cases where tensions and disagreement arose between participants.

3.7.1.1.3 Peer Debriefing

Lincoln & Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). The PAC and the Thesis Research Advisory Committee (TRAC) were comprised of key subject experts with an in-depth understanding of the Region of Waterloo. To address issues of credibility, members of these committees served as an important resource for the PI throughout the process of data collection and analysis, particularly as the analytic ideas and concepts progressed in a theoretical direction. Although it would be inaccurate to say that committee members were “disinterested” according to Lincoln and Guba’s definition, it is likely that members of the academic community on these committees held to a high level of scientific integrity by remaining unbiased and objective in providing feedback to the PI. Through peer debriefing with select committee members, the PI had an opportunity to test and defend emergent hypothesis, and to assess the plausibility of themes with a disinterested debriefer (which helped to further refine concepts and themes throughout analysis).

3.7.1.1.4 Member Checks

Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue that member checks are the most important technique for establishing credibility. Member checks involve formal, or informal, ways of testing the data, analytic categories, interpretations and findings with respective members of the groups from whom the data were originally obtained (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). The PI took advantage of opportunities for member checks with participants as they arose during the normal course of conversation during the research interviews by saying, for example, “This is what I am hearing from you, and from others...am I correct in my interpretation of this experience?”. In addition, and as noted previously, when interpretations were unclear or incomplete, the PI emailed individual participants for additional information. Each of the interviews lasted approximately 1-2 hours in length. The interviews were not rushed, and often participants would naturally bring up an earlier point in the conversation, adding additional information to help clarify their perspective on the topic/issue. A third form of member checking involved members of the PAC.

Members of the PAC represented regional departments and local interest groups and in the final stages of analysis, key concepts, interpretations and theoretical findings were ‘checked’ to ensure the credibility of the study conclusions. Lastly, before meeting the PAC members, the PI presented preliminary findings at the Canadian Public Health Association National Conference in 2010 (Wegener & Hanning, 2010b) and met with members of the Thesis Research Advisory Committee as a further form of member checking.

3.7.1.2 Transferability

Transferability is a second important criterion of scientific adequacy for demonstrating the trustworthiness of qualitative data. Similar to the idea of ‘external validity’ or ‘generalizability’, transferability is the degree to which the findings of an inquiry can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project, or have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that ‘thick description’ can help to achieve this type of external validity in that, by describing a phenomenon (e.g., food system policy making) in sufficient detail, it becomes possible to evaluate the extent to which the themes and key findings are transferable to other jurisdictions, levels of government, stakeholder groups, situations, and points in time.

Efforts to address transferability included engaging in an in-depth, comprehensive and detailed exploration of the policy process as described by multi-sectoral stakeholders. Interviews were lengthy, and the questions were designed to obtain rich perspectives on the various stages of the food policy making process. While it is likely that the overarching themes and sub-themes would have applicability in other jurisdictions (particularly as local food trends increase), it is difficult to determine, without further research, the degree to which findings from this research would apply to regions that do not have a similar strong agriculture base.

3.7.1.3 Dependability

Dependability is the ability to show that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated (Cowen & Crabtree, 2006) with the same (or similar) subjects in the same (or similar)

context. Cresswell (1998) describes external audits as a technique to check the consistency of the study methodology.

External audits include having an external examiner assess both the process and product of the research study to evaluate the accuracy (and where appropriate, to challenge) and to determine whether the study findings, interpretations and conclusions are supported by the data. However, as Cowen and Crabtree (2006) note, “an external auditor cannot know the data as well as the researcher(s) immersed in the study and may not share the same point of view, which may lead to differences in interpretation and the issue of trying to resolve which is most ‘accurate’. To increase the dependability of the findings, the PI made every effort to include multiple participant quotes within the reporting of the findings. In this way, it was assumed that members of the Thesis Research Advisory Committee, and other readers, would be able to assess both the process and product of the research study. As discrepancies arise, these will be examined by the PI, discussed, and used to support a broader understanding of the concepts, findings and research conclusions.

3.7.1.4 Confirmability

A final critical criterion of scientific adequacy in qualitative inquiry is the idea of confirmability. Confirmability is a measure of how well the inquiry’s findings are supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) or according to Cowen and Crabtree (2006), the degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are influenced by the participants and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Two important techniques for establishing confirmability are constant comparison and reflexivity.

3.7.1.4.1 Constant Comparison

According to one of the key theoretical founders of GT, whatever bias one might have brought to the data is neutralized through making constant comparisons and by raising the level of abstraction of the categories (Glaser, 2002). This logic assumes that the process of comparing data with data, data with categories, and categories with categories builds significant checks on a grounded theorist’s biases. With respect to constructivist GT, Charmaz (2006) agrees, as long as

the researcher is reflexive about the comparative process as well as the emerging categories. Charmaz suggests reflexive memo writing throughout the research process (and the inclusion of these memos in the final report) as a transparent way to establish confirmability (Charmaz, 2006). This type of audit trail, including examples of field notes; analysis products (summaries of condensed notes); reconstruction and synthesis products (drafts of theoretical frameworks); and reflexive notes and memos are an important component in acknowledging the “construction” of these theoretical findings and as a means to improving the confirmability, and overall trustworthiness of the research.

3.7.1.4.2 Reflexivity

While an external audit is a way for an outsider to assess the trustworthiness of the data, a reflexive approach by the researcher can also be applied to the research process. According to Charmaz (2006), reflexivity is the researcher’s scrutiny of “the research experience, decisions, and interpretations in ways that bring the researcher into the process and allow the reader to assess how and to what extent the researcher’s interests, positions, and assumptions influenced inquiry.” (p.188). Importantly, it is the process of making these interests, positions and assumptions known to the reader that separates reflexive GT methods from other methods of inquiry.

It is possible that many of the participants in this study recognized my personal and professional health biases and made assumptions about my reasons for conducting this research. I did not make any effort to conceal this part of my professional background and rather, stated my biases upfront by introducing myself as a graduate student with an interest in healthy food access. Participants received an Information Letter which clearly indicated my affiliation with the University of Waterloo’s Faculty of Applied Health Sciences and Department of Health Studies and Gerontology and the “RD” (i.e., registered dietitian) credentials alongside my name on my business card identified my professional interest in healthy eating. In light of the study’s focus on land use planning considerations related to food, I did not pretend to know more about planning than I did, nor did I attempt to influence participants’ views about local food or healthy food access. It is possible that my personal and professional health biases were most obvious to

regional decision makers as several Councillors made an extra effort to show their support for the public health activities of PH, and their sensitivity to rural health concerns. In some instances, participants were interested to know the reasons for my interest in this research and my level of candidness about my family's farming experience was an important way to establish early trust and rapport with food system stakeholders.

3.7.2 Ethical Implications

There are important ethical implications related to the use of a GT approach in qualitative research. In particular, the researcher plays an important and arguably *equal* role in constructing GT through his/her role as a 'human research instrument'. Thus, there are important ethical implications when individuals are brought into the research context. The PI made every effort to build rapport and trust with all research participants while being aware of the need to present a professional, yet personable approach to data collection through interviews. The following highlights and addresses ethical implications by examining the benefits and risks to research participants and the community.

3.7.2.1 Benefits of Research to Participants and to the Community

In considering the potential benefit of the research process and outcomes to participants, it is probable that the PI's initial contact with decision makers, and expressed food policy research interests, served as a reminder of the community's growing interest in local food system issues. Similarly, decision makers' participation in the individual interviews may have provided an opportunity for more intentional consideration of Section 3F than otherwise would have occurred following the adoption of the ROP. Further, interview discussions may have helped to illuminate issues and concerns regarding land use planning that may have been unknown, or not fully understood, by regional decision makers (or other study participants).

Likewise, in view of the fact that the Region of Waterloo is one of the first regional municipalities in North America to adopt food policy considerations in an official plan, regional planners may consider it a privilege (or a professional obligation) to share their early 'trail blazing' experiences with others; benefiting both personally and professionally from an opportunity to informally explore, reflect, and discuss successes and frustrations throughout the

ROP policy making process. Similarly, it is likely that stakeholders' participation in this research served as an important way to share personal experiences (including successes and frustrations) related to local food system activity. For many stakeholders, the interviews provided an opportunity to voice personal concerns about zoning regulation and the impact on food-related initiatives in the Region. Some expressed sincere gratitude for a renewed interest in their livelihoods and for early signs of government willingness to address issues affecting farmer viability.

3.7.2.2 Risks of Research to Participants and to the Community

In light of the perceived benefits to participants, it is also probably that the research may have posed inadvertent risks. In particular, decision makers and regional staff experts provided very honest accounts of events, and spoke candidly about their roles and motivations for engaging in food system activity (in some cases revealing professional and personal biases). As elected representatives and government employees, this may potentially pose a risk to participants as it increases the politically sensitive nature of the data. To minimize potential risk, participants were reassured that their identities, and perspectives were completely confidential, and that any identifying information in quotes used in the final reporting of the study would be removed. It is also likely that, due to the nature of social science research, the PI's exploration of ideas and concepts within the interview setting could have influenced the consideration of new food-related ideas and policy options for future consideration. Similarly, the use of snowball sampling would have also identified those connected to food system activity in the Region who may have wished to remain unidentified. This potential risk was captured best by a senior-level regional staff official,

“Yeah, because if I send you somewhere, that can actually have an impact, right? It can have an impact on our relationships and it can have an impact on how the individual views the issue.”

Although unanticipated, this concern was acknowledged in subsequent interviews by asking the participant to “get permission from the individual first” before disclosing his/her name to the researcher. Thus, while a full appreciation and acknowledgement of the sensitivity of the research design and content were recognized at the early stages of planning for the research

interviews, unexpected concerns arose and appropriate steps were taken to minimize the potential risk on participating individuals.

In summary, this qualitative research used grounded theory methods and techniques and a case study design to obtain multi-sectoral perspectives of food system policy making in Waterloo Region. The research took advantage of a natural experiment to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews with regional decision makers, staff experts in planning and public health, and food system stakeholders. A Project Advisory Committee was established to help guide the research and increase its relevance in the Region. To increase the transferability of the findings to other jurisdictions, case study aspects were integrated into the grounded theory thematic analysis.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS FROM A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM POLICY MAKING AND FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE

4.1 Research Overview

The purpose of this exploratory research was to examine Waterloo Region as a case study for food system policy making and food systems change at the regional level. The study included a qualitative assessment of the Region's policy and planning environment through multi-sectoral perspectives. The first three objectives of the study were: (1) to examine the process of food system policy making and to identify the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers at the individual-, organizational- and system-levels; (2) to identify current planning policies and practices that affect the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail outlets at the local level (including opportunities to improve the community food environment in Waterloo Region); and (3) to describe the role and motivation of new and existing regional food system actors and community stakeholders in food system policy change. In total, forty-seven semi-structured interviews with regional decision makers (n= 15), public health and planning staff 'experts' (n= 16) and regional food system stakeholders (n= 16) were conducted and used to examine food system planning in general and the study's three primary objectives in particular. Participant profiles are described below, followed by a brief introduction to the study's key overarching theme, sub-themes and conceptual framework. These findings are presented here as a way to orient the reader to this paper's organization, chapters and common areas of investigation.

4.1.1 Research Participant Profile

The aim was to obtain between 32-48 multi-sectoral perspectives on the food system policy making process and food access in Waterloo Region. The final research sample comprised three distinct groups of participants, including: (1) regional decision makers; (2) regional and local staff experts in public health and planning; and (3) regional food system stakeholders.

All participants were recruited and interviewed between October 2009 and May 2010 following ethics approval from the University of Waterloo's Office of Research Ethics. In total, forty – eight formal and informal interviews were conducted. Two of these interviews were used as an

informal way to gather ‘expert’ information for subsequent interviews and did not include questions from either of the interview guides. Personal notes from one of these *informal* interviews sufficiently captured the respondent’s perspectives on food-related planning in the Region and therefore were included in the analysis for a total of 47 *official* interviews. The following table summarizes the number of interviews, per sample group, per month:

Table 1: Summary of Participant Interviews, per Month

Sample	October	November	December	January	April – May	Total
Decision makers	1	0	10	2	2	15
Staff ‘experts’	5	4	5	1	1	16
Food system stakeholders	1	4	9	2	0	16
TOTAL	7	8	24	5	3	47

Importantly, with the exception of one regional decision maker, everyone who was recruited for the study agreed to participate in the research interviews. The majority of the interviews were conducted in late November and December 2009, following fall harvest and prior to the holiday season. Based on Table 1, there were approximately equal numbers of each of the targeted sample groups and the aims of quota, and expert sampling were achieved. Although no personal demographic information was requested at the time of the interview, observational and summary information concerning participants’ respective local food establishment (e.g., farm, retail store, processing or distribution facility) was collected by the PI during site visits and from stakeholders’ websites.

4.1.1.1 Regional Decision Makers: Elected Members of Waterloo Regional Council

Waterloo Regional Council is the policy-forming and decision-making body of the Regional government. There are 16 members of Regional Council consisting of: the Regional Chair (directly elected, at large, in the community) and eight directly elected officials from the seven Area Municipalities (AM), including the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich. Directly-elected regional officials serve alongside the Mayors from the seven AMs (automatically appointed as Regional Councillors) and include two members each from Cambridge and Waterloo, and four members from Kitchener.

Fifteen of the 16 members of Regional Council (henceforth referred to as decision makers) agreed to participate in the research interviews. On average, interviews with decision makers were shorter than other participant interviews, and lasted approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ hour in length. The decision maker who did not participate was a non-response after several contact efforts over the study period using phone and email information obtained from the Region's website. It is likely that the non-respondent was busy, or uninterested in the study rather than in a position of wanting to intentionally withhold personal opinions or information regarding regional food policy considerations. Thirteen of the interviews were in-person and held at the following locations: eight at regional/personal offices; two at food retail establishments; and three at the decision maker's personal residence. The two remaining interviews were by phone, and recorded by digital audio-recorder.

Demographic information was not obtained directly from decision makers but certain observations were made based on the publically available information on the Region's website (www.waterloo.region.on.ca). Rough estimations of decision makers' careers in politics ranged from 4 – 34 years, with an average of over 20 years. Regional Council is largely comprised of urban-oriented males as evidenced by the male to female ratio of 10:6 and an urban to rural representation ratio (not including the Regional Chair) of approximately 11:4. The above considerations are important in light of the study's findings (discussed in Chapter 5).

4.1.1.2 Regional and Local Staff Experts

Sixteen interviews with regional and municipal staff experts were conducted. Interviews with staff experts were the most lengthy of all research interviews and averaged one and $\frac{1}{4}$ hours. In general, the longest interviews were with project- and senior-level regional staff in RP (policy and planning experts) which is not surprising in that RP staff lead the ROP process as mandated by the Province. Other staff experts included public health planners (project-level) and senior-level staff in PH, and local planners from each of the Area Municipalities. Table 2 summarizes the number of staff expert interviews and interview lengths across regional and local planning and PH departments.

Table 2: Summary of Staff Expert Interviews, per Department

Regional and Local Staff	# Interviews	Average length of interviews (hr/mins)
Regional Planning Department	4	1 hr. 24 mins.
Municipal Planning Departments	5	1 hr. 9 mins.
Regional Public Health Department	7	1 hr. 13 mins.
Total	16	Total average: 1 hr. 15 mins.

All interviews were held in regional and municipal offices, with the exception of one which was held in a local coffee shop. Based on Table 2, approximately equal numbers of planning and health professionals participated in the interviews. Similarly, a near equal number of regional and municipal planners, and a disproportionate number of females (n=4) and males (n=12) were included in the final study sample.

4.1.1.3 Regional Food System Stakeholders

Sixteen interviews with key regional food system stakeholders were conducted including: local food producers, processors, distributors and retailers; members of community interest groups; academic experts; and government representatives. Table 3 includes a summary of the key food system stakeholders, arranged by sector.

Participants were largely recruited through snowball sampling. All regional food system stakeholders that were contacted agreed to participate in the research interviews. One participant, representing a community interest group, had initially agreed to participate but due to poor weather conditions, an appropriate time and location could not be rescheduled during the study period. Regional food system stakeholder interviews lasted approximately 1 hour in length and took place at a number of regional locations. The final sample was comprised of six females and ten males. The interviews were conducted at a coffee shop close to the participant's home (n=6) or at a home/business office (n=10). With respect to the latter, six of the business sites also served as a retail and/or distribution outlet for local food and thus, permitted the PI to make site observations before, during and after the participant interviews.

Table 3: Summary of Regional Food System Stakeholders, by Sector

Regional Food System Stakeholders	Sector	# Interviews
producers, processors, retailers, distributors, trade organizations (agri-food industry)	Private	8
not-for-profit/community interest groups	Public	4
government (municipal or provincial representatives)	Public	2
academia	Public	2
Total		16

4.1.2 Local Food Retail Site Visits

Six site visits occurred over the course of the study period. All sites were located within Waterloo Region and had been suggested as a convenient meeting place for individual interviews by regional stakeholders (sites were often family-run businesses located on a farm or a retail establishment owned and/or operated by the participant). Only general observations of these sites were possible and included the following noted characteristics: size, location, rural/urban; on-farm/commercial site; driving distance/walking distance and whether the site was promoted as a local food distribution/retail site on the BLBF! map. Minor observations about the types of food sold and supplied through these sites were also noted including: availability of (1) fresh produce, (2) processed/convenience foods, and (3) local/organic growing methods. These findings are summarized in Table 4.

It should be noted that these observations were all based on the PI's personal observations and perceptions of the conditions and contexts surrounding healthy local retail. However, professional and practical training as a dietitian helped the PI to collect relevant observational data for this research. General observations provided context and insight into relevant probes to explore during the individual interviews (often the site observations occurred formally as a tour prior to the interview, or informally while the researcher was waiting to begin the on-site interview). Often, in sharing their personal experiences regarding zoning restrictions for on-farm or commercial retail, the PI was able to physically observe the retail sites and could confirm stakeholders' accounts by cross-checking with local planners' accounts.

Table 4: Summary of Select Distribution and Retail Sites in Waterloo Region

Site	Location	Size/Zoning & Rural/Urban	Food Availability/Options:			Walking distance (yes/no)
			Fresh produce	Convenience/processed	Local/Organic	
1	Woolwich	Large/commercial/rural	Y	N	Y	N
2	North Dumfries	Small/residential/rural	Y	N	Y	N
3	Waterloo	Small/residential/ urban neighbourhood	Y	N	Y	Y
4	Waterloo	Small/commercial/urban	Y	N	Y	Y
5	Woolwich	Large/commercial/urban	Y	Y	Y	Y
6	Wilmot	Small/residential/rural	Y	N	Y	N

4.2 Research Findings: Introduction of Overarching Themes and Conceptual Framework

In-depth GT analyses yielded rich insight into the policy, planning and public health considerations related to food system policy making and food access in Waterloo Region. Key findings and overarching themes related to the study objectives were identified and a detailed exploration and discussion of these findings is presented in the following chapters.

To reduce the complexity of reporting on different, yet complementary and overlapping areas of research, this section provides a brief introduction and overview of the organization and relevant content areas of Chapters 5-7. While the regional food system is the uniting and central focus of each chapter, three distinct lenses, or perspectives, are used to portray various features and aspects of Waterloo Region’s food system planning context. Specifically, Chapter 5 examines the food system through a *policy lens*, focusing on regional food system planning *policy making*, and identifies the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers at various policy stages. Chapter 6 explores the current realities and barriers affecting food system activity at the municipal level through a *planning lens*. Chapter 7 describes the role and motivation of food system actors in creating opportunities to increase access to healthy local food and therefore is examined through a *public health lens*. In this way, each chapter captures the unique, yet complementary, features of the Region’s policy and planning environment through policy, planning and public health perspectives. The following diagram captures the focus of this

research and the organizational presentation of the findings by drawing attention to the relevance of key study findings to each of the respective policy, planning and public health aspects of food system planning.

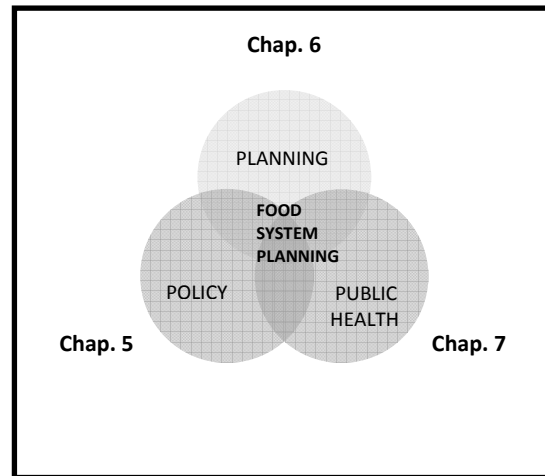


Figure 1: Research Overview: Key Practice Areas and Reporting Structure

4.2.1 The *Role of Evidence* in Food System Policy Making

To support future policy and planning considerations in other jurisdictions, an underlying aim of this research was also to examine the role of evidence in food system policy making and food system change in Waterloo Region. As one of first regional municipalities in North America to adopt food policies in an official plan, a case study analysis of the Region served as an important and timely opportunity to explore the ways in which various types of evidence were used to inform policy and practice. Thus, within the following chapters, the role of evidence is integrated into the discussion of food system planning from an initial policy *idea*, to a regional course of government *action*. In Chapter 5, food system planning is discussed as a policy *idea* that is considered, and diffused between and among regional staff and food system stakeholders. The Region’s adoption of a *vision* for the regional food system (Section 3F), including directives to Area Municipalities, sets the context for local level consideration of food policy. However, as identified in Chapter 6, despite common perceptions of Waterloo Region as a “fertile environment” for regional food system planning, a number of barriers at the local level may limit the realization, or *implementation potential* of Section 3F. Chapter 7 describes the role and motivation of key food system actors in working to overcome these barriers through community partnerships, policy advocacy, and a climate of food system change. In this way, the use of

evidence in food system planning is considered through an examination of the *regional vision*, *current planning reality* and future *opportunities* to affect food system change.

4.2.2 An Introduction to Key Overarching Themes and Research Concept Map

The value of using GT methods is that themes “emerge” (Glaser, 1992) or are “constructed” (Charmaz, 2006) from the data and can be used to generate theory about everyday life. A number of key overarching themes were identified through in-depth analyses of multi-sectoral perspectives on food systems planning in Waterloo Region. Emerging concepts and ideas were grounded in participants’ perspectives and experiences of food system activity and were therefore, specific to the local context.

An important recurring theme that arose from participant discourse on regional food system activity was the idea that ‘changes’ were happening within the current food system environment. Specifically, features of ‘*change*’ were alluded to through participants’ descriptions and ideas about ‘progressing’, ‘going forward’ and ‘evolving’ as a society in regard to the current ways of thinking about, and responding to food-related concerns. Examples included changes in societal attitudes, purchasing behaviour, government involvement, food system innovation and national and global changes related to agriculture, economics, health and the environment. In this way ‘change’, was an important underlying current, or feature, in participants’ descriptions of their experiences with food system policy making, policy and planning barriers, and roles and motivations for participating in food system activity. While the concept of ‘change’ was not described directly, it emerged as a key theme common to most, if not all, interview discussions with participants. In this way, ‘change’ was identified as one of the most dominant and consistent themes in this study. However, rather than classify it as an overarching theme alongside the other key themes, ‘change’ was regarded instead as a feature of a dynamic food system environment, and thus, the “*context*” within which all other themes could be understood.

Within the context of food system change, key overarching themes included: ‘*strategic positioning*’, ‘*partnerships*’, ‘*participation*’, ‘*knowledge transfer*’ and the following sub-themes: ‘*legitimacy*’, ‘*visioning*’, ‘*issue framing*’ and ‘*aligned agendas*’. A concept map is included (Figure 2) as a visual representation of the connections between overarching themes and sub-

themes and is used as the basis for the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 7. Briefly, the key overarching themes and sub-themes are introduced as follows:

‘Strategic positioning’ was a key overarching theme driving political action and successful private sector activity. Features of this theme included political strategizing (that is, convincing or motivating others to support your ideas or political agenda) and strategic efforts to use others to create new opportunities for policy activity or food system change. Various examples were revealed through multi-sectoral perspectives of public and private-sector activity in Waterloo Region. As an overarching theme, ‘strategic positioning’ was the goal of a number of other important themes related to the ways or channels through which individuals and groups organize to advance food ideas and policy options within the Region. Under ‘strategic positioning’, other key underlying themes included ‘partnerships’, food system ‘participation’, and ‘knowledge transfer’ (KT) as forms of positioning. In addition, a number of common sub-themes emerged including: ‘*visioning*’ and ‘*issue framing*’ (sub-themes to reflect specific ways of achieving KT) and establishing ‘*legitimacy*’ and ‘*aligned agendas*’ (sub-themes of participation in food system change).

Under ‘strategic positioning’, ‘partnerships’ were a second important underlying theme that emerged from participants’ perspectives on how actors and stakeholders engage, or advance their position, in policy making and food system activity in the Region. Multiple examples of networks, community connections, coalitions and longstanding relationships were recognized and noted as a driving factor (or key facilitator) for policy activity and food system change. Specifically, partnerships were almost always associated with an opportunity to advance food system ideas, policy options and change.

A third underlying theme, along with ‘strategic positioning’ and ‘partnerships’, was the concept of ‘participation’. This theme was found to have different meanings based on participants’ ‘position’ or role as a policy actor or food system stakeholder. The ability to ‘*participate*’ effectively and successfully as a policy actor or food system stakeholder was described by a number of participants, and consistently emerged across various public and private settings and contexts. Partnerships were described as a way for non-traditional (new) regional actors (e.g., PH

staff) to “participate” in food system policy activity and similarly, as a way for marginalized (existing) stakeholders (e.g., small-scale producers) to engage as a viable player (“participate”) in innovative food system initiatives in the Region. In these cases, the drive or motivation to ‘participate’ also influenced other important considerations. Specifically, a key feature of food system ‘participation’ was the recurring issue or concern regarding ‘*legitimacy*’. Specifically, this arose as an obvious sub-theme based on numerous examples of key policy actors working to establish credibility, or a *legitimate* voice, on food system policy issues as a way to “participate” in food system activity. Legitimacy was also described in the context of local food system stakeholders’ attempts to *legitimize* their participation in ‘fringe’ food-related activity.

Lastly, the ‘*local*’ and ‘*historical*’ contexts were important contextual elements that provided support for, and clarified critical features in the ROP policy making case study. Prior to the ROP, important early partnerships and relationships had been developing, and food system actors were already beginning to establish themselves as credible, or *legitimate*, voices on food system issues. Thus, historical events and influential individuals and groups were already positioned in their role as food policy actors or engaged in food system policy activity prior to the ROP. Similarly, the uniqueness of the ‘*local context*’ created an ideal environment for these activities to take place. Participants’ described a number of important features of the local context that were identified as key contextual factors and which helped to advance food policy options in the Region. With regard to the ROP policy making context (discussed in Chapter 5), *tensions, influence, power struggles, control and competition* emerged as important underlying features and relevant findings within the local and historical contexts.

4.2.2.1 Concept Map

The concept map of key overarching/underlying themes, sub-themes, context and relevant features is shown in Figure 2. The map is divided into two spheres of influence marked by the participation of food system actors and stakeholders in the regional food system (top), and global industrial food system (bottom). A large forward-pointing arrow represents the current direction of food systems change in light of the growing regional movement of concerned stakeholders working to establish healthy public policies and create a supportive food system environment. A second forward-pointing arrow suggests that as *participation* in this movement increases (that is,

as more people become involved as concerned policy advocates, or engaged in local food production, distribution, retailing or consumption-related activity) momentum or change will continue to move in a forward direction and may help to improve underlying concerns with the global industrial food system (including the effects of global warming, long-distance food transport, rising rates of obesity, urban sprawl and a lack of consideration and attention to issues of environmental sustainability). Specifically, the establishment of *game rules* (e.g., ‘get big or get out’), or *rules governing participation in the global industrial food system* are indicative of the power, control and influence of multi-national food corporations and large food system players. While these ‘*game rules*’ limit the ability of independent, or small-scale local food system actors to influence, or positively affect change at the global level, the ability to engage in local-level food system activity and participate in regional decision making has the potential to shape not only important food policy and planning changes but also can have a significant impact across a number of important sectors. A counter-pointing arrow illustrates the multiple barriers, or ‘*game rules*’ that hinder the ability for some local food system stakeholders to meaningfully engage as valued participants in the global industrial food system. In the same way, policy and planning barriers also exist at the local level and impact the ability for food system actors to participate locally, and to make a meaningful contribution to local food system activity. These barriers are explored in Chapter 6 and pose a significant threat to progress with regards to regional food system change.

A final critical component of the concept map is the underlying community values that shape how members of society understand and respond to food system issues. A number of significant local food system drivers have been identified over the past decade and are associated with a surge of interest in regional and community food systems. These drivers can be seen as important influences in shaping societal values and are best defined through the movements and actions of concerned communities. The following five driving factors are identified in the concept map: (1) global warming/climate change; (2) environmental sustainability; (3) public health; (4) land use (i.e., reducing urban sprawl); (5) farmer viability and are discussed throughout the following chapters.

Briefly, as Jerome Kaufman explains (personal communication, November 9, 2010) change is now well accepted and recognized as an important global concern. Concerned advocates point to the excessive use of fossil fuel energy in the food supply chain and are promoting local food systems which rely less on long-distance food transport. Environmental advocates, particularly those concerned with the sustainability of land and other natural resources are raising awareness about the impact of pesticides and fertilizer run-off, factory farms and genetically-modified organisms. A strong public health movement has also been raising awareness of dietary quality and food safety problems associated with foods produced and distributed through the conventional food system. This has contributed to a surge of public interest in ‘buying local’ and ‘direct’ from *farm to fork*. Public health movements have also been instrumental in pointing to issues of food access, both from a geographic and economic perspective, linking these concerns to the growing burden of diet-related chronic diseases. Contributing further to ‘food access’ concerns, sprawling cities and high demand for urban land have also increased the loss of rural farmland and are contributing to the economic decline of rural communities. Importantly, this has impacted the way communities view food and farming. Community movements and dominant societal values impact the degree to which regional decision makers, and regional staff experts are willing to participate or engage in policy and planning issues that affect private sector interests. These values, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7, determine the level of community support and capacity that is available to advance healthy public policies in support of the regional food system.

In summary, this section included a brief outline of the study’s key findings, overarching themes, and food system actors in Waterloo Region’s food system policy making case study. A concept map was presented as a preliminary overview of the content in Chapters 5-7. Findings from the study’s primary objectives and themes are discussed as a whole in Chapter 7 and considered for their potential to inform food system policy making in other jurisdictions. Chapter 8 concludes with a discussion and integration of findings presented in previous chapters, and considers the relevance of the research to policy and practice.

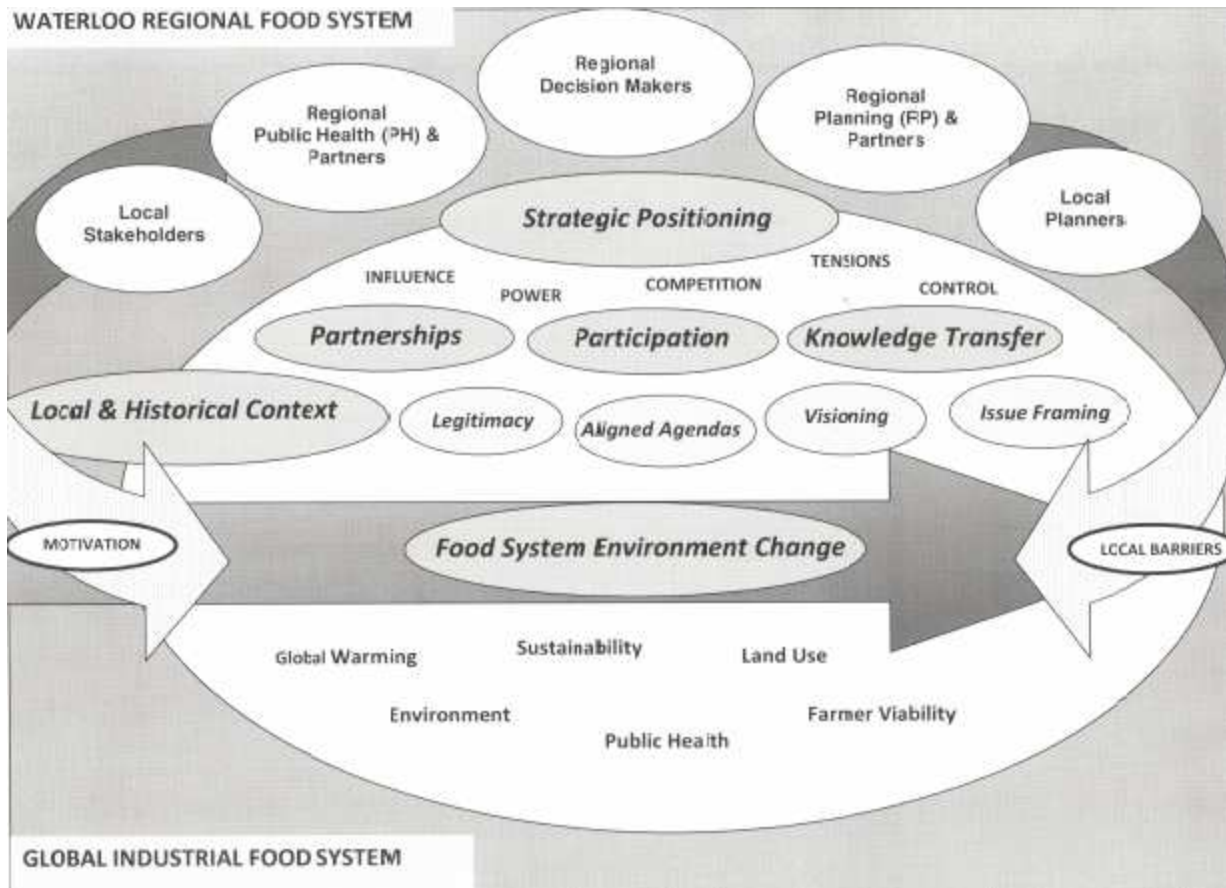


Figure 2: Concept Map of Themes, Concepts and Food System Activity in Waterloo Region

CHAPTER 5: FINDING FERTILE GROUND IN WATERLOO REGION WITH A VISION FOR THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

5.1. A Case Study of Food System Policy Making in Waterloo Region: Contextual Factors, Facilitators, Barriers, and the Role of Evidence

There has been very little consideration of food-related issues at the local and regional levels despite rising interest in a national food policy at the federal level. Recent efforts have placed the Region of Waterloo (ROW) (Waterloo Region, Ontario, Canada) at the forefront of local food system changes in Canada and thus, provide an interesting case study to explore the various facilitators, barriers, contextual factors and dissemination channels associated with food system policy-making at the regional level.

Government efforts to promote a healthy regional food environment through supportive policies and planning actions may help to facilitate residents' access to healthy food and in turn, lead to potential improvements in health. However, policy research is in its infancy and there have been no published studies to date exploring the ways in which food system planning policy 'ideas' reach the political agenda, are considered, and become adopted as part of official planning decisions for the community. An in-depth assessment of the ROW's policy and planning environment can contribute to the field of health policy research and help inform future food system planning efforts in other jurisdictions. This chapter addresses the first of three overarching objectives of this study which was to examine the process of food system policy making in Waterloo Region through multi-sectoral perspectives and to identify the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers at the individual- organizational- and system-levels. In addition, the recent adoption of the ROW's Regional Official Plan (ROP) in 2009 served as a natural experiment to examine the ways in which various types of evidence were used to inform the inclusion of food system ideas and planning options in the Region's long-range community plan. Specific questions regarding 'evidence' were not included in the interview guides, however particular attention was paid to the ways in which participants' described the *initiation* and *transfer* of food system planning considerations, as innovative '*policy ideas*', to policy planners during the ROP review process between 2005 and 2009. Thus, while transcripts of interviews were analyzed thematically, a key focus in examining multi-sectoral participant

perspectives was: *How was evidence used to inform the Region's food system policy making process?*

To appropriately examine the question of how evidence shaped the process, facilitators were recognized for their role in *facilitating* the transfer of evidence and *supporting* the adoption of food system policy options, and barriers were identified as factors which *hindered*, or had a negative influence on regional decision making. Although the purpose of this study was not to conduct a formal analysis of the policy process, Howlett & Ramesh's (2003) policy cycle was used to narrow the focus of research questioning and to help organize the subsequent coding and analysis of the data. The five identified stages include agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation and evaluation, however only the first three were considered in light of the recency of the ROP's adoption.

The policy cycle was used only as an analytic starting point and a means of understanding the context and classifying the individual-, organizational- and system-level facilitators and barriers. Thus, this chapter describes an in-depth examination of multi-sectoral perspectives of the key contextual factors, and individual-, organizational- and system-level facilitators and barriers associated with: the process through which food-related issues came to the attention of regional government (agenda setting); the formulation of draft food system policies and planning actions in the ROP (policy formulation); and the relevant decision making factors associated with the adoption of Section 3F as an appropriate course of regional action (decision making). Aspects of policy implementation were discussed with participants but are not included here. This chapter presents findings from forty-seven multi-sectoral participant interviews with regional decision makers (n=15), regional and local staff experts in planning and public health (n=16), and local food system stakeholders (n=16).

5.2. Agenda Setting: Defining the Problem in Waterloo Region

Agenda-setting is the first stage of the formal policy-making process and concerns the ways in which problems or regional issues come to the attention of government (Howlett et al., 2003). For policy planners, problems are identified by examining short- and long-range time horizons and by predicting future issues through considerations of economic, demographic, socio-cultural,

technocratic and political trends. In Waterloo Region, decision makers are informed directly by senior-level reporting from the Region's Planning Department (RP) and through their involvement with the Planning & Works Committee. Through an in-depth analysis of the findings, it was found that the 'historical context' and the 'local ROP review context' were important contextual factors that shaped the Region's policy and planning environment and set the stage for consideration of food policy options by RP. The following section examines the 'historical context' and identifies key relevant factors preceding the ROP review.

5.2.1. Historical Context: Pre-ROP Regional Priorities, Issues and Activities

Historical context played an important role in the ROP policy process. Specifically, a number of events and considerations leading up to the ROP were identified as important early influences of problem identification and food policy options. Three relevant factors were discussed as part of the historical context including: (1) RP's plans for regional growth and the development of a Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS); (2) the early initiation of strategic partnerships; and (3) PH's food systems groundwork and reputation.

5.2.1.1. Planning for Regional Growth: New Priorities and Direction

Between 2001 and 2003, RP developed a RGMS in response to large forecasted increases in population growth in the Region. Participants described it as a "comprehensive roadmap" and "benchmarking piece" and recognized its value in setting out a strategy to address anticipated population growth and new direction in provincial planning. This is noted in the quotations below,

"When the new Liberal government was elected, maybe 8 years ago, they started a series of changes to the Planning Act, changes to the Provincial Policy Statement and they developed a Growth Plan. So at the provincial level, you have all these progressive planning ideas coming out that didn't exist 10-15 years ago. So at the provincial level, you've got this focus for changing the way we've been growing in the past, and the focus was more on trying to cut back on sprawl, get back to more transit-oriented, mixed use communities."

"Now all of a sudden people are talking about complete communities, whereas 10 years ago, nobody did."

Despite having "no legal standing", the various policies, intentions and implementation activities outlined in the RGMS would subsequently be incorporated into the next revisions of the ROP as

part of its mandatory five year review. RP experts were concerned that provincial planning changes and increases in population growth would lead to greater regional development pressures and recognized the need to establish strong policy measures to protect agricultural areas from urban sprawl. Thus, growth management was high on the Region's political agenda and a number of planning strategies were being considered and implemented as a way to manage and accommodate change. Strategies discussed most by participants included: (1) the countryside line; (2) the establishment of complete communities (urban intensification); and (3) light rail transit. A firm countryside line around the Region's three large urban cities and rural settlement areas to protect farmland and environmentally-sensitive areas was regarded as a timely and politically important planning strategy. However, participants questioned the Region's ability to ensure long-term protection in light of strong development interests in these areas. The following comments reflect these concerns:

"The main issue that was being identified back then was the incredible rate of urban sprawl that was happening in Waterloo Region. I mean, development was just rampant and so most of planners' energy was fixed on trying to build a legal case for actually setting a boundary beyond which development couldn't happen...And when the Greenbelt became a political hot potato around Toronto, it made it easier for Waterloo I think to also go ahead with the countryside line."

"Our Official Plan does things like the countryside line. It's going to be everything we can do to sell that concept to the Province. Because they look at it and go 'Holy Crap! How can you do that?'. Well, we do it by doing good planning and figuring out where we should grow and where we shouldn't grow."

A number of important factors were noted to have played a role in securing early public and political support for the Region's growth management ideas. Specifically, RP was known for progressive and proactive policy innovation, highly competent senior planning leaders, and strong policies related to agricultural protection, environmental sustainability and affordable housing. Additionally, RP's Director of Policy had been seconded to the Province to help write provincial planning legislation. The significance of being at "the forefront of planning", as captured below, was an important factor within the historical context:

"A previous Regional Official Plan was used as a template for the Places to Grow Act because long before people were talking about urbanization and controlling suburban sprawl, we had already put it into our Official Plan...we've always kind of been at the forefront of some of these planning initiatives."

5.2.1.2. Need for Internal and External Partnerships

As noted above, the coming of the Province of Ontario's Places to Grow Act (Ministry of Infrastructure, 2011) and the anticipated challenge of protecting the Region's agricultural land from urban development was recognized as a "political hot potato", or a political *problem* that would necessitate the marshalling of as many regional partners as possible. Specifically, decision makers and senior-level staff experts placed a strong emphasis on internal and external partnerships as a way to increase public and political support for the Region's growth management strategies and other priority areas. In particular, collaboration across regional departments and strong working relationships with the Area Municipalities (AM) and with other external stakeholders were seen as a way to "make the case" for the Region's new planning direction. This would also help secure the necessary buy-in for the implementation of the RGMS and subsequent ROP considerations at the local level. Within this historical context, the need for collaborative partnerships, and in particular, the need to include a health agenda was recognized as a way to support and implement regional *growth* management strategies. This is best captured by the following:

"In terms of the ROP, for example, they knew that there was going to be lots of debate around this, and in particular the development implications are huge. And so having as much support for that, from a political point of view, and marshalling as many partners who will support your perspective...If you can line up more partners that actually support your perspective, it makes your case stronger. So it was in their [Planning] interest to continually align [Public] Health with what it was they were trying to achieve."

"So we [the Corporate Leadership Team] were talking about the Smart Growth Plan and we thought that strategically, we already knew we wanted to have a countryside line, and a transit corridor down the middle, we wanted to have intensification, and we knew that including a health argument would be a helpful thing to paint the picture of what we were trying to achieve..."

"Probably the number one thing that separates us from a lot of other municipalities is back in 2003 when we adopted the RGMS, one of the things we recognized was that the implementation of the strategy was much broader than the traditional planning framework and in fact, needed to draw in many different segments, or other professionals. In particular, Public Health was a big one."

As suggested by the quotes above, decision makers and senior department leaders recognized early on that PH's concern for rural health would offer the necessary support and public interest in what regional planners were trying to achieve through the countryside line and the

establishment of ‘complete communities’. Thus, PH’s early food-related groundwork also emerged as an important feature of the historical context as described below.

5.2.1.3. Public Health’s Groundwork, Food-Related Agendas, and Early Relationship Building with Regional Planners

Prior to initiating the ROP review, decision makers discussed ‘food access’ only in the context of their awareness of PH’s past and present food-related activities. In particular, PH was recognized for creating important channels to connect consumers to regional producers through their partnership with Foodlink Waterloo Region (FL). FL, a not-for-profit food advocacy organization established by PH, was well known to decision makers in light of the Region’s provision of start-up funding and the popularity of their local food initiatives. PH’s early efforts to promote local food as a way to address rural health concerns, led the majority of decision makers to describe ‘food access’ from an agricultural perspective. From this perspective, regional efforts to increase access to food, including supportive planning actions to encourage the production, distribution and retail of local food, were seen as adding weight to the Region’s countryside line decision by justifying the need to protect rural farmland from sprawl. However, PH’s other priorities, including physical and economic access to healthy food, were not discussed by decision makers. Thus, with respect to PH’s two key food-related agendas (discussed below), only those activities which considered ‘food access’ in relation to the Region’s local food and agricultural economy received much political recognition by decision makers in the current case study.

5.2.1.3.1. *Foodland Preservation, Community Food Security and Access to Food*

With a 50% projected increase in population growth over the next 40 years, the approval of the RGMS in 2003 was an important historical milestone for PH and an important opportunity to promote greater consideration of food access and community food security issues. PH’s concern for farmland protection and rural health stemmed from earlier investigations into food as a determinant of health - the adopted focus of the new and unique Health Determinants, Planning and Evaluation (HDPE) Division within PH. Thus, as captured below, PH took advantage of the

RGMS as a window of opportunity to move forward on plans to raise public awareness of important, and *inter-related*, food-system issues, as noted by the following,

“A year or two before the Growth Management Strategy, Public Health started talking to the Planning Department about getting food systems into the thinking there...[they] were already concerned about containing urban sprawl and protecting farmland but we asked the question a bit more pointedly ‘Are we going to think about feeding that growing population?’”

“There was the development of many background documents in terms of the Regional Growth Management Strategy and it was certainly at that junction that we said, you know, ‘Food is really intrinsic to the RGMS’.”

“From our point of view, we wanted to make people understand that the [countryside] line wasn’t just about protecting the business interests of farmers and property owners, which is how most people saw it, but it was about ensuring that we could produce food.”

The last comment above is significant in that it illustrates PH’s early approach to framing political and public understanding of the problem from a public health perspective. By shifting the community’s understanding of the problem away from urban sprawl (an issue of little potential interest to most residents), PH could attract widespread support for ‘farmland protection’ and appeal to a much broader audience of concerned local food system stakeholders and health and environmental-protection advocates. Importantly, with the establishment of the HDPE Division in 1999, PH staff had been hired with unique strengths and non-traditional health backgrounds in social justice, political science, and community building, and possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively build capacity and a climate of change to address these issues.

As early as 2001, when the Region began working on the RGMS, early relationship building between the RP and PH departments (at corporate-, senior- and project-staff levels) had developed through PH’s efforts to raise planners’ awareness of food-related issues. The aim of early cross-departmental communication was described by participants as a way to not only ensure community food security (in light of increased fuel costs and disappearing farmland) but also as a means to promote a secure farming future for the Region’s local growers and producers. The latter was noted to be a particular sensitivity among senior RP experts and PH’s research into the factors affecting farmer viability, and established network with the farming community, helped to strengthen this cross-department relationship prior to the ROP review process.

5.2.1.3.2. *Health and the Built Environment: Food Stores as part of a Walkable Community*

“So with this broader sort of concern about the built environment and how it ties to active transportation and also intensification and supporting transit and a firm countryside line, the other thing that resonated with that was preserving agricultural land which also ties into local food and local food systems.”

As noted above, PH’s parallel focus on the impact of the built environment on obesity and other health-related concerns (e.g., air quality, walkability) was an important, food-related planning consideration leading up to the ROP review. Specifically, PH’s ‘neighbourhood walkability’ research had contributed new insight into possible food deserts in Waterloo Region, or areas where access to food stores was limited or impossible without access to a vehicle. PH staff worked to raise municipal planners’ awareness of the impact of community planning decisions on residents’ access to food. Despite these efforts, a sensitive and carefully protected relationship between regional and local planners made it difficult for PH to affect food-related changes at the local level (this two-tiered planning context is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.3.1). From a senior-level RP perspective, there was a lot of interest in work related to food deserts, particularly as relevance to health and obesity could be used to push forward the Region’s plans for light rail transit, intensification and the development of complete communities. From a PH perspective, reductions in automobile emissions, increased access to food destinations within mixed use neighbourhoods, and improvements in transportation infrastructure to reduce the geographical barriers associated with food deserts would also support a number of PH priorities. With respect to ‘food deserts’, the following captures PH and RP’s common understanding of ‘food access’ within a parallel focus on health and the built environment:

“Back in 2003, we were doing presentations that were talking about the need to really change the nature of how we do our business as planners because we were in a situation where the public’s health was being directly affected by the nature of our policies. So we took a look at a number of different things, walkability became a big one, the use of public transit, and the way the city is shaped became a big focus. And one of the interesting ones that came up was the number of areas within cities which had no access to food other than by automobile... You know; they were effectively, by what was defined by Public Health, food deserts. And so that raised the issue of food access in everybody’s consciousness and that this was something that we wanted to take a look at as part of our Official Plan review and as part of really getting a sense of how we could start to make changes to the traditional planning model at a regional level to start to address these.”

Overall, PH's two food-related agendas within the HDPE were strategically aligned with RP's planning direction to protect agricultural land, promote urban intensification through complete communities and secure funding for light rail transit. Within this historical context, important outcomes for regional planners included access to PH's community networks, increased public interest in community planning decisions, and health evidence related to urban form and obesity to support a new direction for urban infrastructure. PH played an important early role by raising awareness of food-related problems through research and advocacy, building capacity for change within the regional community, and establishing cross-departmental linkages with regional planners (discussed further in Chapter 7). An increasingly collaborative partnership with RP provided a strategic advantage and an opportunity for PH to be included as an important internal partner in the upcoming ROP review as captured by the following RP perspective on the need for "more consistently collaborative" and "tighter and closer links" with PH:

"I think more than most places in Ontario that I'm familiar with, we probably have a much closer working relationship [with Public Health] and it's fairly recent on an ongoing basis. It's always been collegial on a case-by-case basis where there was something big that came up and we thought 'Gee, we need to talk to the people in Public Health'. But we didn't have what I would consider a strong regular working relationship. Staff didn't know each other that well, couldn't have told you who was working on what and why and so forth and then through the course of the Growth Management Strategy that we did from 2001-2003, we identified a lot of links because the issue of Healthy Communities... anyway, we established some of the ongoing linkages that needed to be created and nurtured, and that has carried forward. So through the Growth Management Strategy, we ended up realizing that there was a need to be more consistently collaborative and to have tighter and closer links."

Thus, a key finding within this historical context was an early pre-established relationship between senior-level staff in RP and PH and a commitment to work together to address issues related to food, health and planning. Lastly, PH's early food system groundwork and growing number of food-related activities created a reputation that many participants recognized as a key factor in their success, particularly with respect to influencing regional planning considerations. The following comments capture participants' perceptions of PH as an early food systems leader,

"To their credit, Public Health has been the pioneers in making an association between healthy food systems and healthy communities. They were amongst the very first that would have taken food and extended the food theme and tied it into a healthy community. [And] then gone further to say that a healthier built environment enables a healthy food system."

“Food systems started to impact on planning departments and planning departments across the Province would always cite Waterloo Region as one of the key movers and shakers in the food system world. So it would be embarrassing for the Region not to enshrine food systems in the ROP.”

“As food systems actually struck a chord that made sense, other jurisdictions came to our Public Health Department saying ‘Wow, you’re doing all this, you made this association...’. Of course, Public Health is going to move forward because that sort of fuelled...it justified their initial investment. And so they were seen as leaders and pioneers, it’s hard not to pursue that even further.”

As suggested by these perspectives, PH’s ability to make important connections between rural health issues, agricultural land protection and urban access to local food was a critical factor leading up to the ROP review process. In addition, PH was also able to raise the issue of food deserts by linking a healthy eating and physical activity agenda to the Region’s plans for urban intensification and the need for food stores within close proximity to places where people live and work. The historical context is relevant in this case study in that it provided an important period of time prior to the ROP whereby PH established an increasingly collaborative partnership with RP, and fostered public and political support for food access, and food system issues.

5.2.2. Regional Official Plan (ROP) Review and Local Context: Agenda-Setting

By the time of the ROP consultation and review process (see relevant timeline in Appendix G), a mutual interest in food retail opportunities in neighbourhoods and food and agricultural-related planning issues in rural areas had well positioned PH as an important internal regional partner. Multi-sectoral perspectives revealed three key factors in this context that were important in maintaining PH’s ability to inform regional food access problem considerations during early stages of the ROP review process. These included: PH staff’s use of evidence, the establishment of external partnerships and a senior-level PH food system champion.

5.2.2.1. Public Health’s Strategic Use of Evidence and Regional Positioning to Inform a Food Systems Problem

PH’s early efforts to collaborate with RP included sharing ideas about community food security and neighbourhood food access concerns. PH benefited from planners’ expert insight into

regional and local planning policies and practices and gained a better understanding of how current practices could inadvertently affect food access in the Region. As staff explored emerging issues, the complexity of food-related problems became better understood through a ‘*food systems*’ lens, a topic that was just beginning to be identified and discussed in the planning literature. PH used both the academic and grey literature to inform their understanding of food system issues and established a *food system networking group*. These resources supported advocacy efforts during early stages of the ROP review by contributing to PH’s ideas and plans for food system change and equipping staff with practical policy options to explore with their community partners. As illustrated below, RP also recognized PH’s shift to a ‘food systems’ approach and importantly, began to understand their own role in helping to address identified problems:

“Our discussions with the Public Health group, our colleagues there, their focus [early on] was more on food security....So we kept on with some of that dialogue [which] started to shift more to how you get more of the food produced in this Region to stay in this Region?...And on top of that, what about different ways of getting the food to market so that it becomes a food systems issue? How does it go from the farm to the consumer?...So that’s when a lot of discussion about what policies could we put in the Plan that would deal with this access to local food or food security stuff really started to come together and we started saying ‘OK, at least we now have a bit more of a focus on some of the things we actually think we can get at, and other things we can’t but have never thought it through before, so let’s delve in! That’s the genesis of the discussion.”

“But certainly in working with our colleagues in Public Health, this was a big focus for them, they felt quite strongly that access to locally grown food was something worth promoting.”

1. Academic Literature

PH staff experts acknowledged the influence of a seminal food system planning study on their understanding of the connection between planning policies and community food security (Pothukuchi et al., 2000). The paper was timely and influenced PH’s direction and active efforts to influence regional planning policy as part of their ‘food systems’ agenda. More importantly, the paper offered a tangible way for PH staff to convince planners that food systems issues were problems that were already beginning to receive policy consideration within the planning profession. PH’s use of research evidence to influence planners’ understanding of the problem is captured by the following:

“I was sending those people articles from the planning literature about the food system and saying ‘Hey look, it’s not just me in Public Health telling you about this, people in your own field are starting to talk about this.’”

“What we’re finding is more and more the research is saying that chronic diseases are the direct result of the nature of our urban form. And so the identification of that was something that started happening about ’98 but really started to take hold about 2005 when a number of huge studies came out.”

“I would say Public Health [staff] were the ones that came to us saying ‘Look, here’s some stuff, what can you [Planning staff] do about this?...And then from our side we also could see where some of the benefits and where some of the trends were coming from and we were able to say to them ‘We don’t know the answers to this, have you guys done research?’...And they were great in coming back to us [and informing us].”

2. *Grey Literature and External Partnerships*

As noted previously, PH had also begun to develop a reputation for their active interest in local food system issues. PH’s growing collection of food system-related departmental reports and consultation activities was mentioned by participants and found to be an important contributing factor related to the Division’s growing recognition within and outside the Region. One of the most highly regarded projects was the creation of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! (BLBF) map, a product of PH’s partnership with FL and an important resource for identifying local food producers and suppliers in Waterloo Region.

“We were very much involved in the creation of Foodlink Waterloo Region. That came out of our first round of community-based planning, which happened in the Fall of 2000...people identified a number of issues and one of them was a mechanism to link local farmers to local consumers....And the Region of Waterloo funded Foodlink in the amount of \$50,000 and we helped with their initial grant, and helped bylaw development and hiring, and all kinds of things, so we worked really actively in that area. We launched the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map (BLBF).”

“We launched Foodlink at a time when we [Public Health] needed some external partners...None existed so we got this group up.”

The BLBF! map was later adopted by 18 other municipalities in Ontario and earned Waterloo Region an important reputation as an early supporter of the local food system. Decision makers acknowledged FL’s role in the success of the map, and strongly supported PH’s external partnership with FL as a way to address farmer viability. Indirectly, PH’s early ‘reputation effects’, and increasing credibility and recognition for innovative food system activities contributed to the subsequent transfer, or *diffusion*, of PH’s new food system planning ideas as relevant policy options for the ROP.

3. *Public Health’s Food System Networking Group and Knowledge Community: the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable*

The establishment of the Waterloo Region Food System Roundtable (FSRT) in 2005 was one of PH's key RGMS implementation activities. The FSRT provided a forum for stakeholders to raise their concerns and establish mutually-agreeable solutions to emerging food system problems in the Region. The strategic role of a senior-level local food system champion in PH (PH champion), discussed as a key facilitator below, with relevant insight into the Region's priorities and RP's planning direction, was noted in transferring food system ideas and policy options to a lead policy planner and author of the ROP:

“[W]hat shifted a little bit was that I managed to capture the attention of [lead author] who was a planner with the lead on the ROP and at that time, he had the lead on what was called the countryside line.”

Importantly, the lead author was invited by PH to serve as one of the FSRT's 18 core members. As part of the FSRT, it was anticipated that the lead author would gain important insight into stakeholders' concerns about restrictive planning policies and farmer viability and that collectively, they would develop appropriate planning solutions to be addressed through policy changes to the ROP:

“[P]art of the reason for wanting a Food System Roundtable [was] to pay attention to these kinds of things and call attention to these kinds of things.”

Additionally, while links between PH and RP project-staff had already begun through earlier consultation activities, the lead author's role on the FSRT would strengthen the cross-departmental linkages at the project-level and provide more opportunities for PH's champion to influence food policy options in the ROP.

5.2.2.2. Public Health's Dedicated Project Staff and Food System Champion: Promoting a Food Systems Agenda in Waterloo Region

PH project staff recognized the uniqueness of their Division and attributed its committed food system direction to the strategic visioning ability and personal and professional interests of a senior-level food system champion. Staff worked diligently to address emerging food system problems, often having to 'think outside the box' on issues that had not yet been considered by

PH professionals. As noted by the PH perspectives below, staff faced both opportunities and challenges to advancing food system policy ideas within a hierarchical organizational structure:

“I was a leader but I was a different kind of leader. I worked very collegially with staff and that’s a big tension in a bureaucracy that’s run as a hierarchy. I argued a lot with the bureaucracy, always to protect my staff from it and its implications. You can only do that for so long before the higher ups say ‘We’ve had enough of that’.

“Another thing that [PH’s champion] did, she hired people who had skills in community development which was completely unusual for Public Health because other health departments hire people who are trained in Public Health, right? So these people come on board, they’re very good at working with the community...so they had the skills to work in the community which many Public Health people don’t have at all. Which was, again, a brilliant thing to do.”

“And so once people started to get the hang of it and started to think ‘We want to make more walkable communities, we want to work with more rural people, we want to set up committees of people we can interact and consult with,’ staff time was really the resource that we had, not much else.”

Importantly, the investment of PH staff time was identified as a significant factor in moving forward food system ideas in the Region. Given limited regional funding and the lack of a provincial mandate, PH’s champion strategically dedicated staff time to research and to building external partnerships and community coalitions to push externally in areas where staff had limited capacity to act. Staff time was recognized as a critical PH resource as follows:

“I play a staff support role and it’s basically written in my job assignment, you know, that I spend about half my time supporting that [community interest] group.”

“I think that all that work that went into those research papers, it took a lot of staff time to work on those things which I don’t think many health departments had.”

“I would say mostly staff time. Just staff time boning up on the issues and developing relationships with planners and developing input, like spending time working on our own positions on these issues.”

“So it took a lot of time and a lot of money and Public Health contributed all of that.”

Thus, within the context of the ROP review, the problems associated with food system issues in general and concerns about food deserts and restrictive rural planning policies and farmer viability in particular, were brought to the attention of RP and regional decision makers by PH. Specifically, PH informed regional planners through literature, a growing reputation for food system activity, and insight from the FSRT. Committed PH project staff were directed by the

strategic visioning ability and personal and professional interests of an internal food system champion who invested significant staff time in research and the establishment of community partnerships. Additionally, the ‘idea’ of addressing food system problems in the ROP was transferred to RP through important cross-departmental communication channels at the project- and senior-staff levels within the organization. At the beginning of the ROP process in 2005, a strategic partnership between PH and RP had already begun and staff recognized their ability to support each other’s agenda and collaboratively affect food system change. This is captured from a PH perspective as follows:

“I mean I think because we had built that base relationship over the years beforehand, our input was welcomed...So when they began the process of the ROP review, this year, it was not a question of pushing for Public Health to be involved which is often the situation in other jurisdiction where there hasn’t been a history, it was an assumption that Health would be at the table, and would be involved.”

5.3. Policy Formulation: Defining ROP Policy Options to Support the Regional Food System

Policy formulation is the second stage of the formal policy-making process and can be viewed as the stage through which policy options within government are formulated (Howlett et al., 2003). As a legislative planning framework, a *regional official plan* can be used to: provide a statement of government intent; establish future direction; define a clear position on an issue; address problems or opportunities; serve as a context for action; and provide an outline for decision-making (M. Seasons, personal communication, n.d). Official plans can include goals, objectives and policies to set and clarify direction and strategies, tactics, and operational details to move towards action and implementation. Importantly, they also serve as a guide in identifying the roles, implementation activities, and responsibilities of local municipalities to which lower-tier plans and actions must conform. An important factor shaping policy formulation in this study was the Region’s two-tier planning environment described below.

5.3.1. The Region’s Two-Tier Planning Context

A two-tier (regional/municipal) planning context emerged as an important factor influencing policy options in the ROP. Senior RP experts reasoned that the Region’s two-tier planning context gave them the ability to focus on high-level, long-range planning issues (rather than

specific local-level planning concerns) and had contributed to the Department’s reputation for progressive planning. The Region’s two-tier planning system, as an important contextual factor, is recognized below:

“The two-tier environment and the *very stable* political context that we’ve had over the last 25 years have allowed us to do stuff that are going to shape the way this community grows for the next 50 to 100 years. It’s been fun to be in the right place at the right time.”

“And what it really comes down to, and this sounds derogatory to my colleagues at the local level, it’s not meant that way at all... We deal with big picture stuff, they deal with dogs, and noise, and fences, and parking and they’re very good at it and that is absolutely critical that somebody deal with those things but dogs, fences, noise, parking and that little stuff will always fill in your basket. It will always fill your time and you’ll never get an opportunity to do the big picture planning.”

Thus, as noted below, within a two-tier planning context, the Strategic Policy Group within RP was able to do “things that would never happen” including the formulation and consideration of innovative food system policy options as part of a new direction for the ROP:

“But because we’re at this two tier level where we fit very nicely as a very innovative group between the Province and the local municipalities, it’s allowed us to do things that we would *never ever* had the opportunity to do..[I]t’s amazing how much of it is dealt with at the staff level at the Region....[B]elieve me our Council holds us accountable. It’s not that we’re this unaccountable group up here. But what they do is they focus on and participate in the long range big picture stuff and the reason that they’ve got the time to do that is that somebody is doing a very good job dealing with the rest of it at a different level. And it’s created the opportunity for us to do stuff that would never happen in a single-tier city. It would *never* happen.”

The following sections present key findings related to policy formulation within a two-tier context including: the negotiation of policy options with external and internal partners, the openness of senior-level staff to the incorporation of new ideas, and the drafting and reframing of food policies in the ROP.

5.3.1.1. The Area Municipal Working Group: Gauging the Appropriateness of Health- and Food-Related Policy Options with External Partners

The support from the Region’s AMs in general, and local municipal planners in particular, was identified as a critical factor in moving forward with plans for the inclusion of new health- and food-related planning ideas in the ROP as noted below:

“So their [local planners’] perspectives are critical to any kind of implementation when you’re getting into, you know ‘Are these policies going to have any effect at all?’ You’re going to need their views.”

Thus, during early drafting stages of the ROP, senior experts in RP spent a lot of time nurturing their relationship with municipal representatives and preparing local planners for the introduction of new regional policy and planning ideas. The establishment of an Area Municipal Working Group (AMWG) was one of the earliest efforts to include the AMs in the ROP consultation process and importantly, was regarded by participants as a way to gauge local planners' support for new policy ideas. The AMWG was comprised of regional policy planners (including the lead ROP author), a planning representative from each of the AMs and stakeholders from the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) and the Waterloo Region Federation of Agriculture (FA). Another member of the AMWG included a planner who had been hired by RP to work in PH as a liaison between the two regional departments (this is described as a key facilitating factor at the organizational-level in Section 5.5.2.2). Throughout the ROP review process, the group met regularly to examine and formulate policy options and to discuss ideas, review drafts and provide feedback on RP's proposed regional planning direction. Local planners' perspectives on the AMWG as part of the policy formulation process are noted as follows:

“So we met over the course of a couple of years from the very initial drafty drafts of the ROP to the latest Council-adopted one. That's how I was involved in all of this. And we talked a great deal about 3F.”

“Everyone was involved, so we met...when it got closer to the final release of [the ROP], we were meeting a couple of times a week or fairly frequently. And we went through the Plan, so not just 3F, chapter by chapter, page by page. That was the chance where we all went through it and bounced ideas off of each other.”

“During the drafting of it, we worked with Area Municipalities at the staff-level. There was a lot of back and forth at that time so that they actually had input into it, and could comment on it.”

“Right from the very beginning we were involved in going through the draft policies, policy by policy by policy, and we did it through three versions of it, as were all the area municipalities. So they asked for our advice, and we gave it.”

In general, the AMWG helped to raise awareness of early ideas concerning the direction and new ROP focus, and in this context, set out the Region's intentions for complete communities and the countryside line. During these initial stages of policy discussion, local planners recognized PH's influence in early drafts of the ROP as follows:

“So from very early on, there were a few show-and-tell talks with area municipalities and, of course, with regional municipalities, with all kinds of development groups...and many of them were jointly presented by [the Directors of

Public Health and Planning]. And so there was a very deliberate positioning that [the Director of Planning] took to position Health and Growth together because it was successful in capturing support.”

From a PH perspective, RP’s ability to use the AMWG as a way to gauge acceptance of health-related planning considerations in the ROP was seen as an important strategy in policy formulation. In attempting to move new options forward, the AMWG allowed regional planners to present health-related planning ideas, manage initial reactions and concerns, and capture support for new food-related policies. A close working relationship between senior experts to align Health and Growth gave PH unique insight into RP’s early challenges and jurisdictional tension with the AMs, as noted by the following:

“Largely because this was so new and foreign, I think [the Director of Planning] knew the uphill battle to sell this to Area Municipalities. Even though this was way before we [Public Health] had even spoken with Area Municipalities, he knew. And so I think it would be fair to say that in the early stages of actually trying to craft [health-related] policies, we got some pretty negative feedback on them.”

As noted by the following, it was an important turning point for PH in their realization that they would need the support of AM planners as well but that due to the sensitivity of that relationship with RP, they would have limited capacity to act without the support of their RP partners:

“I realized the relationship with municipal planners is absolutely key. That the people going to review those proposals, who I had never up to that point had any contact with, for them to understand the importance of food, and food access to health was what was actually important in all of this. Nothing we had done to date made any difference.”

“He [the Director of Planning] has spent years cultivating these relationships to set the groundwork so that we could get this through in a way that wouldn’t make them feel defensive, in a way that would bring them along...It’s definitely a managed relationship. It ‘s really a very critical relationship in this community because we have a two-tier government, which is...very sensitive.”

5.3.1.2. Inter-Departmental Request for Input: Informing Policy Options

Participants also discussed the importance of broad consultation with regional departments as a critical feature of the ROP policy formulation process. In particular, RP’s initial request for feedback - a blank table of contents included as an email attachment to all regional departments - was described as an early step in identifying regional planning concerns and potential policy options:

“I can recall a request coming from the Planning Department to various department across the Region, and Public Health being one of them, to ask for ideas for inclusion in the Plan...I can recall this template sent to us which was like ‘What are the goals that you want, what are the policies, and what is the background justification for it?’

From a RP perspective, the inclusion of a specific food-related section was not something that they had initially intended to include in the ROP. In light the Province’s direction on intensification, RP was attempting to change traditional ways of planning by incorporating new ideas on ‘complete communities’ and by promoting a greater mix of uses in the development of new and existing communities. RP experts’ perspectives on the food policy considerations in early drafts of the ROP are noted as follows:

“And one of the big foci of our new plan is to try to develop more mixed use communities...and so connected to that is food. You want to have food destinations such as food stores, farmers’ markets, community gardens, and even restaurants...So that was part of our thinking, it wasn’t so much access to food, but it was ‘How can we integrate food destinations into our broader concept of mixed use development?’”

“When we started this process, we knew certain things we wanted. We knew the elements of the food system that we wanted to support. And we knew that we wanted to protect farmland and we wanted to support farmers, we wanted to create a climate in which farming would, you know, be viable. We also knew that we wanted to promote community gardens, and urban agriculture.”

“We didn’t really think of putting a section on food in our Plan initially. We started the project at least 3 or 4 years ago and one of things we did was we came up with a table of contents of what the various chapter heading would be, just to come up with a bit of a framework for what we thought would go into each section...we had sections on agriculture, and agricultural policies, and farmland preservation, that sort of thing. We also had another section which was our soft section called Liveability in Waterloo Region. “

As a regional department, PH was also included in RP’s early ‘request for ideas’. As noted previously, a strong and ongoing working relationship between RP and PH’s senior directors and project-level staff helped facilitate the diffusion of information across departments and shaped RP’s early understanding of food policy options:

“Through Public Health we started to learn more about this issue of food accessibility and food deserts and we thought, ‘Well that ties in well with another one of our planning goals that we wanted, you know, to create a greater mix of uses in our communities’.”

At a project-level, PH staff considered their invitation to participate in policy formulation as both an outcome of earlier RGMS collaboration and current cross-departmental partnership with RP. As well, staff also recognized that regional decision makers were keen to have PH representation in the ROP review process as a way to increase public involvement in regional planning issues.

Thus, as illustrated below, PH took advantage of an important opportunity to influence regional food system planning as reflected in the following perspective on their role in policy formulation:

“You know, if it was our document, it might have looked differently, but it’s not our document. So, our role was to influence them. And we weren’t equal partners, they had to invite us to their meetings, they had to invite us to provide feedback and it could have just as easily been that we could have had no access.”

“In the case of this particular advocacy approach, clearly we pulled some things that worked to get where we got”

Participants attributed PH’s early success in influencing RP ideas to a focused food system agenda and a collegial working relationship across senior- and project-staff levels. The organization’s hierarchical decision making structure was identified as an important organizational barrier that limited consideration of new policy options within government. However, as noted below, PH’s food system champion was recognized as an important policy advocate who had strategically built capacity and created opportunities for collaboration within and across regional departments. These leadership style attributes and ability to secure early partnerships with RP were critical in minimizing organizational hierarchy and advancing food system policy options,

“We had a very collaborative research team in Public Health. And I think there were times when they [staff] forgot that they were in a hierarchical organization because my style is very collegial and collaborative with them. We worked as a team on research projects and I think sometimes they couldn’t adjust to the fact that oh yes, but I work in this strange hierarchy where things are being said and I don’t know what....So basically what started to happen with the ROP then, we had- we were invited to input into chapters.”

5.3.1.3. Senior-Level Regional Planning Staff: Openness to Exploring and Testing New Policy Options

In this case study, a critical feature of policy formulation within a two-tier planning context was senior-level experts’ openness to exploring and testing new policy options. Specifically, the ability to integrate new food policy options in the ROP was attributed to senior-level staff as “policy gatekeepers”, who were recognized by participants for their role and ability to secure Council’s acceptance of new policy ideas:

“I’ve been fortunate here because both my Manager and the Director and our Commissioner are fairly progressive, they’re open-minded and they don’t mind listening to good ideas and testing them out and seeing if they fly. And that was the thing with our Plan, because it was a fairly lengthy process, we were allowed to put in a few ideas, see what the reaction was and if the reaction was good, it went a notch further and then if the reaction was still good, it made its way into the final document.”

“In a Planning Department, unless you’ve got the senior staff behind you, it isn’t going to go anywhere. In some ways, they’re the gatekeepers of what policies actually make it to the political agenda. Some of the Councilors could raise issues and say ‘We’d like you to look at this’ but it’s how that message gets repackaged and reported back to Council and all that is done through the senior staff in the Planning Department.”

The importance of senior-level support for planning ideas from other departments was also noted as a critical way to advance new policy options. Specifically, and as illustrated below, PH’s internal champion provided the necessary senior-level, cross-departmental support for new food system policy options in the ROP by knitting together, or *aligning* policy direction at higher levels within the organization:

“We certainly had the folks at Public Health backing us and supporting us even at the senior staff level, which was critical. Because a lot of the time, at my level, if a lot of ideas don’t get past your Manager or Director, or senior staff in your own department, those ideas aren’t going to make it anywhere. And if you have more senior staff in other departments in the Region, converging and talking about these issues at a higher level, then trust me, they’ll get implemented at my level....If you can’t get it through your department, it’s never going to get to a local Council or Regional Council, it’s just not going to fly. It has to kind of make its way to the top.”

At the project level, a specific example of cross-departmental support was shown through PH’s willingness to share official mailing lists from their work with the rural farming community. PH’s extensive contacts and community network with farmers and other food system stakeholders can be seen as a bargaining chip that PH used to strengthen their role in informing food system policy options. Strategically, by providing the lead author access to these contacts and offering to play a coordinating role in consultation activities, PH secured a better position to influence (and remain engaged in) agriculture- and food-related discussions as illustrated by the following:

“He [the lead author] knew we would have some mailing lists because of our work with the rural community health study...So I got back to him and said ‘Absolutely, I can send you the mailing list but what if we jointly do this and I help you facilitate this? And we [Public Health] have some staff who can do some outreach on this and actively go around and visit with their contacts and personally invite them to come [to the ROP consultation meetings], right?’”

“And so we collaborated...and they [RP] got such rich rich input and they were so happy by that, and so delighted that, I think, that was probably a watershed that forged the partnership because they saw how we could be useful to

them”

Thus, as captured by multi-sectoral perspectives, key features of policy formulation within a two-tier planning context included the establishment of an AMWG; the inclusion of internal regional departments in the identification of early planning problems and policy ideas; and senior-level staff openness and strategic positioning as a way to explore and advance new policy options for the ROP. The next section describes a critical period of policy re-formulation (redrafting) as a critical feature in policy formulation and a key factor in advancing a unique food policy section in the ROP.

5.3.2. Re-Drafting Policy Ideas: The Process of Reframing Policy Options

As noted above, PH experts played an important role in influencing RP’s understanding of food deserts and raising awareness of the importance of food stores. With respect to the latter, PH’s built environment research revealed that residents identified ‘neighbourhood food outlets’ as one of the key destination points in a community that would encourage more active physical activity and reduce their reliance on automobiles. Thus, in early discussions with the AMWG, RP presented new policy ideas around food destinations as part of the Region’s intensification plans to establish complete communities. Importantly, these early food-related ideas were included as part of *unofficial drafts* and presented to local planners for feedback. As captured below, the response was initially very poor:

“People looked at what we thought were our relative good food policies and were saying ‘What is the Region doing trying to get into commercial planning?’ And again, this gets to some of the tensions about what the Region’s role is and what the local municipal role is. Commercial planning...that whole thing tends to be a locally-driven process. They [local planners] want to be the ones in charge of where and when and what types of stores can be located within their communities. So we had a policy about requiring food stores to be located in close proximity to where people live in neighbourhoods...A lot of people looked at that and said ‘What are you guys doing? This is not a regional role. Are you getting into commercial planning?’ And ‘You’re starting to dictate to the local municipalities what types of stores we should be having’.”

The following sections briefly highlight participant perspectives on the process of redrafting policy options as a way to minimize perceived jurisdictional concerns and secure buy-in from local planners within a two-tier planning context. Similarly, PH also maintained an active role as

an internal partner and strong local food advocate by supporting and influencing RP's consideration of a 'food systems' issue frame.

5.3.2.1. Jurisdictional Concerns

As captured by the quote above, tensions between regional and local planners arose from perceptions of the Region's perceived encroachment, or overstepping of well-established jurisdictional boundaries within a two-tier planning framework. The resulting tensions were acknowledged by both regional and local planners as follows:

“Well, you can go back to our role, I mean there's always been that tension and again, this is kind of a barrier, I guess... Yeah, planning is such a political beast...there's provincial planning, regional planning and then local planning and each one wants to sort of insert or have some effect on a process as to how development should occur.”

“One of the problems that we have is that we may have some good ideas that we want to pursue but we always have the issue of the local municipalities and trying to balance their concerns of having, instead of a big brother kind of policy whereby the Region says 'the Area Municipalities shall do this', and to have it more of an approach whereby the Region sets the broader policy framework and says 'this is what we'd like to do, but we'll let you figure out exactly where it will be done. So I guess what I'm trying to say is that... whenever we're getting into an area where we're trying to achieve something new, we always have the risk of someone saying 'Well, is this a regional issue?'. That's a question we commonly get asked, 'Why does the Region need to have this in its Official Plan?' ”

Importantly, these tensions were regarded as a threat not only to RP's ability to move forward plans and ideas for 'complete communities', it also affected local planners' receptiveness to food policy options in general. Despite an understanding that the push for complete communities was coming from the Province, planners opposed the Region's involvement in food-related commercial planning and regarded it as 'outside' their legal planning authority. Specifically, regional planners' attempts to provide direction, or “require” plans for small-size food stores in neighbourhoods in early policy drafts were met with resistance and opposition and forced the ROP Writing Team to step back and re-evaluate their planning options and objectives. This critical point in the policy formulation process is recognized as an important contextual factor as follows:

“They [Regional Planning] had come out with a draft, and it was extremely detailed. They then took the whole process back, cancelled our meetings and everything else and went back to the board and redrafted it before we really got into another set of meetings.”

5.3.2.2. Reframing Policy Options: The Role of Issue Framing

The unanticipated early responses from local planners lead to an important redrafting period for food policy options. Importantly, based on the lead author's active involvement with PH staff and members of the FSRT, the idea of shifting food store ideas to a 'food system' policy frame was noted as a critical turning point in policy formulation and supported the development of a separate food system planning section in the ROP (i.e., Section 3F). By framing food policy options this way, RP was able to divert attention away from commercial planning activities and achieve the necessary support from external partners. The importance of the policy frame in this context is noted as follows:

“And what that did, it caused us to step back and say ‘Ok, people are confused, they don’t understand what it is we’re trying to get at’. And what we ended up deciding to do is to keep the policies that we had, sort of spread out throughout the chapter, but then have another section in our Plan, and put it into Chapter 3 which was sort of our soft policies that dealt with liveability and quality of life types of issues. And in there we put in the section on Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods.”

“Part of the buy-in was because when we looked at what we had, we realized that by changing the focus to more of a food systems approach, it just clarified what it was the Region was trying to do and it meshed well with a lot of other goals in our Plan related to mixed use, the environmental aspects, the agricultural aspects and sustainability. And then people started to see that by framing it the way we did, and promoting access to local food, that we were very much in line with what the Region was all about traditionally.”

“We also changed the term food stores to food destinations to provide a little bit more...I’m not sure if we made it worse or better, there’s another whole series of debates about how we tried to de-emphasize the references to stores which got us into the commercial planning aspect and we tried to keep it a bit more general and yeah, food destinations can include a food store but it could easily refer to a farmers’ market. It’s a little softer, a little vaguer which allowed us the kind of ability to get it through our local municipalities.”

These findings highlight the skills and competency of RP planning experts in navigating early food planning challenges in the ROP and are discussed further as facilitators and barriers in the policy process below.

5.3.2.3. Public Health’s Use of Evidence to Support the Reframing of Policy Options

PH and the FSRT played a critical role in influencing a 'food system planning' issue frame during the period of policy re-formulation. Specifically, the informal knowledge community that formed around the lead author (as a member of the FSRT), and informally through PH staff

efforts to share resources and inform policy language through their internal connections with RP were identified and discussed by participants. Briefly, PH's use of the FSRT, policy and practice literature and their growing reputation for innovative food system ideas were identified as key knowledge channels through which policy options were transferred and considered by regional planners.

1. Information Dissemination through the Food System Roundtable

The lead author acknowledged PH's food system leadership and the activities of the FSRT as important resources in policy re-drafting stages. In light of PH's interest in influencing regional planning policy and staff's active efforts to recruit the lead author to the FSRT, the following perspectives point to the strategic 'pay-offs' of advancing a 'food systems' agenda at a critical point in the ROP formulation process.

"That kind of sprung out of my work with the Food System Plan at the Region's Public Health department. Around that point, the Food System Roundtable had been in existence for about a year, or half a year, and they were actually looking for a planner. Not a regional planner per se but someone from the land use planning sector, to sit on the Roundtable. And I was interested, and I applied, and I've been there for I guess it's been over 2 years now."

"I don't know whose decision it was but we did have some discussion about how to recruit [lead author], who didn't have a lot of food system background, but the thinking was that it would be strategic, useful, to have his input and to be able to sort of give him some more ideas and then facilitate that kind of input into the ROP and broader things that he's doing in terms of planning."

"Yes, I don't think it [Section 3F] would have been there without us, collectively with [lead author] in terms of the feedback that we were providing to [the lead author]."

2. Information Dissemination through Policy and Practice Literature

As noted previously, PH played an important role in influencing policy options by sharing published academic and grey literature with regional planners. A white paper and a food systems planning guide published by the American Planning Association (APA, 2007) were identified as important resources that supported RP's efforts to shift to a 'food system' policy frame during this period. PH's role in sharing these resources was discussed by participants as an important influencing factor in shaping food system policy options in the ROP:

"I know we shared with him [the lead author] the American Planning Association's publication 'A Guide to Regional and Municipal Food Planning' and he's commented that it was hugely helpful for him to find us, Region of Waterloo [Public Health], mentioned in that document, even described to some degree in the leadership role. And

then I think that's where he drew the whole notion of food destinations and then he was able to go back to his colleagues and say 'Look, this is really quite endorsed, and quite celebrated by the American Planning Association'."

PH also used their access to published research literature to inform specific food policy content areas in the ROP, including neighbourhood markets and community gardens. In addition, PH used their professional networking channels in the United States to remain informed on policy and planning progress and despite early knowledge gaps, PH's ability to advocate for food policy options in the absence of Canadian-specific literature contributed to their early recognition and international attention as organizational champions of food system change.

3. *Public Health's Reputation for Food System Change*

PH's growing credibility and reputation as a "food system mover and shaker" was also noted to be a key factor in shaping RP's food policy drafts for Section 3F. This finding supports one of the study's key overarching themes related to *legitimacy in food system planning* and is discussed further in Chapter 7. From a RP perspective, PH's recognition within the APA Guide to Community Food System Planning (Raja et al., 2008) was an important indication that their regional colleagues were regarded as leaders within the international planning community. Importantly, as captured below, this finding sheds light on RP's willingness to reinforce PH's food system activities with supportive policies and planning actions in the ROP:

"It's consistent with the work that Public Health was already doing, because they've already done a food system plan. So we thought it was logical to, kind of, mesh in with that and if anything, provide some support in our Plan to the work that they're doing in Public Health and to see if there was a way that we could continue to have that work continue in the future. Whether they want to review it, or update it, and so on. So Public Health could turn to this Plan one day and say 'Well, Regional Council adopted a Plan which supports this idea of a food system plan. So in keeping with that policy, we want to update our Food Systems Plan.' So it's kind of solidifying those links a bit more."

Another one of PH's RGMS implementation activities was the development of a food system plan (FSP) for Waterloo Region (Mann Miedema et al., 2007). While PH's FSP was recognized as having no legal authority, it was seen as an important tool to document and draw attention to action items to improve regional food systems issues. PH developed the FSP through focus group consultations with key regional food system stakeholders and input from a small number of regional and local planners. As noted below, the development of the FSP became part of a

cyclical process for the dissemination of policy options between PH and RP and served as a guide for the development of specific food policy and planning actions in the ROP:

“[PH’s Food System Plan] was one resource that I didn’t mention but yeah, we [RP] were involved in reviewing it and providing some comments from a planning perspective on that report. And so again, it was kind of cyclical because we provided input and then, once it was done we looked at their work to see how it could help shape this [the ROP].

As PH gained recognition and respect among regional planners for their ongoing food system activity, they became strategically positioned as an important policy resource in drafting the newly reframed ‘food system planning’ section (Section 3F). An important challenge for the ROP Writing Team was that these kinds of policies had not yet been developed, and they lacked relevant policy information, and policy *language*, upon which to model their policies. As noted below, through PH project staff’s ongoing food system work, they were in an important position to help inform specific policies and planning language:

“Certainly all the different [Public Health] planners at Public Health because of our connections, and the contacts we had made there, some of these policies were drafted over the phone. Well, not *necessarily* drafted but you know, talking to some of them over the phone and saying ‘I’m thinking about...this term, ah ‘temporary farmers’ markets’, you know, what exactly is that? I need to have some parameters around that and they had done some research on that subject and they were able to provide us with some very good definitions. A lot of terminology...we used them as kind of a benchmark to kind of assess what it was we were trying to do. So they were very helpful.”

“A lot of the language we used was modeled after what was found in that American journal, that publication on food, the White Paper and then again, a lot of it was based on the input we received from the people in Public Health.”

“It was part of my job [in Public Health] to be reviewing it [the ROP]...and [lead author in Planning] was basically writing drafts and throwing them back at us...And I would give feedback and we’d have kind of a joint-editing process.”

5.3.2.4. Waterloo Region Federation of Agriculture: Influencing Agricultural Policy Options

With respect to agri-food policy options in the ROP, RP also recognized the importance of their relationship with the local Federation of Agriculture (FA). Specifically, the relationship was regarded as a ‘unique’ external partnership and the FA was identified as an important supporter of RP’s direction on the countryside line and other progressive environmental protection policies. With FA’s support, RP had been able to maintain the agricultural value and integrity of the land despite intense pressure from the development community. In describing their role in

the ROP policy making process, FA took credit for the wording of the countryside line policy and for the recommendations for on-farm agricultural activity in Section 3F:

“Some of the wording came directly from [the Federation of Agriculture]. When we read it, we said ‘Wow, that’s exactly what we said!’...which was somewhat flattering, quite frankly.”

“One of the things that is special about Waterloo Region is that they take into account what [the Federation of Agriculture] says and thinks. And actually, not only to they take it into account, they put it right in the ROP which I think is really special.”

Thus, as captured by the perspectives above, a critical period of policy redrafting was noted as an important contextual factor in policy formulation. Jurisdictional concerns were minimized by RP’s ability to successfully redraft ‘commercial planning’ interests using an acceptable ‘food system planning’ issue frame. PH and the FSRT helped shape the lead author’s ideas about food systems issues and through shared policy resources, influenced the inclusion of specific food system policies and content considerations. In addition, PH’s international recognition and FA’s long history of support for agricultural interests were noted as important influences of policy wording. Evidence of the significance of these combined influences in advancing food policy options can be seen in the introduction of a vision for the regional food system presented for Council consideration in the final draft of the ROP.

5.3.3. A Vision for the Regional Food System: Final Policy Options for Council Adoption

In the final stages of policy formulation, RP experts described Section 3F as a vision for the regional food system. Section 3F was recognized by participants for its significance in elevating a number of important food policy issues and for raising awareness of various forms of local food production, distribution and retail activity. Importantly, while the specific policies and planning actions were regarded as “having very little teeth”, “not solid regulation”, “right on the edge of whether or not they belong in an official plan”, and “outside of what would be considered traditional under the Planning Act”, the Region’s inclusion of Section 3F in the ROP was regarded as a “movement in the right direction with respect to providing opportunities and access to healthy foods for the citizens of the community” and “well worth promoting”.

With respect to the diffusion of food system ‘policy ideas’, the adoption of Section 3F by Council can be seen as part of the continuous transfer of policy options which originated among a few committed PH staff, moved through the HDPE Division, diffused through PH’s numerous community networks, and found fertile ground for consideration among an open-minded, progressive group of policy planners in RP. Policy ideas were supported by senior-level experts and adopted as an RP position for approval by Council. The final draft of the ROP was described as a general goal for the community and an important opportunity to elevate public discussion of the health impacts of food access and food system planning considerations. In this way, in light of tensions with planners and a limited capacity to independently affect municipal-level change, RP used Section 3F as an important channel, or knowledge instrument, to transfer food policy ideas to the community. Section 3F was described as “reinforcing” what the Region is already doing; “raising the consciousness” of regional food system activity; “raising the profile” of food system issues; and “creating opportunities where none previously existed”.

As a knowledge transfer (KT) instrument, it was expected that Section 3F would serve to (a) engage municipalities in food systems *discussion*; (b) encourage food system activity through municipal planning *action*; and (c) create *opportunities* for future food system planning in the Region.

5.3.3.1. Planting Seeds with a Vision for the Regional Food System: Signs of Knowledge Transfer

1. *Food System Discussions at the Local Level*

As reflected in the quotes below, the regional food system vision was regarded as a way to promote meaningful food system considerations and dialogue at the local level:

“At least by getting it in there, you’re putting the issue on the table and you’re forcing people to talk about it. You’re putting it as one of the things that should be talked about during the planning process, and however it works out, at least you’re putting it forward...they’re [the Region’s Planning Department] putting in some language in the Plan that sets out what our interests is on this issue.”

“So it really is just kind of pushing people in the direction that they *probably* would otherwise go...”

2. *Food System Planning Action and Supportive Practices at the Local Level*

In addition to promoting the consideration of food system ideas, it was anticipated that Section 3F's vision would also influence future planning considerations and provide "an anchor" for new planning practices and *actions* at the local level. However, as captured here by the questioned suitability of the policies in Section 3F, subsequent considerations will be needed to ensure that AMs revise their official plans and establish appropriate and relevant ways to integrate the Region's food system direction in the ROP (this is discussed in detail in Chapter 6):

"What can go in an Official Plan? (reading) 'Will establish policies to encourage community gardens and rooftop gardens'. I'm not sure where that fits *necessarily* in the overall planning process but if it's not dealt with somewhere in it [the Plan], it's never going to occur. Or it will occur so very rarely that it becomes the exception rather than the norm."

"So at least now we've incorporated the 'will establish' and 'we will support', which is good, but at least they [the policies] are there and they're there to anchor future processes on."

3. *New Opportunities for Food System Change at the Local Level*

The Region's food system vision was also recognized as a way to reinforce current food system activity and a means for creating new opportunities for supportive policy and planning action. Senior-level RP experts described their role in the development of Section 3F as "planting seeds" of food system change, suggesting that the seeds of 'food system planning' will grow and produce relevant food system activity while contributing to a healthy, vibrant and fertile community food system environment. The following comments reflect the potential for expanded food system-related activities in the Region:

"This just solidifies in our Plan that we're going to take those things that are already happening and entrench them in our Plan to have a clearer statement on what the Region would like to do with this."

"This type of thing is, you know, it's part of raising the profile, nudging people along, making opportunities available where they never would have been thought of before."

"So what we've created is the opportunity for that to occur and if it makes it a little easier, that's great."

"[F]or the vast majority of people in an incredibly smart, affluent community, if you give them the right information and the right opportunities and you plant the seed often enough, at some point it'll grow. And that's what we see this [Section 3F of the ROP] as being is 'planting the seed'."

In summary, Section 3F's vision for the regional food system can be seen as an important vehicle of knowledge transfer throughout the Region. As shown here, it is anticipated that the vision will

serve to promote widespread consideration and discussion of food policy *ideas*, influence policies and planning *practices* and improve *opportunities* for healthy, food system-related activity at the local level. The vision can be seen as a timely and appropriate way to exercise planning authority to “nudge society in a direction they would otherwise go”. While not regarded as “solid regulation”, the adoption of food system planning policies as part of this overarching vision for the regional community was put forth as a supportable course of action for regional government. The following section concludes with the final stage of policy-making in this case study and includes an examination of relevant decision making factors associated with the approval of Section 3F and adoption of the ROP by Regional Council.

5.4. Decision Making Context: Adopting a Vision for the Regional Food System as an ‘Appropriate’ Course of Action for Waterloo Region

5.4.1. A Change in the ROP Policy Making Context and Key Decision Making Factors

Decision-making is the process by which governments adopt a particular course of action or non-action (Howlett et al., 2003). The majority of decision makers on Regional Council (RC) had been involved in local politics for more than 20 years and many were able to offer relevant insight into how the current ROP review process had been a change from traditional ways of making long-range regional planning decisions. In particular, almost all members of RC noted that the current round of regional planning had included a stronger emphasis on internal and external partners and a greater involvement of senior-level staff across regional departments. Specifically, in contrast to previous ROP reviews where members of RC had sat on Review Committees, the following comments point to a lack of decision maker involvement in the current process:

“I had sat before on an Official Plan review, we had a committee. This time, we didn’t, all the work was done by staff and I found it worked out very well. They were certainly in tune with what the public were saying to them.”

“A report comes to Council, we read it and we vote on it, and if there are any questions, [the Medical Officer of Health] answers the questions. If there are any presentations then it’s staff or community groups that do them. That would be the process that we went through.”

“We kind of went through the hot spots, you know, and where there were delegations or controversy or [where] people wanted things beefed up, or in some cases, [where] others wanted it weakened a little bit depending on their slant.”

Decision makers recognized the importance of the ROP’s new direction and areas of policy focus. Specifically, these new considerations were understood as a way to maintain the Region’s current level of planning and policy leadership, reinforce existing internal and external partnerships, support ongoing RGMS implementation activities, and emphasize a stronger focus on quality of life and health issues, as captured by the following:

“Through [Regional] Planning, we’ve always had this strong policy on food land retention and protecting agricultural land. So I think the idea of them continuing those strong policies with our Growth Management Strategy, which actually put a stronger policy framework for saving farmlands in place, was really seen as a backing up of, or a continuation of what we’ve done in the past on the planning side, and then a reinforcing of what the Public Health Department was doing because in dealing with the ROP this time around, I think we made far more effort to make it more of a quality of life issue [rather than] just a land use planning document.”

As noted by decision makers, unless the issues were controversial, the specific details of the policies and planning actions did not receive a lot of attention and consideration by Council. With respect to the approval of Section 3F’s food policies, a number of important decision making factors were identified including: perceived alignment; perceived acceptance; and perceived appropriateness. It was also found that decision makers were willing to adopt Section 3F as an appropriate course of regional action based on the incremental-nature through which food system ideas had been introduced to Council. These factors are discussed briefly below:

5.4.1.1. Incremental Decision Making

The adoption of Section 3F as part of the final draft of the ROP was agreed upon by decision makers in light of their awareness and recognition of the success of past and current food system promotional activities in the Region. In particular, PH staff were recognized for their ongoing work and efforts to improve the regional food system as captured by the following comments:

“Council has been advised and has been involved in the promotion of locally grown food and other aspects as detailed in that section of the Official Plan for a number of years. So the Region embarked on a number of different programs to promote these types of endeavors including local area farmers’ markets, buying from the local food cooperative and also encouraging consumers at these local markets to purchase locally-grown food...so the fact that Public Health has made forays in this area and had started Foodlink and had educated Council on this during the past five years, that laid the groundwork for an easy decision to be made from Council’s perspective around

including it in the ROP.”

“Public Health’s involvement in a variety of food issues, and Foodlink being partially sponsored by the Region, and a variety of initiatives that the Region is supporting, you know, farm gate maps, all that kind of stuff, it did make it fairly easy – we were already in the business to a certain extent of supporting local agriculture and farm markets and so on.”

In this way, Section 3F was seen as a reflection of what the Region was already doing through PH and in light of important regional groundwork, decision makers were informed and prepared to consider new ideas that would support ongoing efforts to improve the regional food system. Council’s preference toward incremental decision making is evident through the following remarks:

“[the Region] had the first regional or county plan in Ontario. It really had very strong farm land and environmental protection policies...so it [Section 3F] built upon a feeling that was here, crystallizes it through the Plan and it’s been reinforced in every plan since.”

“If that amendment to the ROP came to us out of the blue, and Public Health had not laid the kind of groundwork that they’ve laid over the past five years, there would have been lots of discussion...I suspect it would have been sent back ‘what’s this all about?’...Government makes decisions incrementally.”

5.4.1.2. Agreement with Senior Regional Staff

Decision makers agreed with regional staff’s direction and planning ideas and supported the inclusion of food system policies in the ROP. Section 3F’s content was recognized as innovative, progressive, consistent with regional values, a ‘clear departure’ from typical community planning, and ‘breaking new ground’. Regarded as an appropriate course of regional action, decision makers’ agreement with senior-level staff leaders is captured by the following:

“I think the Commissioner of Planning made elusions to [Section 3F] in terms of a quality of life aspect and how this is a real departure from official plans in the past, and that staff are really pleased and positive to include these kinds of measures and policy positions. There was not much discussion generated other than ‘Here is what we’re gonna do, this is progressive, we need to do it, we’re doing some of this already from a public health perspective. As a Region we think this is valuable and will impact quality of life in our community in a positive way to the extent that we think it’s worthwhile to be included in the Official Plan’. And Councillors agreed with that.”

“I come back to the staff we have at the regional level in terms of their attitude about the importance of moving ahead in terms of protective policies, and supportive public health policies...they’re just very on the ball and advanced”

Decision makers' confidence in staff and awareness of widespread community support for the policies were also noted as important features of Councillors' agreement with Section 3F. As captured below, the 'agreeable' nature of the policies sheds light on why these may have only received limited consideration by Council:

"A lot of discussion? Probably not a lot of discussion...I think there were...certainly [name] and a few others from the Federation of Agriculture came and spoke to some of these things. I think the people from Foodlink spoke during some of the public meetings but I'd be wrong in saying they were the focus of the exercise. There were some bigger issues...and these things weren't being contested...there was pretty widespread support for these kinds of initiatives so there wasn't a lot of time spent on them."

5.4.1.3. Appropriate Regional Direction (Course of Action)

As an official land use planning document, decision makers recognized that the ROP would receive very little public attention and interest beyond that from the development community, consultants and municipal planners. However, by moving toward 'a quality of life' focus, it was anticipated that the ROP would likely garner greater public interest. Thus, so long as the policies appeared to be 'generally supportive' of issues of health and aligned with other community values (i.e., innovation, collaboration, excellence in community service), than the inclusion of any health- or food-related considerations were an improvement in the current status quo. In Waterloo Region, a food policy gap was noted to exist and thus, Section 3F's vision, policies and planning actions can be seen as a reasonable effort to advance policy action in this area as noted by the following:

"These are nice policies, these are supportive policies, and there is nothing controversial here...this is the direction we should be going...ok, we'll pass it. It's that simple."

Importantly, decision makers recognized that the adoption of Section 3F did not commit the Region to any additional financial commitments. Cost is discussed as an important system-level barrier to food policy adoption in a subsequent section below.

5.4.1.4. Acceptable Alignment with Regional Values

Decision makers also pointed to Section 3F's compatibility, or alignment, with the Region's values and past experiences. Within the context of growth management, a revised 'food system

planning’ policy frame simplified what the Region was trying to achieve, minimized opposition from local planners (by diffusing commercial planning concerns) and aligned with other important regional strategies. Framed in this way, decision makers saw that Section 3F was in line with ‘what the Region has been about traditionally’ and that it promoted and reinforced regional priorities and values including: the local agricultural economy, rural countryside (including urban-rural harmony), prime agricultural land and history of successful farmers’ markets. In light of this ‘alignment’, efforts to facilitate ‘food access’ were regarded as an acceptable course of regional action:

“This [3F] ended up being, I would say by default, the driver of a whole bunch of other things. But I don’t think it was as conscious as we might like to think it was..it drove a lot of other aspects of the Plan...I think it was a good thing, and if we didn’t spend a lot of time on it, it was because ‘Well, what do you mean we have to talk about healthy food [access]?’ . And so it’s just an accepted principle and a prerequisite to everything else.”

“[3F] is complementary. Like Public Health said, ‘this is just the right thing to do, and makes so much sense’. Why are we not doing this? So let’s do it!”

In summary, within the context of a new ROP policy process, decision makers regarded the inclusion and adoption of Section 3F as an appropriate course of regional action. Specifically, the policies and vision were introduced incrementally, received widespread agreement by Council and at the same time, were considered to be appropriate and well aligned with the Region’s direction and values.

5.4.1.5. Decision Makers’ Awareness and Appreciation of Community Assets

Another noted decision making factor in this context was Council’s recognition of a number of important community assets in Waterloo Region. In particular, assets were described as strong community values relating to rural issues (an “agrarian mentality”) and land stewardship; a longstanding local food culture and market tradition (including a concern for health and the environment); and an appreciation for both urban and rural aspects of the Region. These characteristics are discussed in light of their importance as significant system-level factors in supporting widespread acceptance of food system policies as an appropriate course of regional action.

1. Agrarian Mentality:

Despite the Region's reputation for technological innovation, participants noted that many local residents identified with the Region's strong agricultural history and farming communities and were in favour of regional efforts to promote the local food economy and protect agricultural land. Specifically, the Region's unique geography supported urban residents' ease of access to the rural countryside, while providing access to urban amenities for rural-dwelling residents. Thus, in light of the Region's size as a regional municipality, participants perceived that the community still maintained its 'agricultural' roots and farming traditions. Thus, a key facilitating factor noted below was decision makers' sensitivity to rural issues and close ties with members of the agriculture community. This was described as 'an agrarian mentality' as noted by the following:

"Thinking of this community as being a significant urban centre in Canada yet so close to and closely tied to the agricultural lands that are still within the Region. So I think this sort of thing [access to locally grown and other healthy foods] became important to us because we still have that, agrarian mentality, we just can't forget about it."

"There's always been a recognition of the importance of the agricultural community and the rural community and how we're one of the most urbanized regions in Ontario. But when you look at geography, there's a beautiful countryside that envelopes our urban area...and I think there's been a long-standing history and tradition in our community of those two solitudes working closely together and recognizing the vitality that each sector brings to the quality of life for the whole region."

"There is a very deep, more than recognition- it's almost part of our nature in this area to recognize the rural...the agriculture. It is part of our character, notwithstanding that we live in a city."

2. Mennonite Influence:

The influence of the Region's large Old Order Mennonite (OOM) population was noted more often than any other community consideration. The well-being of the Mennonite farming community, including sufficient land to house and support their large families, and the Region's ability to support their ongoing farming efforts were significant concerns among decision makers. OOM farmers were described as an asset to the Region in their ability to farm sustainably and supply local produce to regional markets. The labour-intensiveness of mixed produce farming was recognized and OOMs, in light of large families, were seen as uniquely equipped to meet the demands of this type of growing. The OOM farming community was also seen as having a "stabilizing influence" on the Region and all decision makers agreed that "we

can be thankful that we have them here in Waterloo Region because they're likely the best stewards of the land". OOMs were seen as "innovative people" and "very hard workers" and according to participants, efforts to advance planning goals around environmental sustainability (i.e., farmland protection) and healthy communities (i.e., access to local food) would need to ensure that the Mennonite population was on board as key producers and suppliers of local food in the Region. Awareness among decision makers that the OOM population would disappear from the Region if their land and farming interests were not protected was a key consideration and issue that was discussed among participants.

3. Health and Environmental Consciousness, and a Strong Local Food Culture:

In light of a strong Mennonite farming influence, and the OOM farmers' willingness to remain in local food production, Waterloo Region's reputation for successful farmers' markets was a key consideration noted by the majority of decision makers in this study. Farmers' markets were an important identified feature of the Region's food system environment as captured by the following:

"We have so many markets and you know, the Mennonites and the type of farming that is going on, so I think we're kind of unique and we've taken that uniqueness and developed it into what we really want to be in this municipality and as a region...you know, we do have so much access to the different markets. The markets are driven by the people who sell their products so it's easier for someone to get involved in agriculture- in growing food, and has a much easier time of selling it and making money than someone in the Toronto rural area."

"There's a tradition of people going to the market here, they'll get three to four hundred people on a Saturday morning down there...it's been very successful!"

Similarly, a number of successful high-tech and insurance industries were identified as a relevant factor in increasing the average income and level of education of residents in Waterloo Region. With respect to health and environmental consciousness, it was suggested that a higher level of disposable income within an already established local food culture, contributed to greater demand for 'high quality' foods and the growing success of many local food retail establishments. Decision makers described their own local food preferences and acknowledged numerous innovative local food retail establishments within their respective municipalities. "Urban foodies" was a term linked to some groups of residents in Waterloo Region.

4. Prime Agricultural Land:

Lastly, the Region's rich, productive agricultural land was noted as a key regional asset by participants. Decision makers and RP staff experts described the Region's evolution as an important manufacturing community to its present position as a leader in the high-tech industry. Despite a growing reputation for the latter, the Region was recognized as being a strong food production and food processing centre and competitive industry leader in the agricultural economy. Several decision makers noted agriculture as the Region's fourth highest grossing industry and a large majority of participants acknowledged the Regions' prime agricultural land:

“This is the only place where there is good agricultural land and it's the same place where they are pushing growth. Not only are they pushing growth in the 6%, their pushing growth onto the best of the 6%. And if you are to take a look at the Waterloo Region's Economic Impact study, it stated conclusively that the very best land and the best combination of land, farmers, farming culture and ability to generate income, was right there, Waterloo Region.”

The significance of the Region's assets, including public support for rural issues, committed land stewards, a willing farming sector, community concern for health and the environmental, and a strong local food culture were recognized by participants and regarded as important factors in regional decision making. In summary, and as captured appropriately by the comment below, the inclusion of food policy ideas in Section 3F and their subsequent adoption by Council as an appropriate course of regional action found “fertile ground” in Waterloo Region:

“I think it's just sort of a reflection of where people have been for many years here in this community, that they see the importance of this and I think the added significance or importance over the last 2, 3 or 4 years has found fertile ground in this Region.”

The following section summarizes the process of food system policy making in Waterloo Region through a brief overview of multi-sectoral perspectives of the individual-, organizational-, and system-level facilitators and barriers. The key contextual factors related to agenda-setting, policy formulation and decision making are summarized in Table 5.

5.5. Food System Policy Making Facilitators at the Individual-, Organizational- and System-Levels

5.5.1. Individual-Level Facilitators

Five relevant individual-level facilitators were addressed and identified as important factors in food system policy making in Waterloo Region. These included: PH’s food system champion; the skills and competencies of the lead author; senior-level department staff leaders; characteristics of the Regional Chair and Council; and partnerships between regional staff. These are discussed brief below.

Table 5: Key Contextual Factors in the Food System Policy Making Process

STAGES OF POLICY MAKING	CONTEXT	CONTEXTUAL FACTORS/ KEY FINDINGS
Agenda setting	Historical context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional growth (RGMS in 2003); new provincial planning direction, FA support for countryside line, agricultural protection • Need for partnerships (internal/external) • PH’s food-related groundwork, early communication with RP, strategic alignment of food agendas • PH’s early work with FL in 2000 and the FSRT in 2005
	ROP review & local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champions within PH, RP (lead author) • PH’s use of evidence to inform a ‘food systems’ problem • PH credibility via APA PAS Report (Raja, 2008) and Food System Plan (Mann Miedema & Pigott, 2007) • Complete communities and access to food stores
Policy formulation	Two-tier planning context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for local planners’ support (AM Working Group) • Inter-departmental request for input • Senior-level RP staff ‘openness’ to new ideas
	Period of policy reformulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jurisdictional concerns • Issue framing • PH’s use of evidence to influence food policy options • A ROP vision for the regional food system; knowledge transfer
Decision making	Decision making context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change in the ROP review process (greater senior-level staff control) • Incremental decision making • Agreement with staff; an appropriate course of action; acceptable alignment with regional values; consideration of community assets • Section 3F – no financial commitment needed

5.5.1.1. Public Health’s Senior-Level Food System Champion and Committed Staff

PH’s senior-level local food champion (PH Champion) was recognized by all participants as a key facilitator in the transfer and dissemination of food system policy ideas within regional government and throughout the public health community. Specifically, through various organizational channels of influence, PH’s champion took advantage of a political opportunity to

strategically connect community food security to regional growth management and agricultural protection priorities. Within the HDPE Division, the Champion hired, motivated, and influenced PH staff to support a food system agenda and through a collegial and collaborative working relationship, built a committed, non-traditional PH staff team with a passion for food system issues. Strong staff skills and an ability to ‘think outside the box’ helped build community capacity and a climate of change. Through an early ability to capture attention and convince RP and Council of the public’s interest and support for *foodland* protection, PH gained an important position through the Champion’s work as a strong political ally and internal partner in growth management efforts for urban intensification and a firm countryside line.

5.5.1.2. Regional Planning’s Lead Author and ROP Writing Team: Skills and Competencies

The skills and competencies of the ROP’s Writing Team were also identified as key individual facilitators in food system policy adoption. The lead author was described as being committed to agricultural land preservation, and an early adopter of food system policy and planning ideas. Specifically, the ability to respond to negative feedback from local planners and reframe the issue as an acceptable and common ‘local food system frame’ can be seen as a critical turning point in the advancement of food system planning ideas in general, and the development of a regional food system vision in particular. By successfully negotiating a common issue frame, and minimizing perceived ‘commercial planning’ concerns, regional planners were able to secure sufficient buy-in from RP’s external partners to allow the section and its ‘regional food system’ vision to remain intact throughout various policy drafts. The inclusion of a preamble to define the Region’s intentions regarding food-related planning actions creatively reinforced the ROP’s new focus on ‘quality of life’ issues, drew attention to the Region’s agricultural economy and added weight to the countryside line debate. In the end, project staff successfully navigated a tense relationship with planners and achieved an acceptable vision for the regional food system by realigning their plans with regional priorities, minimizing their focus on commercial planning, and softening the policy language. Importantly, the Team was also one of the first regional planning departments in Canada to include food system planning considerations in an official plan.

5.5.1.3. Strategic Department Leaders: Visionary-Style, Support and Openness

Senior-level leadership from RP and PH staff experts was found to be a significant facilitating factor in this case study. RP's Director was recognized as having a progressive leadership style and reputation for proactive and forward-looking planning practices which were critical to the advancement of innovative policy ideas in the Region. Specifically, an openness and willingness to test out new food policy options was highly regarded by staff and attributed to the inclusion of food system planning policies and practices in the ROP. RP's Director was noted for strategic long-range planning, influencing provincial policy and shaping regional consideration of higher-level policy and planning issues. Ultimately, the Director's leadership and skills, and strategic ability to appeal to rural interests contributed to the final adoption of the ROP's new policy direction.

PH's Director was described by participants as being collaborative, a visionary, having key insight into the Region's political and social climate, and strong values about the conventional food system. PH's Director was also regarded as politically strategic in advancing the Department's food system and built environment agendas and helping to develop an important regional and international reputation for innovative food system initiatives. The Director's strong commitment to food system issues helped to align PH's agenda with other regional priorities and fostered significant community support for local food system issues. (The specific roles and motivations of PH are discussed further in Chapter 7).

There were multiple participant references to 'reputation' 'leadership' and 'being ahead of others' in this case study. These were captured as features of 'strategic positioning' and 'legitimacy', concepts that emerged as key overarching themes and which were identified in a number of different contexts and settings. These are discussed further in Chapter 7. However, strong staff leadership and regional innovation were noted to be important influences in regional decision making and thus, were identified as key facilitating factors in food system policy-making in Waterloo Region. As illustrated below, decision makers were quick to acknowledge the Region's leadership in a number of areas.

“With respect to Regional Council...the [regional] staff in particular are very progressive and they always have been. And if anything really accentuates or differentiates them across the province, it’s the fact that they have been leaders in numerous areas.”

“We’ve always been first. We’ve always been first, ah for example, with the Affordable Housing Strategy that was adopted in 2000. A previous regional plan was used as a template for the Places to Grow Act because long before people were talking about urbanization and controlling suburban sprawl, we had already put it into our Official Plan.”

“So we’ve been doing these kinds of things, and you know, we always seem to be among the first to ‘put our toes in the water’ so to speak.”

“the Region of Waterloo has, again because of the qualified people in various departments, we have a great reputation”

5.5.1.4. Regional Leadership: Characteristics of the Regional Chair and Members of Regional Council

The ability of key individuals to influence the acceptance of food policy options was recognized by participants. Specifically, several regional decision makers were noted to be strong supporters of rural interests, including protection of the Region’s agricultural land. Given their early adoption of food policy ideas, several opinion leaders can be regarded as individual-level facilitators of food system policy making. Characteristics of the Regional Chair and select members of Council were identified by participants including: a sensitivity to rural issues; an interest in maintaining urban-rural harmony; and strong ties to the agricultural community.

The Regional Chair was regarded as an early food systems adopter because of his political sensitivity to rural issues and strong leadership commitment to maintaining “urban-rural harmony”. Specifically, the Chair was recognized as an important opinion leader on Council and an early proponent of food policy options in the ROP. Thus, PH’s ability to align a health agenda with issues of importance to the Chair can be seen as an important factor in the ROP policy making process. The Chair’s commitment to maintaining harmony between rural and urban areas, a key feature in a healthy regional food system, was emphasized by participants:

“[the Chair] has been around a long long time and comes from the agricultural community and he’d be better able to tell you about the urban-rural relationship issue because he’s managed that for 20-some years and he’s done a great job of managing that. Why we don’t have a lot of conflict between the urban and rural communities is largely because [the Chair’s] work in making sure there are winners on both sides, as opposed to a winner and a loser.”

Decision makers' collective sensitivity to rural issues was also a key policy influence in the present case study. In particular, Councillors described themselves, and each other as being either urban or rurally-oriented and as having a long history in politics in the Region. Similar to the Regional Chair, many decision makers were strong supporters of agricultural interests and worked within their municipalities to promote urban-rural harmony. Eight of the 15 Councillors made a clear effort to show their rural orientation, and to explain the reasons for their support or sensitivity for agriculture issues in the Region. Many described early experiences of being raised on a farm, attending farmers' markets as a child, or working in the agricultural sector as an adult. Importantly, these experiences reinforce the importance of the historical and local context in this study.

Given the self-identified *rural-orientation* of decision makers, it is not surprising that regional efforts to facilitate "food access" were largely recognized for their potential to improve local economic development and agricultural interests in rural areas rather than healthy food access among regional consumers. Health implications were not discussed in any detail, and less often than expected among regional representatives serving as the Region's Board of Health. These findings suggest that the appeal of agricultural and local economic gains in rural areas may have been used to influence the decision making of individual members of RC more so than anticipated health benefits. In this way, the Chair's leadership and ability to secure the support of rurally-oriented Council representatives was seen as an important individual-level facilitator of food system policy adoption.

5.5.1.5. Partnerships between Regional Staff

In response to Council's strong emphasis on collaboration, the natural and strategic partnership between RP and PH was nurtured by staff experts in RP and PH. At first, communication between individual staff was based on project-specific information gathering. However, over time, the relationship between staff strengthened into a strong collaborative partnership where project staff spoke to each other regularly, and at senior-levels, were actively involved in each other's team meetings. Relationships and strategic partnerships were a key facilitating factor in the diffusion of food system policy ideas within and between policy actors. This is also discussed further in Chapter 7 as a key overarching theme in this study.

5.5.2. Organizational-Level Facilitators

Multi-sectoral perspectives revealed three key organizational-level facilitators of food system policy making in Waterloo Region including the Region's organizational structure, internal regional partnerships and external community partnerships.

5.5.2.1. Regional Organizational Structure

Two important features of the Region's structure were identified as key organizational-level facilitating factors. First, as part of the Region, PH operates within a political organization where the Medical Officer of Health (MOH), the Commissioner of Planning (COP) and members of Council communicate internally as part of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT). Importantly, this gives the MOH (and PH) direct access to planning authorities and important insight into internal politics, strategic direction, regional priorities and department agendas. Additionally, it provides access to regional funding and an opportunity to inform regional decision makers and department heads of relevant PH issues and concerns.

Secondly, through Council's role as the Board of Health, PH has a second avenue of influence to inform regional decision makers of emerging issues, department needs, and research activities. Through senior-level staff communication channels and published reports, decision makers have multiple points of exposure to PH's agenda, strategic actions, and community health concerns. These formal and informal communication channels were identified as key facilitating factors at the organizational level and played an important role in the 'incremental' transfer and acceptance of food policy ideas. In particular, through these channels, PH was well positioned to strategically align their rural health, food access and community food security concerns with other regional priorities regarding agricultural protection and urban intensification. In light of PH's potential to serve as an important internal partner for the Region's growth management strategies, greater political consideration was given in support of a health agenda, as noted by the following:

"Now, [the Medical Officer of Health] actually works for Regional Council, so they have to listen to [her] because [she] is their employee. And [Council] is also the Board of Health. So automatically that gives [Public Health] an advantage to be involved in all kinds of conversations, to have more influence, simply because the MOH is at the senior-management table."

“So the Councillors picked up pretty quickly that the health agenda would align their goals. And so even when the staff from Planning weren’t that interested in necessarily involving us as much as we might have liked to be involved, Council continually was reminding Planning to ‘Make sure [Public] Health is involved’.”

PH’s HDPE Division was also noted as an important feature within the Region’s organizational structure and a key facilitating factor of food system policy activity. While the specific role and motivation of staff in the HDPE is explored in greater detail in Chapter 7, two streams of PH activity were noted to have informed food policy considerations in the ROP. Within the HDPE Division, PH staff were informed by professional associations, academic and grey literature, and strong partnerships with food system stakeholders in the Region. The Division established an important reputation for research, capacity building, raising awareness of food system issues, and external partnerships and community networks (e.g., FL and the FSRT) – significant ‘food system’ accomplishments that had not yet been achieved by other PH departments - and which would later become important in influencing professional standards (described in Chapter 8).

Similarly, RP was also regarded as highly innovative, and recognized for the Strategic Policy Group’s contribution to progressive policies on environmental sustainability, agricultural protection, and supportive housing. Importantly, the Group’s ability to participate in long-range policy planning was noted as a key facilitating factor for the inclusion of food system ideas in the ROP. A two-tiered planning context freed regional planners and members of Council from daily planning concerns and allowed the Region to develop a more strategic, long-range focus on emerging issues in planning.

5.5.2.2. Internal Partnerships and Regional Collaboration

At an organizational-level, a strong mutually-supportive partnership resulted in the “cross-fertilization” of food policy and planning ideas between PH and RP. PH worked strategically to support this partnership by sharing literature, policy options and community contacts with their regional colleagues. Mutual support for the partnership was shown through a combined effort to create tighter links between staff; specifically, a professional land use planner was jointly recruited and hired to work alongside PH staff. In reference to the overarching themes of this study, the liaison was funded by RP to: help PH staff navigate policy and practice issues

(*participate* in regional planning); understand new language and local land use considerations (*knowledge transfer*); and to break down departmental silos (become a *strategic partner*). Importantly, in light of their mutual interests in health and growth, and agriculture and ‘*foodland*’ protection (examples of *strategic positioning*), the liaison also supported PH’s efforts to influence the inclusion of food- and health-related considerations in the ROP by way of a staff role on the AMWG. The importance of this position in advancing new food policy options in the ROP is recognized as follows:

“We had somebody who was trained as a land use planner working in Public Health and that had been a strategic and intentional thing because we had wanted to influence land use policy, and not just food issues but also health and the built environment.”

This position was an important influence and helped facilitate the transfer of food system policy ideas between regional departments. In addition, it is an important example of how intentional changes to the current status quo can lead to far-reaching benefits in the community. Thus, in this way, RP and PH’s strategic internal partnership can be seen as a significant organizational-level facilitator of food systems policy change in the Region.

5.5.2.3. External Partnerships

The ‘healthy communities and policy’ focus of the HDPE Division was an important influence of PH’s active engagement in food policy networks, advocacy groups and community partnerships in the Region. As noted previously, community contacts were a critical resource used by PH to convince regional planners that they could be useful in promoting public support for the countryside line. At a critical point in Council’s decision making process, PH/FSRT called on the community to serve as delegates and to lend support for the food and health-related considerations included in the ROP. The importance of PH’s external partnerships as a way to advance non-partisan opinion and influence decision making is captured as follows:

“I think we realized that the other asset we had was huge community support and huge partnerships with community players – I mean agricultural groups, community garden networks, networks that had to do with food in one way or another including Healthy Communities groups, so we really turned to them. We said ‘You know, this [the ROP draft] is coming to you for comment and you should know that right now, it’s not looking good, and right now, we’re not sure if these policies are going to live to see the light of day’. And our big concern was that because this wasn’t a public draft, we couldn’t share what it was, which was our writing. We would only get to share what came out of the first consultation with area municipalities, which wouldn’t be our writing anymore.”

“The Food System Roundtable used its channels to communicate to the public that there are these proposed policies in the new draft ROP and if you have any comments on it, here they are. And certainly a Working Group of the Roundtable formed, and went through the thing line by line and came up with their comments on the draft forms of 3F and they have official responses.”

From a PH perspective, these efforts were pivotal in influencing decision making and can be seen as a critical organizational-level facilitator as follows:

“They [Regional Council] are interested but it also reminds them that this is something that is really important to the community. And so I think we keep bringing it back in front of them to keep it on their agenda”

“We have a large number of people in support of the work that we’re doing. And so if it was just Public Health’s plan and we went to Regional Council and there was no support when the ROP was being proposed, it really wouldn’t have had much weight with Councillors and their decision making. So the [Planning liaison in PH] worked on the plan, and got the language in there that would support our strategies in collaboration with community coalitions. When that was actually presented as a draft, then we had the community coming in and adding support to it.”

The quotes above point to PH’s unique position as a regional department and an active policy voice on food system issues. PH’s role and motivation in balancing these interests is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. In later stages of the ROP public consultation process, PH’s intentional, and strategic investment of time and resources in developing external partnerships and extensive community networks played an important role in influencing regional decision making, as captured by the following:

“We just couldn’t have asked for better from the community because in so many ways, so many meetings, so many consultations where people raised food issues...there were the “food groups” but what started to happen is that the non-food groups, like the active transportation community groups started referencing food...and the Pedestrian Charter group, they would have referenced walking to food as being key and there’s a healthy communities group that would have been more interested in air quality but they linked that to food transport and food miles! And so it ended up getting cross-referenced by others....And that’s where our partnerships with these groups paid off because they referenced food, not us [Public Health].”

5.5.3. System-Level Facilitators

A number of important system-level facilitators were identified but were not discussed in great detail by all participants. Several critical events were mentioned as factors affecting regional policy options and decision making, including changes and trends in provincial and regional planning, agriculture, health and the environment (these are summarized in Appendix H). A

frequently noted factor was the recent change in provincial planning legislation which included a stronger focus on urban intensification, direction on growth and the promotion of complete communities. Regionally, a farm tour organized by the FA and FL for local and regional Councillors was also identified as an important event that had influenced decision making. The lobbying activities of FA and FL are recognized as important system-level facilitators of food and agricultural-policy considerations and changes in the ROP.

5.5.3.1. Food- and Agriculture Policy Networks and Lobbying Activity in Waterloo Region

Briefly, FA and FL were recognized by decision makers and RP staff experts as important food policy actors and stakeholders. A number of PH advocacy groups were also noted but have been discussed elsewhere. Policy networks were seen as system-level facilitators of food system policy making in that they actively gathered, synthesized and disseminated information to: support new and existing food initiatives; shift community values toward a stronger appreciation of local food; and facilitate greater stakeholder involvement in local food system activity.

The FA was mentioned more than any other food system stakeholder by regional decision makers and RP staff experts. A unique mutually-supportive relationship between the Region and FA developed over a long history of lobbying and consultation activity through which FA established strong credibility for their advice on agricultural issues as noted by the following participant perspectives:

“We have a very strong relationship with our Federation of Agriculture. And while there are other groups that deal with agriculture in the Region, they are, without question in my mind, the most well-versed and consistently open group that we can access. And they’ve been very good about coming forward, where they’ve seen things that they either have lobbied for, or they see that we’ve come up with something that they agree with, they’re very good at coming forward and saying ‘We think this is a good idea, thank you. We’ll help lobby Council for those things’. So that working relationship is also very helpful too.”

“We always include them as a delegation, or a stakeholder in the discussions. So they come to us, we ask them their opinion, they make presentations on what they feel is good, bad, or indifferent about what we’re trying to do and from that, that helps us make our opinion.”

“They (the local Federation of Agriculture) are willing to come to the table on a whole variety of matters, and that’s helpful too. And they’re very reasonable, and collaborative. So I think that’s certainly very helpful to get these kinds of things [policies in 3F] on the table and into policy.”

“I think the other thing that is really important here that is different from other communities is that for 25 years, we’ve had a very strong relationship with the Federation of Agriculture. Instead of being antagonistic, we’ve worked together on things throughout the years. So that relationship is quite strong, they have a lot of input into what we do, we talk back and forth a lot, and we’ve maintained that working relationship. Which I don’t think is duplicated everywhere, I think others have tried but I don’t think anybody has it quite to the degree what we do.”

As noted by the quotes above, the FA was recognized by decision makers as a critical regional resource on agricultural issues. As a close external partner with RP, the FA was recognized for playing an important non-partisan role and lobbying Council on RP’s behalf. In this way, the FA’s activities can be seen as unique system-level facilitators of food policy making in Waterloo Region.

FL was also recognized as an important regional influence and a strong supporter of activities to promote the local food economy. As an external partner to PH, FL was mentioned frequently by decision makers in light of the Region’s provision of start-up funding and sponsorship of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map. FL’s Director was noted for strong local food marketing and promotion skills and had been successful in establishing an important ‘Foodlink’ name in Waterloo Region. Despite a noted absence in the ROP policy making process (discussed in Chapter 7), the Director was recognized as an important food systems policy advocate who worked to defend the interests of regional farmers, and in particular, the OOM farming community. Although tensions were noted to exist between PH and FL, FL’s work in helping to address municipal planning barriers to expand opportunities for local food production, distribution and retail activity was highly regarded by participants:

“[Foodlink’s Executive Director] is a very good lobbyist and strategist. And I’m not sure it would have occurred in the way it did without [him] there, and Foodlink assisting.”

“So Foodlink worked with the Federation of Agriculture...[They] would have been the tie to the Old Order Mennonites to help form this [Agricultural] Committee and [they] gained some considerable concessions from the Township.”

As noted previously, the OOM farming community was recognized by decision makers as an important asset to the Region. Strategically, the potential threat of losing them became an important feature of FL’s advocacy efforts to promote local food interests. FA and FL jointly organized a regional farm tour for local and regional Councillors as a way to raise political

awareness of the needs and interests of the Region’s farmers during the ROP review. The farm tour was described as an important influencing event that informed decision makers’ understanding of agricultural- and food-related issues and showcased a number of innovative OOM agricultural initiatives. Participant perspectives on the farm tour as a strategic lobbying event are noted as follows:

“I would think that was all background information for us when we were doing this [reviewing the ROP]”

“I think the intention was to promote local agriculture and to allow that interaction to take place between some of the people involved full-time in the agricultural business and local policy-makers. And you know, a couple of things that [the Federation of Agriculture representative] talked to me about on the bus...we’re now correcting”

“We took a tour...we saw what they grow, how they market...we saw the [OOM] wholesale auction”

In this way, the activities of FA and FL and their networks, including this example of the regional farm tour, can be seen important system-level facilitators in advancing the food-related interests of food and agricultural policy networks in the Region.

5.6. Food System Policy Making Barriers at the Individual-, Organizational- and System-Levels

5.6.1. Individual-Level Barriers

While many individual-level facilitators were identified by participants, only one key barrier was noted in relation to food system policy making: PH and RP experts’ challenges related to navigating food systems as a new professional area of practice.

5.6.1.1. Navigating Food Policy as a New Professional Area of Practice

Non-traditional health backgrounds among PH staff and the HDPE Division’s unique open mandate were noted as individual facilitators in Section 5.5.1.1. However, early identified challenges within the Division were that some non-traditional staff did not have the specific food-related knowledge to address food issues while PH traditionalists lacked the vision to follow the open mandate. Specifically, some PH staff questioned the relevance of their early food-related activities and described a lack of procedural knowledge (i.e., *‘What are all these*

projects and reports leading to?’). Other noted professional challenges included: the need to transition from a “thou shall do this” regulatory (i.e., food safety enforcement) approach to more focused advocacy efforts; limited knowledge of land use planning practices and policies; and PH mandate constraints (discussed in Section 5.6.2.1). Project-staff also felt that there was little public interest and support for their early food-related activities. These issues are discussed further in Chapter 7 but illustrate important individual-level barriers related to ‘*legitimacy*’ for PH staff in creating a climate of change for food system policy making.

For regional planners, similar findings were observed. Specifically, a lack of professional literature was noted as a challenge in developing appropriate ROP policy wording that planners and the development community would understand. In addition, policy planners in RP recognized that their attempts to fill existing policy gaps with new food system considerations in the ROP would lead to questions about the Region’s authority on these issues. The novelty of the food policies themselves were noted as a general challenge as captured by the following:

“We had our ideas of what we wanted to achieve but nobody has really done this.”

5.6.2. Organizational-Level Barriers

Several organizational-level barriers related to food system policy making were identified by participants in this case study. Three key barriers included: resource constraints; a limited capacity to act (without partners); and tensions with external partners.

5.6.2.1. Resource Constraints

PH staff described a number of resource constraints affecting food system activities in the Region. A lack of food policy or food environment considerations in the Provincial Public Health Standards (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2011) meant that PH’s food projects and consultation activities were outside the Province’s mandated activities and therefore lacked sustained funding. Staff noted that they “scrounged funds from available sources” to advance a food systems agenda. Similarly, in light of a food systems gap in the PH mandate, many of the local level projects lacked regional coordination. For example, the coordination of community

gardens was identified as an organizational challenge in that some municipalities were willing to support gardens with appropriate resources whereas others were not. An early and insufficient PH evidence base for professional practice was also considered a significant resource constraint. The literature on health, food systems and the built environment was thought to be in its infancy and presented a challenge with respect to identifying the specific impacts and associations between land use planning and health. Canadian-specific, professional planning literature was also noted as a resource constraint by RP experts. Specifically, an organizational-level barrier to the adoption of food system policy making in the Region was the lack of food system planning consideration in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2011a). A lack of provincial planning leadership was noted to be a key resource constraint that impaired the ROP Writing Team’s level of professional knowledge on food-related issues (this is discussed as a key theme in Chapter 6).

5.6.2.2. Limited Capacity to Act

A second key organizational-level barrier for PH and RP was a limited capacity to act without the support of external or internal partners. For PH staff, it was strongly understood that the ability to influence regional planning policy was outside of their authority and would require a close working relationship with planning colleagues as captured by the following:

“From a jurisdictional perspective, Public Health does not have the ability to create these sorts of plans, that is definitely within the bailiwick of our Planning department. So we were keen in terms of our broader vision of creating a healthy local food system to see that the Regional Official Plan, to whatever degree it could, could be supportive of access to healthy food. We see that as part of our overall vision or strategy to create a healthy local food system. Intrinsic in that is creating access to healthy food. One strategy to get there, from our perspective, is ensuring that there is some mechanism with the ROP to support access to healthy food.”

In light of these noted jurisdictional barriers, PH strategically used their relationship with regional planners and their “inside avenue” to decision makers to help advance food system policy options as noted by the following:

“I think because it was something that the Region had direct control over, we put more effort into it because we had that sort of an inside avenue to decision makers.”

‘We’ve got to start getting our heads around land use policy’, right? Cuz we think we have a toe in the door with planners to influence this, but we need to know what we’re advocating for.”

In the same way, early in the development of the RGMS, RP experts identified their limited capacity to implement the strategy without the support of internal and external partners. Specifically, as noted above, development pressures to expand the agricultural countryside were “huge” and the need to marshal “as many supporters as possible” was regarded as a necessary approach to safeguarding the countryside line decision and securing ‘buy-in’ for the Region’s planning directions. At the local level, RP needed the area municipalities to be “on board” with the Region as they would bear the responsibility for implementation activities as noted by the following senior-level RP perspective:

“One thing we’ve managed to do, especially from 2003 on, was we spent a boatload of time really setting up an implementation group. There are 32 action items identified in the RGMS...it was really 80-85 projects that fell out of that. And the interesting part, about 30% of them were actually under our [regional planning] control...and about 70% of the things that we had to do weren’t ours to do. So what you had to do was to get other people to do them for you...To buy in to it and adapt their capital programs, their work programs, to do the thing that were important to us, not necessarily important to them. So that was a real challenge.”

Thus, with respect to the protection of agricultural land and plans for urban intensification, it was clear that a key organizational-level barrier was RP’s ability to secure the implementation commitment from the local level. A key challenge noted previously was the “up-hill battle” to sell food-related ideas to municipal planners. These findings reinforce the importance of partnerships as an overarching theme in this study.

5.6.2.3. Tensions with External Partners

A third and final organizational-level barrier, related to food system policy making, was the identified tensions from RP and PH’s involvement in food system activity as a new and non-traditional area of practice. Specifically, for RP experts, jurisdictional tensions surrounding local planners’ perceptions of the Region’s involvement in ‘commercial planning’ (or efforts to influence the size and location of food stores in neighbourhoods) were described previously. A two-tiered planning system was identified as a unique contextual factor that influenced the sensitivity of the relationship between planners and affected policy options in the ROP through a necessary period of policy redrafting. Municipal planning departments have control over zoning decisions that impact the location, promotion and establishment of food destinations at the local

level. Thus, the implementation of regional intentions is complicated by a number of factors (e.g., value conflicts, lack of consensus, jurisdictional boundaries, etc.) and can present barriers to advancing a regional food system vision when tensions exist, particularly when there is no provincial legislation to define food-related planning activity. Organizational-level tensions can be seen as follows:

“That’s the dilemma in any kind of policy work. Because on the one hand it’s in an upper tier plan, in our Plan, so this is a direct...instruction, or directive to the local municipalities to do something.”

“[M]ost of the development decisions are still at the area municipal level and so, again, it comes back to the Area Municipalities buying into the restrictions that the Region has laid down.”

Similar sub-politics, tensions and concerns arose among key regional food system stakeholders and PH regarding their involvement in what was perceived as ‘private-sector’ food matters. Specifically, tensions over competing resources, public attention and credibility between FL and PH were noted as an important factor in FL’s absence from the ROP policy-making process (this issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7 as a key feature related to the overarching theme of legitimacy). There were also noted tensions within the community groups and networks established by PH. Specifically, many groups were encouraged to participate in food system advocacy efforts yet did not feel they had the resources or mandate to do so, as captured below:

“We had a lot of conflict within [our organization] as to whether our strategy should be around that [advocacy work for supportive food-related policies in the ROP]. I think policy- not everybody was on board as to the need for supportive policies and what benefit that could achieve.”

Thus, as illustrated by these findings, key organizational-level barriers to food system policy making in Waterloo Region included: resource constraints, a limited capacity to act, and lastly, tensions with external partners. In light of these identified barriers, RP was able to move forward on their vision for the regional food system with sufficient resources, including strategic partnerships, and policy language and planning practices that were sufficiently “watered-down” to gain the municipalities’ support for a food system direction. Two key system-level barriers were identified by participants and emerged as important considerations that will affect the movement of the Region’s vision into a food system reality at the local level. System-level barriers illustrate the complex inter-relationship between market and public policy and included: dominant community values and government considerations of cost.

5.6.3. System-Level Barriers

Through an in-depth analysis of multi-sectoral perspectives on community change and food system policy making, two system-level barriers related to ‘cost’ were identified. The first barrier concerned dominant community values and consumer perceptions of the ‘cost of food’ and the ‘cost of convenience’ in making local food decisions. The second barrier related to decision makers’ values and the perceived ‘cost’ of government involvement in addressing ‘food access’ in the community. With respect to the latter, relevant considerations included both the financial and relational ‘costs’ of regional action and are described in greater detail below.

5.6.3.1. Dominant Community Values: The Cost of Food and Lifestyle Preferences

Cheap food preferences were identified as a critical system-level barrier to regional food policy activity. Specifically, participants described how society had grown accustomed to cheap food and argued that deeply-engrained consumer values regarding low food prices would hinder wider community acceptance of local food policies. More than any other issue, there was an underlying concern among participants that dominant community values and expectations for cheap local food would have a negative influence on *any* policy effort to ensure a ‘fair price’ for local producers. Similarly, commonly-held societal views of the farming community, including a lack of public appreciation for farm culture and local agricultural interests, relative to other food system sectors, were recognized as values that would reduce the potential for change and reinforce the current status quo. The comments below capture these value-based ‘cost’ concerns as key system-level barriers:

“We still have some rootedness in derision of farm things. Even though there’s almost this worship of farmers in some margins, in general, you still don’t choose to farm if you are a smart, get-it-done sort of person. You don’t want your children to become farmers.”

“Like it’s just criminal...I’m not sure what it says about society that the person that produces that thing that sustains life has no margin for profit. You get farmers getting into farm tours and entertainment farming because there are margins for profit in entertainment but there’s no margin for profit in feeding.”

Others also captured the idea of “derision of farm things” through descriptions of a noted power imbalance in the agri-food sector. As illustrated from the comments below, farmers were noted to be increasingly disempowered by a lack of control over decision making and by a very small

margin for profit in the conventional food system. The role of government agencies in occasionally reinforcing this imbalance was captured as follows:

“The farm economy, so the farmer’s wallet would be the primary thing [that we are concerned about]. And [we] end up shaking our heads every once in awhile because we’ll be sitting in on a committee working on a project and you’re on the same page with them...and then some social service agency will say ‘Oh, if we could just get the price of food down, then we could help the impoverished people, then the poor would be great, and then [we] go ‘Whoa, whoa!’ If poverty is the issue, then address poverty! Don’t further impoverish the whole agricultural industry, and affect land use because of the disparity in the farm and non-farm economies because you want to solve some social problem. Like look at the problem in and of itself, don’t do it on the backs of farmers.”

Perceived ‘lifestyle costs’ among consumers were also identified as a relevant policy concern. Modern day lifestyle conveniences were perceived as an important factor affecting consumers’ willingness to buy locally, and a barrier affecting system-level food system change. In light of 21st century conventional shopping conveniences, including 24-hour, 7 days-a-week food retail availability, home grocery delivery services and the emergence of the Superstore, the inconvenience of local food procurement activity was noted as an important factor influencing dominant community values and shopping behaviour. Similarly, consumer preferences for once-a-week, one-stop-shopping at a large Superstore was a noted barrier in long-range community plans for smaller, mixed-use neighbourhoods with small food stores in walking distance from places where people live and work. This finding points to the perceived ‘lifestyle costs’ associated with consumer preference, as captured below:

“A lot of people think it’s a good idea, ‘Oh yeah, buy local, that’s great!’ but it’s making it fit in with your busy schedules and the planning ahead. Because you can’t just run up to the nearest [Local Food] Buying Club at the last minute and buy something. You have to remember when the order time is and order. And you have to remember to come and pick it up. So there are some scheduling and ordering barriers.”

“These plans are for 2029. So twenty-five years from now, the majority of people might still prefer to shop in a big Zehrs store, still might prefer to live in a single, detached house in a primarily single, detached neighbourhood, prefer to travel by automobile regardless of what it’s powered on in the future.”

Thus, the cost (and perceived inconvenience) of participating as a consumer in local food system retail activity is an important system-level, value-based barrier affecting food policy potential in the ROP. In contrast to stronger regulatory efforts, the significance of RP’s conservative ‘visioning’ approach as a way to ‘nudge’ society in “a direction they might otherwise go” can be

seen as gentle way of raising awareness of the Region's intentions regarding the local food economy, agricultural land and access to food.

5.6.3.2. Regional and Local Government Values: The Financial and Relational Costs of Participating in Food System Activity

Decision makers' values related to 'cost' were identified as a second system-level barrier to food system policy making in general and to the Region's adoption of Section 3F in particular. Importantly, Section 3F's food policies and planning actions were noted not to have imposed any additional financial costs on the Region. Most participants discussed cost as an important consideration related to implementation activity at the municipal level and a factor in the Region's use of 'weaker' food policy language in the ROP. The following quote captures decision makers' concerns about 'cost' in policy making:

"You can't tie your Council of the day to a particular regiment because obviously each year they have to balance what they think are the priorities of that particular year. And likewise, if they don't have any money because it's been a bad few years, and they're going to have to cut a program, you can't have people coming and saying 'You're not conforming to your official plan!'"

Local and regional decision makers were perceived by staff experts as being generally supportive and willing to "encourage" the types of policies in Section 3F (with minimal financial cost to the Region) but reasoned that their governments would find it more challenging to "ensure" that these were implemented. With respect to weighing the cost of a number of competing priorities, one senior-level planning expert remarked,

"It's easy to put in a policy that says 'the City encourages community gardens and rooftop gardens where appropriate. City Council wouldn't have a problem with that... Where the challenge comes in is if we want to *ensure* that happens, so that we're going to play a role to *make it happen*. And then there's a cost. There's a cost to the municipality one way or another. And that's where it's always a question of 'Is this the thing we want to prioritize and invest our resources in to make it happen? You can't do it all so where does it fit in relation to others [priorities]? That's the challenge."

Two types of cost-related considerations were identified as factors affecting decision making at local and regional levels and can be seen as important system-level barriers to food system policy adoption. These included financial and relational costs and are briefly discussed with supporting examples below.

5.6.3.2.1. Perceived Financial Costs

The potential cost associated with the implementation of Section 3F's policies and practices was identified as an important issue of concern for regional decision makers. Financial concerns stemmed from the feared costs of overstepping traditional jurisdictional boundaries in planning and interfering in private-sector food interests. As captured below, there was much noted trepidation regarding the financial cost of regional action that could result in an appeal and subsequent hearing at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB). It was apparent that regional decisions needed to be weighed carefully in terms of perceived financial costs, as noted by the following:

“Is Council willing to fight to save on this particular issue? There is great fear in going to the Ontario Municipal Board, the cost involved...”

“This is about as strong as our senior levels of management would like because it doesn't commit the City to anything...I mean the lens that every decision is made from is around cost, financial cost.”

“To be fair, with senior management, they support those ideas as people, and they support us as planners. I mean the Commission [of Planning] supports it. But our mandate is ‘It can't cost us anything!’

“I'm interested in ensuring that the decisions we make as an elected body in the Region of Waterloo improves the quality of life for our citizens at a reasonable cost”.

Thus, decision makers' financial concerns regarding the cost of an appeal against regional food policy activity was an important influence in shaping a more cautious planning approach, softer policy wording and a strong regard for jurisdictional planning boundaries in adopting Section 3F. This finding mirrors a second important feature which relates to the perceived ‘relational costs’ of overstepping the Region's *legitimate* planning authority.

5.6.3.2.2. Perceived Relational Costs

Jurisdictional concerns were identified by participants as an important factor in regional decision making. Specifically, in light of the Region's two-tier planning context, broad directives and a regional vision for food system planning were presented in the ROP with the expectation that AMs would appropriately consider food policy considerations and bring local plans into

conformity with the Region. According to some participants, it was noted that the Region “really has no clout over this [and] it will be a little dance back and forth”. Implementation concerns and relational tensions were best expressed in the following quote:

“In terms of the kinds of policies that encourage this, and encourage that, [they’re] all well and good but you can’t necessarily make them happen unless, you know, you get the co-operation of the Area Municipalities, who in many cases are responsible for zoning and development.”

Thus, with respect to AMs’ responsibility for food system implementation activities, decision makers were noted to be less inclined to pose restrictions on municipalities through ‘heavy-handed policies’. This finding can be seen as a reflection of a concern for and consideration of the ‘relational cost’ of threatening the stability of an important relationship with local municipalities:

“So senior levels of management, seeing that as part of their responsibility, would be less inclined, I think, to accept or develop policies that would bind the City, or cause us [the municipality] to have some sort of cost. I think it would be up to us as we are developing our Official Plan to figure out ways that we could encourage them in a direct way but there was no cost to impact on the municipality. And so that would be part of what we’d be looking at through these draft policies as to what we could do.”

As captured above, dominant community and government values concerning cost were important system-level barriers to food policy activity and the adoption of stronger government policies and planning actions. In the same way that consumers’ perceptions of food and lifestyle-related costs were found to affect participation in local-level food system activity, considerations of cost was also recognized as playing a role in decision makers’ willingness to actively ‘participate’ in regional food system governance activity . Governance barriers are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. A summary of the individual-, organizational- and system-level facilitators and barriers is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Key Facilitators and Barriers to Food System Policy Making at the Individual-, Organizational- and System-levels

LEVEL	FACILITATORS	BARRIERS
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PH Champion and committed PH staff • Professional skills and competency of the lead author/ROP Writing Team • Department leaders in PH and RP • Supportive characteristics and values of the Regional Chair and Council • Partnerships between regional staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional challenges associated with navigating a new area of practice for PH and RP staff experts
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional organizational structure • Internal partnerships and regional collaboration • External partnerships with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource constraints • PH and RP’s limited capacity to act (without external partners) • Tensions with external partners
System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trends in provincial and regional planning, agriculture, health and the environment • Food- and agriculture policy networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominant community values (i.e., cheap food and lifestyle ‘costs’) • Government values (i.e., financial and relational ‘costs’ to food system activity) • Private sector food interests

5.7. Fertile Ground for the Adoption of Section 3F: A Council-Adopted Course of Action for Changes in Regional Food System Planning

Lastly, the policy relevance of ‘time and place’ was a critical recurring feature of the ROP policy making context. With respect to an earlier noted perspective, food system policy considerations found “fertile ground” in Waterloo Region, became incorporated into a vision for the regional food system, and received Council approval as an appropriate course of action.

As noted by the comments below, the “right combination of things” in the “right place at the right time” suggests that key policy actors in this case study, including RP and PH, took advantage of an open ‘policy window’ to actively move forward a food systems agenda. The importance of timing is captured by participants’ comments and reflects: an occurrence at “the right time”; an “astrological convergence of stars”; and “a moment in time”, as noted by the following:

“I’ve been here for 19 years now and I know when I first started, something like this would never have gone through. They’d just say ‘No, it’s too detailed. You’re getting into an area you shouldn’t, you’re treading into local municipalities and into their turf.’”

“It’s almost like an astrological convergence of stars or something, right? Because you have to have built all that groundwork, the rapport with farmers, rapport with planners, the whole urban sprawl issue, the obesity issue, everything coming together and people starting to say ‘Maybe we can make a change’”

“It was kind of a moment in time when health and the built environment first became a hot topic in Public Health.”

“So I think it’s fortunate in terms of all these things, timing, politics, and a number of agendas lining up...the need for a Growth Management Strategy, provincial interest in the same thing because they wanted to protect the Greenbelt...so there’s a lot of things. It’s also been just in the last ten years that we’ve had the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

‘Place’ was also noted as an important factor in this case study in light of Waterloo Region’s unique identified features including agrarian mentality, community and land stewardship, a willing farming sector, and prime agricultural land. The significance of ‘place’ alongside ‘timing’ is captured best by the following and is evidence of the opening of an important policy window in Waterloo Region:

“It’s a weird combination of things that have just come together, there’s a resiliency in this community...the conditions here just seem to be right for the right type of ideas.”

“And policy emerges out of ground work and change, right? And it arises kind of opportunistically with certain things being in the right place at the right time.”

“The two-tier environment and the very stable political context that we’ve had over the last 25 years has allowed us to do stuff that is going to shape the way this community grows for the next 50 to 100 years. It’s been fun to be in the right place at the right time.”

5.8. Lessons from a Case Study of Food System Policy Making: Harvesting Seeds of Opportunity within the Region’s Fertile Environment

This chapter provided an extensive assessment of the Region’s policy and planning environment and identified the key contextual factors, and individual-, organizational-, and system-level facilitators and barriers related to food system policy making in Waterloo Region (these findings are summarized in Tables 5 and 6 respectively). The role of evidence was seen throughout the policy making process through the transfer and diffusion of food policy ideas from a sub-set of

committed PH advocates, to PH staff within the HDPE Division, to RP and Council, and ultimately to the regional community through the adoption of Section 3F.

As introduced in Chapter 4, a number of key overarching themes were apparent within this case study of food system policy making in Waterloo Region. PH's *participation* in regional planning decisions was shown to be an important outcome of the following: the *alignment* of a health agenda with other regional priorities; *strategic positioning* (through many noted channels of influence); and a mutual-supportive *partnership* with RP. At the right moment in time, PH took advantage of a *strategic* opportunity to use policy *evidence*, including academic literature, knowledge communities/external partners, and a recognized reputation for food system innovation to advance a food system policy direction in Waterloo Region. Similarly, RP also benefited from PH's *alliance* and used their internal *partnership* as a way to move forward on plans for urban intensification and the protection of agricultural land. RP's ability to establish a common *issue frame*, and to exert influence without the use of solid regulation, minimized planning *tensions* and moved early food policy ideas from agenda-setting to an approved course of regional action. In this way, RP became an active *participant* in food system policy making. Strategically, Section 3F's *vision* for the Region was used to promote ongoing food policy dialogue, intentional food planning consideration, and greater opportunities for local food system activity in the future. Despite noted 'cost' concerns and the *transfer* of implementation responsibility to local municipalities, regional decision makers played an important *participatory* role by harvesting Section 3F's 'seeds of opportunity' through the adoption of the ROP. In summary, while this chapter identified the key contextual factors, facilitators and barriers associated with food policy making at the regional level, the opportunities and challenges of shifting a vision to action at the local level remain unexplored. The following chapter examines multi-sectoral perspectives of the current food planning 'reality' within Area Municipalities and identifies overarching barriers affecting food system change.

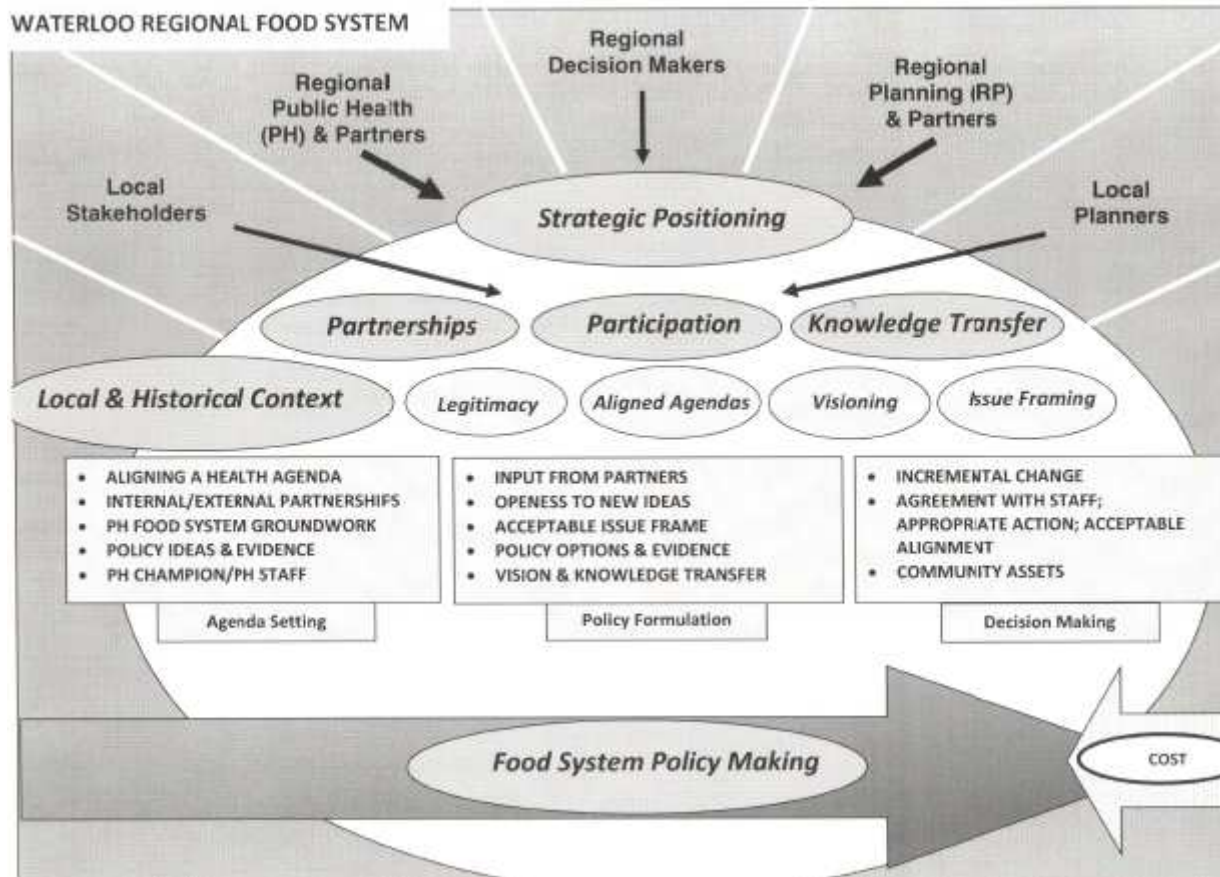


Figure 3: Concept Map of Key Findings and Themes of Food System Policy Making in Waterloo Region

CHAPTER 6: CULTIVATING SEEDS OF CHANGE IN THE REGION'S COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM ENVIRONMENT

6.1. From 'Vision' to 'Reality': Identifying Challenges of Current Planning Policies and Practices

A community food system environment (CFSE) is a concept that encapsulates the range of intentional food system planning practices and supportive policies in a defined political or geographical area. It also includes the full spectrum of production, processing, distribution, retail and consumption activity that is specific to a local food environment. In 2005, Waterloo Region's government officials adopted a series of supportive food policies and planning considerations in the Regional Official Plan (ROP) as a way to: improve opportunities for healthy, local food access; promote local economic development; support farmer viability; and reduce the impact of long distance food travel on the environment (Region of Waterloo, 2005). Each of the seven Area Municipalities (AM) is required by the Planning Act (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2011b) to update and revise their official plans (OP) to conform with the Region's new food system direction. The Region's vision for the regional food system and the implementation of the ROP's food policies and planning actions has the potential to shape the CFSE by promoting and expanding opportunities for local food production, distribution and retail at the local level. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to provide a baseline 'snapshot' of the CFSE, including current planning practices and policies associated with the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail, prior to any resulting changes from the ROP, and as perceived by multi-sectoral stakeholders. While a regional food system is made up of many inter-related parts, the findings presented here are limited to relevant case study examples of the production, wholesaling and retailing of healthy, local food in Waterloo Region.

The aim was to capture a 'pre-intervention' (i.e., pre-ROP) qualitative assessment of the policy and planning environment as it related to the creation of a 'healthy' CFSE. Retail food outlets that offer a wide range of healthy, local food are a key feature of a 'healthy' CFSE. In-depth semi-structured interviews with regional food system stakeholders and staff experts identified a number of land use concerns affecting the location, promotion and establishment of conventional

and ‘alternative’ food retail sites. Given the Region’s vision for a strong and diverse regional food system and to improve food-related planning considerations at the local level, this case study served to answer an important and timely question concerning ‘*What works, and what doesn’t*’. The research also examined common issues, decision making concerns and current policies and practices that may require modification or reform to support new opportunities for healthy retail. Other Canadian municipalities may not yet have initiated any type of baseline planning activity to support their local food system. Thus, insight into the barriers and challenges at the local level can help support early food system planning considerations in other jurisdictions. This chapter presents findings from the second overarching objective of this study which was to identify current planning policies and practices that affect the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail food outlets in Waterloo Region. Key findings are presented here along with a brief consideration of opportunities to improve the regional CFSE.

6.2. Gaps in the Current Food System Planning and Policy Environment: Regional Coordination and Legislative Support

A number of examples of emerging forms of healthy retail and distribution outlets were identified by participants including temporary urban markets, a wholesale produce auction, a neighbourhood buying club for local food, an urban café, and several country farm stores. For each of these, planning permission, licensing or zoning amendments had been requested from local planning authorities within the past five years. Hence the establishment and promotion of these food system activities, including the relevant planning and zoning considerations, could be examined from a variety of perspectives, including those of local planning experts. Most examples highlighted perceived problems or challenges that would need to be addressed to appropriately implement the ROP’s food policy direction at the local level. Based on detailed qualitative analyses of participants’ perspectives, two key overarching challenges, or ‘gaps’ related to current planning practices and policies emerged. The first concerns potential gaps in regional food system coordination and the second relates to the current legislative planning framework’s ability to accommodate emerging food system changes at regional and municipal levels. The two ‘gaps’ are described here as part of the perceived planning reality at the local

level and as overarching challenges that could potentially hinder the implementation of the ROP's Section 3F and impede efforts to improve the CFSE.

6.3. Regional Food System Coordination: Differences in Municipal Food System Planning Practices, Approaches and Policies

The first key overarching challenge emerged from participant accounts of differences in the policies and planning practices across the Region's seven municipalities. Specifically, a number of important barriers at the local level were identified that suggest, despite the recency of Section 3F's adoption, a lack of regional food system coordination may be a potential implementation concern going forward. Identified barriers included: (1) differences in municipal zoning accommodation and planning flexibility ("zoning challenges"); (2) a lack of supportive municipal food policies ("policy concerns"); and lastly, (3) local planners' professional views and receptiveness to the Region's food system direction ("professional practice constraints"). Each of these barriers is examined with respect to regional food system coordination and for its perceived impact on the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail in Waterloo Region.

6.3.1. "Zoning Challenges": Differences in Municipal Zoning Accommodation, and Supportive Food Policies and Practices

A number of examples were discussed relating to local governments' and planners' willingness to accommodate new forms of food system activity through appropriate zoning amendments and planning flexibility. These perceived "zoning challenges" associated with current planning practices received a lot of attention among local food producers, distributors and retailers and were seen as an important factor affecting the location, promotion, and establishment of healthy retail in rural and urban communities. Among rural participants, a common view was that zoning challenges stifled local food system innovation by: restricting the development and expansion of privately-owned on-farm stores; hindering collaborative activity within the farming community (i.e., through restrictions on the ability to retail a neighbouring farm's produce or processed goods); and limiting on-farm processing and food retail. In urban areas, similar concerns were noted with respect to zoning challenges and resource considerations which were felt to restrict community gardens and healthy, local food retail in residential neighbourhoods.

For each of these examples, participants agreed that current zoning challenges presented a barrier to local food production, distribution, and retail activity in urban and rural areas and pointed to differences in the level of zoning accommodation and planning flexibility across AMs.

PH's Neighbourhood Markets Initiative (NMI) offers an example of a unique initiative funded by the Region and coordinated by regional PH staff as a strategy to improve healthy food access. The project included setting up mobile farmers' markets at various community locations throughout the Region where food access is limited (Mann Miedema, 2008). The NMI is an important illustrative example of what could be expected through the promotion and establishment of "temporary farmers' markets" described in Section 3.F.2. Although the NMI was piloted before the adoption of the ROP, participants identified a number of frustrations and concerns with planning and zoning at the local level as follows: "road block"; "endless reasons why you can't"; "embedded barriers"; "a number of challenges"; "planning hurdles"; "they [the markets] didn't fit [within current zoning codes]"; "the City is creating a problem"; "holding us back"; "jumping through hoops"; "no internal champion"; and "big stack of paperwork to get the zoning approved". With respect to specific zoning challenges, the following quotes describe the NMI and identify issues related to site approval, licensing and parking requirements:

"The idea was to put ten foot by ten foot tents in a few places to sell food from local markets. And one of the few places that was willing to have one was [the] Hospital. And we were just going to do it in the parking lot. Well, the hospital is zoned for whatever institution use but it's not commercial, so selling from even the parking lot is technically speaking not permitted. Plus, the City has normal fees for licensing so if you're going to sell, you need a license and there's a thousand dollar fee annually. So these were all huge barriers to somebody wanting to do that kind of thing."

"The things I remember very well are, if you have an establishment, based on the number of employees and the number of people visiting, you have to have X number of parking spots. So even if you use one or two spots [for a temporary market], it's a formula you still have to meet. It was tough to make that rationale. If you pick a day that is low use for the parking lot, it doesn't make sense to the City. The way they look at it, there are no programs happening at a Community Centre on a Thursday but you still need [to have] that many spots."

Thus, the NMI example is an important illustration of the significant challenges and high degree of zoning difficulty in establishing new forms of healthy retail in urban areas. Additionally, as a regional department, PH staff needed to work closely with planners at the local level to obtain the appropriate planning approval for the neighbourhood markets. In this way, PH gained

important insight into key differences in AM planning approaches and zoning flexibility as captured below:

“It took way longer than expected and with each municipality, there is a different story. So some are able to flex their rules, and other [municipalities] are a bit more procedural.”

The NMI example offers a unique opportunity to examine the zoning challenges related to the location, promotion and establishment of urban markets as a type of healthy retail at the local level. As well, it offers insight into perceived differences in municipal approaches and zoning flexibility to accommodate emerging forms of local food system activity. Specifically, some municipalities are able to take a more flexible and supportive approach to new food system initiatives whereas others tended to have a more regimented approach to the acceptance and promotion of new food system ideas. Thus, differences in municipal approaches, including varying levels of zoning and regulatory accommodation, are an important indication of what may not be working at the local level and suggest that regional coordination may be needed to ensure consistent and committed support for regional food system activity.

6.3.2. “Policy Concerns”: A Lack of Supportive Urban and Rural Food System Policies

A second important barrier at the local level was the notable absence of appropriate food system planning policies (including zoning designations) to accommodate emerging forms of healthy local food production, distribution and retail in the Region. Examples include, but are not limited to, those forms identified in Section 3F such as community gardens, on-farm stores, temporary farmers’ markets, and seasonal and year-round produce stands, as well as other increasingly popular ways to access fresh farm produce (e.g., neighbourhood buying clubs, wholesale produce auctions, country market stores, and farm co-operatives). A lack of supportive municipal food system policies in rural areas is captured by the comments below:

“We spent a considerable amount of time trying to persuade local municipalities to allow farmers’ markets in rural areas because in some rural municipalities- the townships, it was not allowed.”

“There are no provisions to have an on-farm sales facility in [the Township]. If it’s not written in the Township’s bylaws, that means it is illegal.”

“There was no appropriate zoning available in [the Township] bylaws to even allow a wholesale auction...there was nothing in their Official Plan or their bylaws.”

Similar findings were found concerning the Region's urban areas. In urban communities, participants described a growing public interest in establishing urban community gardens and healthy food premises as a way to access healthy food within walking distance from places where people live and work. A movement among local residents and community organizations to create opportunities to supply fresh local produce to the Region's urban consumers was also described. Despite the increasing popularity of local food, the absence of supportive policies and planning practices to allow for and facilitate sites for food production, distribution and retail in urban areas was presented as an important challenge:

"Many municipalities do not have a program [official policy] that includes community gardens, with the exception of Kitchener which has a start up fund and some staff support...Kitchener is quite progressive and other municipalities aren't as far along in having official community gardens."

"The community gardens and rooftop gardens, we don't have any [written policies] right now. We may at some point, but we're not dealing with infrastructure of buildings where you'd see that happen."

"So even if ninety-nine of my neighbours like what I'm doing, if one of them feels grumpy about it and calls me in, then they have to enforce the zoning bylaw which is that it is residential property and you can't have commercial [food] activity. So they told me that I needed to close down [the neighbourhood buying club for local food]."

Similar to the aforementioned 'zoning challenges', a lack of appropriate zoning was also noted to be a particular concern for food system innovation in rural areas. In particular, planning practices were seen to differ most in regard to the level of accommodation for commercial activity on agriculturally-zoned land. Based on current provincial property tax assessments, agriculturally-zoned land in rural areas is taxed at 25% of the residential rate (and much lower than commercial property tax rates) as a way to help support small- and medium-sized farms. However, participants pointed to a number of perceived differences across municipalities in the level of support for on-farm processing and retail activity. Some planners recognized the value of food processing activity as an inter-related part of the agri-food system and were more flexible with the 'agricultural' zoning designation. Others were less willing to accommodate any commercial activity and maintained strict zoning codes for agricultural land. These findings suggest that there may be a shortage of appropriate zoning codes in rural areas to encourage local food system activity. The following comments reflect participants' perspectives of the different levels of planning accommodation for on-farm retail activity across the Region's rural townships:

“It [our on-farm retail store] is still zoned agricultural. As far as [North Dumfries Township] went, they didn’t have us rezoned...They [local planners] said that the only ruling is that you have to be at the back of your house because normally a house is near the road and they don’t want retail visible from the road.”

“We gained some considerable concessions from [Woolwich Township], and they [local planners] came up with thresholds whereby around 50% of the product [one sells in a farm store or farm stand] must originate on your farm. We looked at how large farm retail stands should be before they start getting into commercial, you know, very specific, tangible zoning things.”

“[Wilmot Township] came along and said ‘You’re causing a lot of traffic problems along the road, so either you cease what you’re doing, or you build a market’... Yes, very loosely, build a parking lot or get out. Now our last expansion was probably the most difficult to get proper zoning because we still had an ‘agricultural/special’ designation so we’re not paying commercial taxes because we’re still growing food, we are still an agricultural farm, and we’re retailing our products, as well as those of others.”

These findings support a potential gap in regional food system coordination. Specifically, in a food systems approach, restricting activity to *any* component of the system relative to other components or sectors is going to affect the overall functioning of the entire system. In this way, restricting production or wholesale activity (or stifling other forms of local food system innovation) in rural areas will ultimately affect opportunities to purchase and consume healthy, local food in urban areas. As illustrated through a local planner’s response to Section 3F, a “double-edged sword” was used to describe the need for coordinated regional food system planning decisions that consider the *entire* system, rather than each of its individual parts:

“The idea is to bring farmers’ markets into the urban area so that they [urban residents] can walk to it, I get it. But conversely, if you’re restricting what they [producers] can sell in the agricultural areas so that they are being restricted in their ability to sell their own products, or even a bit of other peoples’ products, then it’s almost defeating the purpose...If they can’t sustain the farm, then they’re not going to grow the food...then it’s not going to get to the urban areas. So it’s a double-edged sword.”

Overall, the examples above highlight a number of identified concerns related to a lack of supportive policies to appropriately zone for, and permit emerging forms of food production, distribution and retail activity in rural and urban areas.

6.3.3. “Professional Practice Constraints”: Planners’ Perceptions of Relevance, Acceptance, Independence and Professional Responsibility for Food System Planning Policies and Practices

A number of “professional practice constraints” were felt to impair regional food system coordination. Apart from jurisdictional tensions related to the Region’s efforts to influence commercial planning (discussed in Chapter 5), there was overall, a good degree of support among local planners for the Region’s food system planning direction, as reflected here:

“We’re going to have [to include] new policies that deal with access to local food, and we’re going to have to put that into our [official] plan in some form and then we’re going to have to say, ‘OK, does our zoning bylaw now reflect these new policies?’ And if they don’t, we’re going to have to update our zoning bylaw to implement it.”

However, professional practice constraints (that is, overriding attitudes and personal values about food system planning and the profession) were described by participants that could potentially have a negative influence on the implementation of food system planning ideas at the municipal level. Specifically, four professional practice constraints were identified related to: (1) professional relevance; (2) professional appropriateness; (3) preferred independence; and (4) professional responsibility. These are identified briefly below and examined in regards to their contribution to gaps in regional food system coordination.

6.3.3.1. ‘Professional Relevance’: Finding ‘Relevance’ in Food System Planning

In reflecting on the anticipated differences in municipal planning responses to the Region’s food policies, an important comment by a senior planning expert provided a relevant indication of a professional planning challenge common among local planners. The issue of ‘perceived professional relevance’ is noted as follows:

“For some of them [municipal planners], they’ll look at this and say, ‘Whatever is in the ROP, that’s fine.’ It’s a resource issue, or just a lack of interest issue. Or they might say ‘We’re a township, this is what we do. So what’s your point [with these policies]? And in other places like Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, they might spend a whole lot of time wrestling with how to deal with temporary farmers’ markets and community gardens. Because they’re all supportive [of the policies] from one degree or another. Being supportive is one thing, having some understanding of what they [the policies] mean is quite another.”

“The local municipalities have a lot of work to do. And this [food-related section] is just one aspect... So they’re not only struggling with trying to bring their plans up to date, but they have to do a whole range of studies in relation to their own policies. So typically, if we’ve given some direction on, you know, temporary farmers’ markets, unless they take something like what we’ve written and put it into their Plan, and it stays as a general policy, you’re not going to see much in the way of implementation unless they take it to the next step and start looking at it, like ‘Which areas are appropriate? [or] ‘How are we going to do this?’... In terms of barriers, it’s going to come down to how much time they have and how much of a priority it is.”

As illustrated here, a challenge associated with the consideration and adoption of new food system planning ideas relates to planners' professional ability to understand and identify the potential 'relevance' of food system planning ideas relative to other planning priorities. Two important examples in this case study highlight the professional planning considerations associated with 'perceived relevance': the first concerns Woolwich Township and the second, North Dumfries Township. Local planners in Woolwich were described by participants as being the most 'progressive' and 'ahead of other municipalities' in their support for food system activity:

"The Township of Woolwich was seen as a leader in terms of making changes that were put in place to actually make it more attractive for people to have roadside stands and to be able to sell their produce. And so the easiest way to say it is that some flexibility was introduced into our policies and our bylaws to allow for that."

Participants explained Woolwich's flexible planning approach by pointing out the community's resources and municipal priorities, including: a large Mennonite farming population, prime food production areas, and government interest in agri-tourism and local economic development. In this way, professional planners and local authorities may have had a stronger understanding of the importance of local food system activity as an important point of intersection with other community goals. Similarly, in North Dumfries, an example of a family business initiative was recognized for its value in establishing a popular on-farm retail store. Despite its distance from urban areas, the rural farm store was noted to attract consumers from across the Region by retailing their own high quality meats as well as other products produced and processed locally. Initially, the Township and local planners responded cautiously to the family's request for a store expansion and issued a site-specific zoning amendment. The local municipality's level of planning accommodation and zoning flexibility contributed to the store's success and resulted in the establishment of a second similar farm store in the nearby vicinity. As illustrated below, not only were the farm stores permitted as a way to supply healthy, local food to the community, they were also regarded as a 'relevant' planning opportunity to support the viability of several area farmers. This experience is captured by a local decision maker as follows:

"We have a farm down here that produces beef cattle on it and they have developed that even further to not only raising beef cattle for the meat industry but they've actually turned it into [an on-farm retail store]...They've

expanded so much that they've built a separate building now, sort of like a farmers' market building ... With the success that the [Smiths] had with their [store], the [neighbours] have now expanded, they're doing similarly...they've got a country market...So that's what I see happening here in North Dumfries Township."

Thus, with respect to potential professional practice constraints, unless planners can recognize the relevance of adopting supportive food system planning practices, a key challenge will remain in implementing a viable regional food system vision. Further, there is a need for local governments and municipal planning departments to recognize the value of local level activity as part of a coordinated 'whole' food system approach to address healthy food access, support farmer viability, and facilitate opportunities for local economic development.

6.3.3.2. Weighing the 'Appropriateness' of the Region's Food System Direction

A second key professional practice barrier was identified and related to planners' considerations of new food policy ideas in the ROP. A common finding among local planners was that the policies were regarded as being too '*narrowly-defined*'. This finding was consistent across both urban and rural planners. Rurally-oriented planners' views of *narrowness* may stem from a much broader understanding and experience with the full range of food system activity (with agricultural land and food production concerns being within their usual scope of planning considerations). Thus, for rural planners, the Region's direction on 'access to food' was perceived as narrow in scope in that it was seen to be placing a stronger emphasis on "consumer access to food" instead of "producer access to markets". The following quotes illustrate rural planners' concerns regarding the 'appropriateness' of the Region's food system policies pertaining to 'temporary' farmers' markets and community gardens, or Section 3.F.2 and 3.F.4 respectively). In general, there was a noted concern that these are more appropriate for urban areas as noted by the following:

"Farm produce stands [in rural areas] are another way of doing it, where the public can go on a little farm tour to these various stands to get the fresh products in season. You know, to help sustain farmers. There are a number of ways to achieve this and I don't think it should be limited to urban areas."

"If they have a regional policy that restricts certain uses in the rural area, we have to follow it. Traditionally, they set very broad policies [through which] they're trying to implement the provincial policy statements. And ours gets more detailed and then we decide how we can best implement that policy. And like I said, one municipality's way of doing it differs from another. And so my thought was that they were a little too restrictive."

“It’s being very narrow about ways of doing it, and it may not be as conducive in our area than it would be for more the larger urban areas where their access to open space is less than what we have.”

“This is almost more applicable to the cities where a city could encourage a mall parking lot to be used in the summer months as a farmers’ market as opposed to [being about] on-farm sales. And then community gardens and rooftop gardens, those are generally more city-type policies.”

“I think they [the Region] were starting to get into having farmers’ markets, and that may be a very good idea, but it may not be the only way as to how you can ensure that the public has access to local food products...we had some of those issues...[the policies] were too specific. I said ‘Delete A through D in order to allow each municipality to draft policies that are specific and relevant to their community.... All I’m saying is that may not be the best way we could deliver local foods. You know, there could be other means of doing that.’”

In contrast to rural perspectives, urban planners were more likely to question the Region’s legal authority to enforce a ‘complete communities’ food system direction rather than to comment on specific policies in Section 3F. Specifically, while there was overall support for the food system planning *principles* in Section 3F, the policies themselves were perceived as having a lower priority relative to other issues in the ROP (e.g., urban intensification targets). However, two key areas were questioned regarding their ‘appropriateness’. First, despite a shared regional and local interest in reducing automotive dependence in urban areas, planners did not think that either regional or local planners had the ability, or the authority (through “strong enough tools”) to appropriately change, or manage the trend among large food retail companies of building superstores and expansive parking lots in urban areas. And that while the Region’s emphasis on food destinations in neighbourhoods was accepted *in principle*, it was not perceived to be in tune with the current realities at the local level.

“How can you make Loblaws, for example, build only a 30, 000 ft store when they want to build the 80,000 sq ft one just down the road? They’re not going to do it...[So] how do you develop that sort of system within an already urbanized area that is already, in many ways, developed and is not going to change? Well, that’s the struggle.”

“Some planners say that’s not a land use question, that’s a market question. As soon as you get Loblaws or Sobeys to adjust the market so there is a market for a 20-30,000 sq ft little grocery store, it’s not going to change.”

The second key point of concern among urban planners was the issue of community gardens. The Region’s direction on encouraging allotment gardens was regarded as being counter to the Province’s higher density targets in built-up areas. There were strong sentiments that the allocation of land for community gardens and allotment gardens on prime urban real estate was not realistic and went against planners’ re-urbanization priorities. Thus, based on these findings

and concerns regarding ‘appropriate’ professional food system planning practices, there is an important need for regional coordination to address these issues at the local level. Both urban and rural planning concerns were found to be equally valid and highlight the challenges of aligning these varied perspectives within a regional municipality as diverse as Waterloo Region. This is reflected as follows:

“We were trying to identify *early* in the process some of the issues that we would have, including some of the deficiencies in [the ROP] and how it would affect each of the municipalities. And because you’re dealing with the largest urban areas of Kitchener to the smallest urban areas of Wellesley...the issues are so varied.”

6.3.3.3. Maintaining an ‘Independent’ Food System Approach

In light of the complexity and diversity of the Region’s food system issues within urban and rural municipalities, most municipal planners preferred to remain independent of RP in their approach and considerations of local food system planning. This was reflected as a desire to be autonomous, and unique in identifying ways in which to support the regional food system and facilitate access to healthy, local food. This view is reflected by the following comments:

“We would go through the policies...and the general push from the municipalities was ‘We appreciate the policy direction, however, each of our four townships is unique and has slightly different ways of looking at all of that on-farm activity, secondary businesses’. And so they [Township planners] essentially wanted to be able to reserve the right to still have our own zoning, to deal with specific types of uses, whether permissive-type policies or restrictive policies that would deal with the types of retail that would not be allowed”

“I was involved in that discussion about on-farm uses and the farm retail side of things. Again, from the Township perspective, I was wanting to see policies that provided direction but allowed for that individual-municipal flexibility on how they deal with the uses.”

From a professional practice perspective, these comments illustrate planners’ interest in doing what is most relevant and appropriate for their local community. However, from a food *systems* perspective, where there is a need for many inter-connected parts to work together to support the entire system (Best, 2007), this approach can present a challenge. Specifically, as shown in Chapter 5, tensions between planners arose when regional planners tried to change or redefine their jurisdictional authority in a two-tier planning context. Regional planners were seen as ‘overstepping’ their professional planning boundaries and were forced to reconsider and reframe their initial attempts to influence the size and location of food stores at the municipal level.

Thus, with respect to food system planning, a municipal planner’s preference to remain

independent in food-related decision making can be a barrier in efforts to coordinate regional food system issues.

6.3.3.4. ‘Professional’ Responsibilities: *What is Legitimate?* (Deciphering Legitimate Action)

The professional responsibilities of local planners received a good deal of consideration by participants in this study. The focus of these discussions stemmed from strong reactions regarding legitimate on-farm activity in rural areas and concerns about appropriate planning considerations for commercial activity in cities and urban settlement areas. Specifically, it was well accepted that planners should support the location, promotion and establishment of community gardens and temporary farmers’ markets as part of public-sector activities to facilitate consumer access to food and support the local farm economy. However, beyond these examples, there was less agreement on the ways in which professional planners could *legitimately* influence private-sector activity in a way that supports community food planning goals.

A key professional challenge was noted as planners’ inability to discriminate between ‘healthy’ and other forms of food retail. As one planner remarked, “we can regulate uses but we cannot regulate users”. Related to this, it was found that planners felt it was their professional authority to “try to steer” the private sector as a way to gain minor concessions but that ultimately, the real possibilities for food system change rested within the conventional food industry’s willingness to align with regional or municipal food planning goals. An overriding concern among planning experts and local authorities was that any inappropriate planning action outside legitimate professional responsibilities would result in an appeal at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) that could “cripple” their planning department and result in exorbitant costs to the municipality. (This was also noted among factors influencing decision making in Chapter 5). The following quote appropriately captures the professional planning challenges associated with affecting positive improvements in ‘healthy retail’ in communities. As noted in later chapters, the clash of public-private interests, and the impeding tensions between sectors was an important identified concern and will require appropriate consideration and coordination from higher levels of policy and planning.

“We talked to the planners about how we can actually stipulate the establishment of certain types of [healthy food] businesses and you can’t! Because it’s a free market. We were also asking them if there could be no fast food restaurants within a certain perimeter of schools. And again, they were just unwilling to go that mile to establish those rules...Then there’s this whole thing of a Nanny State, you know? The Police State and how much choice there’s going to be...It will be an inevitable battle, a constant battle of different competing interests, right?”

In summary, this section included an examination of the first overarching challenge related to food system planning at the municipal level. That is, in light of zoning challenges, policy concerns and professional practice constraints, there were important pre-ROP implementation gaps in regional food system coordination. Specifically, differences in municipalities’ planning accommodation and zoning flexibility for innovative forms of local food system production, distribution and retail; the absence of supportive food system policies and zoning designations; and planning practice constraints were identified. With respect to the latter, questions of perceived relevance, appropriateness, preferred independence and professional responsibility and legitimate action present barriers to bridging this gap and moving forward with successful food system planning and opportunities for improvements in healthy retail access at the municipal level. While these findings were important in exposing current realities at the local level, a second key overarching ‘gap’ is addressed below and exposes difficulties in the current legislative planning framework’s ability to accommodate emergent food system change. A summary of this section is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of Barriers Associated with Regional Food System Coordination in Waterloo Region

Gaps in Regional Food System Coordination	
Local Level Barriers	Examples
Zoning Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in municipal planning accommodation and zoning flexibility
Policy Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lack of supportive food system planning policies
Professional Practice Constraints for Local Planners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived relevance and appropriateness of food system planning policies and actions in relation to other planning priorities • Preferred independence from Regional Planning • Professional responsibility, concerns regarding legitimate planning action

6.4. Gaps in Legislative Support for Regional Food System Planning

A second overarching challenge emerged from the findings. In light of a number of perceived barriers relating to policies and planning practices at the local level, there may be policy gaps in the current provincial and regional legislative planning framework's ability to appropriately address food systems planning issues. Further, these frameworks, unless revised, may hinder the potential implementation of the ROP's Section 3F and impede efforts to improve the CFSE. Factors at the local level related to this gap include "legacy barriers", "archaic policies", "industry barriers" and "governance barriers". These are described below with relevant case study examples and shed light on the food system policy gaps in provincial and regional legislative planning frameworks.

6.4.1. "Legacy Barriers": Legalistic Interpretation, Narrowly-Defined Planning Language, and Strict Adherence to Current Codes and Practices

A number of "legacy barriers" were described by participants in this study. Specifically, examples were given that illustrated planners' tendency to make decisions in a manner consistent with the way "planning has always been done". This was found to be an important limiting factor with respect to facilitating new opportunities for local food production, distribution and retail at the local level. Three types of examples were shown to capture this view of legacy barriers: (1) legalistic interpretation of policies; (2) narrowly-defined planning language; and (3) strict adherence to current planning codes. As illustrated below, each of these examples was found to stifle innovation and revealed concerns with the appropriateness of planning language and policies in current legislative frameworks.

6.4.1.1. Language and Interpretation: Legalistic Interpretation and Narrowly-Defined Planning Language

As illustrated by the comments below, participants identified concerns with the inflexibility of policy language in legislation and its interpretation by planners. Specifically, it was noted that current legislation is "terrible for" listing acceptable and unacceptable planning practices and presents an interpretative challenge for planners with regard to emerging forms of food system activity that have not yet been considered and incorporated into appropriate policies. This was

found to result in long delays in the approval, licensing and zoning processes and thus, impacted local food system innovation and farmer viability. This concern is captured by the following:

“It’s more legal-eeze wording changes to close the loop that some weasel got through to accommodate new agricultural direction. For example, we have had a terrible habit in the past of listing things in legislation....Suddenly we have people producing [for example,] alligator meat or something like that, well we’d have to have language and legislation to account for that...Greenhouses are another one. Farmers in Wellesley missed two growing seasons because the Township was sitting on their hands waiting to come up with a bylaw around greenhouses [for food production]. It took nearly eighteen months to come up with something.”

“There are, in most zoning bylaws, still very narrow definitions of how a retail store is defined.”

The following quote illustrates a similar challenge related to the tendency among planners to have a narrow interpretation of planning policies. Specifically, as noted previously, agricultural land is taxed at 25% of the residential rate, and much lower than commercial taxes. Rural planners are responsible for ensuring that land zoned as ‘agricultural’ is being used for agricultural-related purposes. However, as noted in the case of a new wholesale produce auction, the emergence of local food system activity, including greater opportunities for local food production and its regional distribution, created challenges in the interpretation of an “*agricultural*” zoning classification:

“They [Old Order Mennonites] wanted to have [a wholesale produce auction] outside of town which means on a farm [agricultural land]...the Township planning staff looked at the Provincial Policy Statement and remembered the advice they got from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, as rural planners and said ‘You can’t take farm land out of agricultural production to put up a commercial building...we need to protect agriculture by not allowing this’ ...So you get planners looking at the ‘letter of the law’ that says don’t give up a corner of field for a commercial building. But in this case, [allowing the auction] helps, not hurts [farmers].”

“The permit to build a permanent auction building was held up with Township Planning for a good while...maybe six months to a year, because they did not see that being an agricultural use. And so the sale of agricultural products is viewed in many circles as commercial....what they were doing was building a facility on farmland and so you need special zoning change to do that.”

Despite the fact that the auction was a collaborative effort among community farmers to obtain a fair price for local produce and a way to encourage the *participation* of small-scale growers, it was questioned initially as an ‘agricultural activity’. Thus, as evidenced by the absence of appropriate language and planning terms, as well as planners’ traditional way of interpreting existing policies (i.e., in line with ‘the way it has always been done’), current planning frameworks were not seen to be keeping pace with changes in the current CFSE.

6.4.1.2. Strict Adherence to Current Practices and Policies: Following the “Letter of the Law”

A number of examples illustrated planners’ tendency to “follow the letter of the law”. Combined with legalistic interpretation of current practices and narrowly-defined policies, this planning approach was also regarded as a legacy barrier that, if left unchallenged, could continue to impact opportunities for healthy retail at the local level. Two examples are used to capture this perspective. The first example is related to a well-known food system stakeholder’s efforts to retail neighbouring farms’ products at his large country market store. For some municipalities, planning regulations specify that a minimum of 50% of the retailed goods must be grown or produced on site. However, in this case study, it was found that the rules governing how much product (i.e., percentage of goods for sale) that needs to originate from the retailer’s farm is poorly understood by planners. In addition, as illustrated below, it was also thought to be inconsistently implemented and somewhat contradictory in light of the Region’s local food system direction. Examples of “following the letter of the law” are explained as follows:

“The planner pulled the paper out from his file and said ‘Oh, you’re doing some things that technically you’re not supposed to.’ And he mentioned a number of products that we were selling for other local growers...things like apple butter, jams, and preserves. All that stuff technically doesn’t count unless you produce it yourself. What was really interesting is that they [planners] don’t really care where the produce is coming from that you’re selling. If you want to sell strawberries from California, that’s fine but they said ‘Don’t sell your neighbour’s preserves’. Obviously this is one planner that has taken the letter of the law.”

“All farms have the right to sell their own ungraded eggs from their farm. However, when a farm creates a country market and puts in a bakery, they immediately qualify now as a *food premise*. So even though that food premise is on the farm and farms have the right to sell their own ungraded eggs, that farm is not allowed to put ungraded eggs for sale in their *farm market*... This is just the letter of the law...but it was a level of red tape and bureaucracy that we had to challenge.”

Together, these examples illustrate how legalistic interpretation of current policies and strict adherence to traditional practices impact opportunities to support local growers and restrict healthy retail in the Region.

6.4.2. “Archaic Policies” and “Industry Barriers”: ‘Stuck with *Outdated Zoning Bylaws*’ and ‘At Odds’ with the Competitive Direction of Retail Stores

The notion that there are ‘archaic’ planning policies at the local level was also identified as an important underlying barrier and feature of the current legislative planning framework. Participants’ perceived the current zoning bylaws to be ‘outdated’ and ‘archaic’. This finding was consistent across food system sectors and relevant to both urban and rural local food initiatives. Community gardens and healthy retail sites in urban neighbourhoods (e.g., a local food buying club) were the focus of these discussions. One participant described the current “complaint-based system” as ‘*archaic*’ and something that would limit small-scale food system retail activity (e.g., egg, honey and produce sales from backyard hens, bee keeping and vegetable garden production, respectively) in neighbourhoods if opposed by neighbours. In this way, traditional practices in the current system were seen as hindering the location, promotion and establishment of local food system activity at the neighbourhood community level, as noted by the following:

“It’s a complaint-based system...So even if ninety-nine neighbours like what I’m doing, if one of them feels grumpy about it and calls me in, then they have to enforce the zoning bylaw which is that it is residential property and you can’t have commercial activity. So they told me that I needed to close down....I just think they’re stuck with archaic zoning laws that they have to work with, even if they think what I’m doing is a good idea... I know an organic Old Order farmer that was wanting to come and sell and that was just when the City was shutting me down. But it’s too bad. The City should be asking farmers, encouraging them to come in and bring their amazing food. But instead it’s this climate of fear.”

In summary, “archaic zoning laws” and a complaint-based system were seen to not only affect urban neighbourhood access to healthy food, they also had a negative impact on the whole local food system by affecting farmer viability in rural areas.

6.4.2.1. “Industry Barriers”: The Challenges of Restrictive Covenants

Another common concern with respect to participants' perceptions of *outdated* policies arose through discussions of restrictive covenants. A restrictive covenant is a clause in a deed or a lease that limits what the land owner or lease can do with the property. With respect to food retail, participants described the challenges of restrictive covenants when used by retailers to ensure that a competitor store does not move into the vicinity after there has been food store closure or relocation. The intent of the restrictive covenant is to restrict competition and ensure customer loyalty. However, this type of legitimate contractual arrangement between land owners

and corporate food retail chains can result in areas that lack food access and present an significant challenge for community planning. The inability to affect retailers' use of restrictive covenants was discussed by planning experts as a limitation of the current planning system and legislative frameworks at provincial, regional and local levels. As illustrated below, this type of industry barrier has the potential to significantly hinder opportunities for grocery stores and supermarkets as healthy retail outlets in communities. Restrictive covenants are explained, and the current regulatory framework's inability to address this barrier is recognized as follows:

“What has happened in the past 20 years or so is that the size of food stores has gotten bigger...so they've gone to fewer stores, and to maximize the effectiveness of the stores, they don't want another chain coming in and filling up space that they just left because that would take away from the effectiveness and value of their new store...So we [Regional Planning] would not get another food store unless the owners were able to negotiate with Loblaws to remove the restrictive covenant...and the odds are that they wouldn't because they don't want additional competition.”

“From a planning perspective, there is nothing I can do as a planner to say ‘You can't do that’. I can zone it so you have a food store but the restrictive covenant restricts it.”

“And you look at it and go ‘This is the perfect node, [but] there's no food store. There's a [convenience store]’. So there's a place where probably six or seven thousand people could have walked to and carried home groceries quite conveniently. There's not one there anymore. So you look at that and go ‘Here's a problem’. But how do you influence that? How can you? How can you stop it? We can't stop, from a planning perspective, the establishment of restrictive covenants by a private owner. We can't do that.”

Other planners noted that non-grocery stores were beginning to fill the gaps left by restrictive covenants through their offering of convenient access to food in neighbourhoods. Specifically, discount stores like ‘Giant Tiger’ and pharmacies like Shoppers' Drug Mart were addressing a food access need that planners could “do nothing about” based on the current legislative framework. As with non-grocery stores, ethnic food stores were also noted to be emerging and gaining recognition as a place to walk for food in the community. In moving forward on the Province's direction for ‘complete communities’, or neighbourhoods with food destinations within walking distance from places where people live and work, restrictive covenants were identified as a key industry barrier within the current system. The current planning approach to addressing these is summarized by an expert planning official this way,

“So we have, if you will, a public policy direction which is frequently *at odds* with the competitive direction of some of these places [retail stores].”

6.4.3. “Governance Barriers” and Competing Interests: “Conflicting Arms and Legs” and “Trapped by the Current System”

A final key barrier relating to the current legislative system that arose among participants was the perception that there are “conflicting arms and legs of government”. Specifically, this was described as different branches and departments within regional and provincial governments that have competing interests and make it difficult for food system stakeholders to make appropriate business decisions as producers and suppliers of local food. In rural areas, particular concerns related to “a skewed property tax system” were noted to affect land owners’ considerations for additional processing or retail activity on ‘agriculturally-zoned’ farmland. Discussed frequently by food system stakeholders, was the perceived misalignment between what is ‘valued’ and ‘ideal’ from a food system perspective (i.e., opportunities for the promotion of healthy local food) and that which is important to other government sectors (e.g., sufficient property tax revenue). Participants viewed the ‘conflicting arms and legs of government’ and the subsequent tax implications as significant barriers to farmer viability and the promotion of a vibrant local food system. In this way, governance barriers can be seen as a hierarchy (whether *perceived* or *actual*) between provincial ministries or through examples of conflicting municipal policies. Case examples of governance barriers are noted from multiple perspectives as follows:

“OMAF is a big place, it’s got a lot of arms and legs and we get accused of conflicting with each other all the time...Farmers will accuse us, and will say that ‘At the same time that the Provincial Government tells us we need to add value, the other arm of the Provincial Government, the Municipal Property Assessment, comes and raises our taxes! So we invest \$20,000 so we can make \$5,000 a year more adding value and selling stuff on our farm and then MPAC (Municipal Property Assessment Corporation) comes and taxes our store \$5,000 more and we’ve lost the \$5,000 profit that we’ve made’.”

“We’re not doing that on purpose, it’s not a sinister plan. But farming affects a lot of areas so just as you’re seeing how complex it is for a farmer to make a decision, or for a Region to decide what is best, all of these different elements have a regulatory side to them as well. So the number of agencies and rules the farmer has to work with, between food inspection, perhaps provincially but also from the Regional Public Health Unit if they’ve got a premise that they’re selling or processing from, there are marketing boards for some of these commodities, they have rules and thresholds and then depending on what they do, or what they build, there might be incentives to build certain things in a certain way and then there will be negative tax implications of building certain things a certain way.”

“Our last expansion now was probably the most difficult to get proper zoning because we had an “agricultural/special” designation so we’re not paying commercial taxes because we’re still an agricultural farm and we’re retailing our products as well as others’...And with the new addition, we were told that this could not be for

any retail, which was *very* difficult...[Otherwise] we would have to go and pay commercial taxes...So being only open five months of the year, there's no way we could afford commercial taxes on the size of the building we have."

Despite these barriers, there was an obvious understanding among participants that governments needed to balance competing interests, as captured by the following:

"Yeah, and it's difficult for people who work in policy because they have to balance all these competing interests, right? Different groups, like you have a group who wants more community gardens and then you have other people who want more roads."

"Where the challenge comes in is if we want to *ensure* that [Section 3F] happens, so that we're going to play a role in trying to make it happen. And then there's a cost. There's a cost to the municipality one way or another. And there's where, then, it's always a question [of cost]. Because is the thing we want to prioritize and invest our resources in to make it happen? Or is it lower down on the list of priorities? Is something like heritage preservation or affordable housing- whatever it is, you can't do it all and so where does it fit in relation to the others.? That's the challenge....It's not at the bottom, but it's not at the top, so it's somewhere in the middle and so it's competing.

The significance of governance barriers and competing interests is that they can oppose or run counter to the Region's vision for the regional system by hindering farmer viability and impacting opportunities for healthy retail access. In light of a lack of food system consideration in the current planning framework, there is therefore limited capacity to make a legal case for food system issues over other government priorities. As noted by participants below, while it is clear that local planners recognize the value of food system activity, the current legislative framework does not provide the appropriate tools to accommodate emerging opportunities, and ultimately, they "become trapped by their own policies":

"We're [Public Health] trying to promote local healthy food and they [planners] totally got that and saw this as a good agenda. 'This supports the vitality of the City, and it's supporting health but our policy doesn't let us do it'. So they become trapped by their own policies and they see that."

"What we [planners] find in a lot of cases is you get the odd person walking in and saying 'I want to do this' and the zoning bylaws don't allow them, and [they ask] 'Why don't you allow them?' and [we say] 'Well, we don't really know....we just haven't."

With regard to food system planning, a suggested approach to dealing with the aforementioned barriers within the current legislative framework was captured by a senior-level policy and planning expert in this way:

"Nothing happens fast in planning, it takes awhile. They've been talking about this for awhile but it basically takes awhile to infiltrate into the language and how things are run because planning policies are use to being so detailed. It

would be ‘This,’ and that means this and this, it doesn’t mean this and this, right? So when they say [for example] ‘mix of land uses’, they almost have to scale back everything they’ve done. Ultimately they should repeal everything they have done and start from scratch because it is kind of archaic and so they keep adding things to it and revising things but ultimately they need to change the base to reflect current planning principles and policies.”

As noted here, the “need to change the base” of the current planning system reflects the view that in order for meaningful food system activity to occur, change is needed at a foundational level. A legislative framework that is revised ‘at the base’ (or potentially from higher provincial and regional policy levels) to include appropriate considerations for food system planning may be needed to *officially* promote planning changes to support greater opportunities for healthy retail in communities. Governance barriers, along with other identified barriers related to the gaps in legislative planning support are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Summary of Barriers Associated with Current Legislative Frameworks at the Provincial and Regional Planning Levels

Gaps in Legislative Planning Support	
Local Level Barriers	Examples
Legacy Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legalistic interpretation • Narrowly-defined planning language • Strict adherence to traditional practices
Archaic Policies Industry Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated policies (policies that do not appropriately address current food system innovation) • Restrictive covenants
Governance Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing interests (“conflicting arms and legs of government”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g., within the local food system • E.g., within levels of governance

6.5. Seeds of Change in Waterloo Region’s Community Food System Environment

In summary, Chapter 5 described three main intentions for Section 3F’s regional food system vision and food policy and planning considerations. Specifically, as a knowledge transfer instrument, it was hoped that the dissemination of food ideas and policy options in the ROP would lead to greater food system dialogue among local planners, guide municipal planning considerations for food access and create more opportunities for food system planning in the Region. However, the findings here suggest that potential gaps in regional food system coordination and supportive legislative planning frameworks are important overarching challenges that could hinder the implementation of Section 3F and prevent efforts to improve

healthy retail access in the CFSE. Zoning challenges, policy concerns and professional practice constraints were identified as local level barriers related to regional food system coordination. In addition, features of the current legislative planning framework were also identified. It was found that there is a tendency among planners to follow legalistic interpretations of planning policies and to strictly adhere to the current way of planning when addressing innovation in food system activity. Also, current policies and practices were regarded as ‘narrowly-defined’ and ‘archaic’ and an important barrier hindering opportunities for healthy retail at the local level. The current framework is unable to appropriately address ‘restrictive’ industry barriers and cannot, at present, provide a legal case to defend food system activities relative to other government priorities. Therefore, in light of these overarching challenges, there is a need for public and private investment and action to shift positive regional food system intentions and legislation into a new planning reality at the local level. Chapter 7 examines the roles and motivations of policy actors and regional food system stakeholders in creating relevant opportunities for food system change in Waterloo Region. Chapter 8 concludes with a discussion of the various ways that public health and planning professionals can contribute to meaningful food system changes as a way to create a ‘healthier’ CFSE. Key findings regarding the current planning policies and practices affecting the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail access in Waterloo Region, are integrated into the concept map and shown in Figure 4 below.

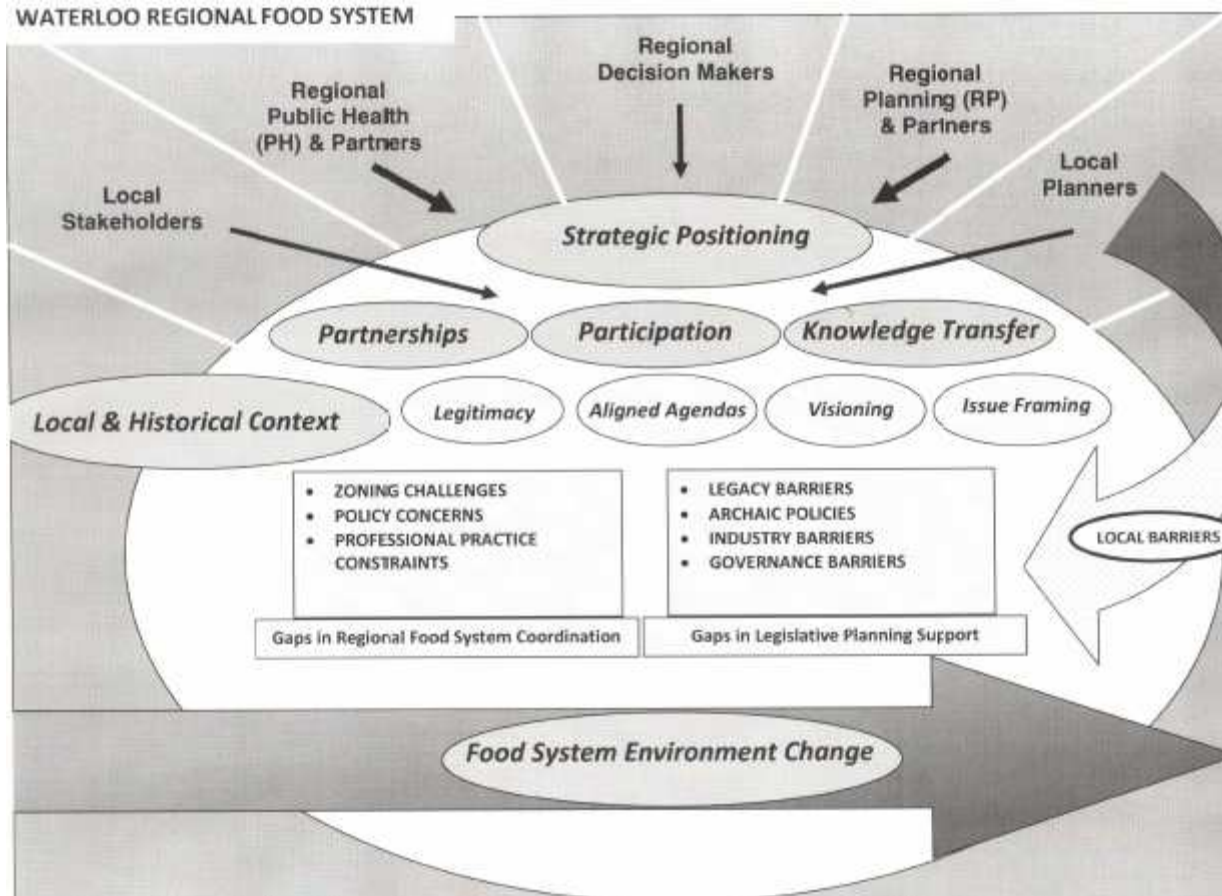


Figure 4: Concept Map of Key Findings and Overarching Themes Related to the Challenges of Current Planning Policies and Practices at the Local Level

CHAPTER 7: PLANTING OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW THE REGION'S COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM ENVIRONMENT

7.1 Defining Roles and Motivations of New and Existing Regional Food System Participants

This chapter addresses the third key objective of this study which was to describe the role and motivation of new and existing regional food system participants in food system change. The most notable, *untraditional* activities were observed among the Region's Public Health (PH) and Planning (RP) departments as representatives of regional government. In addition, the Region's newly established food system networking groups (i.e., Foodlink (FL) and the Food System Roundtable (FSRT)) were also found to play an important facilitating role in food system change.

The findings presented here describe multi-sectoral perspectives of the early food system groundwork and capacity building activities of public health planners within PH's Health Determinants, Planning and Evaluation Division (HDPE). The specific roles and motivations of PH and other food system participants are explored through a parallel examination of the themes and concept map introduced in Chapter 4. Overarching themes included: '*local and historical context*', '*strategic positioning*', '*partnerships*', '*participation*', and '*knowledge transfer*', and sub-themes including: '*legitimacy*' and '*aligned agendas*' (sub-themes of '*participation*') and '*visioning*' and '*issue framing*' (sub-themes of '*knowledge transfer*'). Themes emerged as key recurring concepts in participants' descriptions and personal accounts of food system activity in Waterloo Region and through in-depth analysis of forty-seven multi-sectoral perspectives. Key findings are presented here through a series of '*Who?*', '*What?*', '*Why?*' and '*How?*' questions related to the roles and motivations of food system participation. These questions were used in the grounded theory analyses and are included here to guide the presentation of the findings concerning roles and motivation, as well as for the overarching themes and sub-themes:

1. '*Who* can '*legitimately*' participate in regional food system activity?'
2. '*Why* participate?' (Or '*What* are the motivations for participating in regional food system activity?')
3. '*How* does one participate in food system activity?'
4. '*What* can be done to affect meaningful food systems change?'

7.2 Creating a Climate for Food System Change: Public Health's Groundwork and Capacity Building Activities in Waterloo Region

As shown in Chapter 5, the '*historical-*' and '*local ROP review context*' were critical factors in the process of food policy development. Specifically, as noted previously, RP included Section 3F in the ROP as a way to support the work that PH had already begun in the Region. This section provides a brief overview of key aspects of PH's early (i.e., pre-ROP) groundwork in contributing to a *climate of change* and highlights their role and motivation as a non-traditional regional food system participant.

7.2.1 Public Health's Role and Motivation in Food Systems Groundwork in Waterloo Region: Creating a Climate of Change

In 1999, the HDPE Division was established in response to a growing body of evidence on the social determinants of health. Food was chosen as one of the Division's key policy focus areas and PH staff began to plan intensively around the Region's identified food concerns. In the beginning, staff focused on addressing issues of food security and hunger which stemmed from their interests and backgrounds in poverty alleviation and other social justice issues. Non-traditional staff backgrounds and skill sets, including capacity building and community-based planning, were noted to be a unique and important contribution to public health practice and were later identified as key factors in creating a climate of regional food system change. In light of a unique open 'community health' mandate, a significant amount of PH resources were used to: (1) identify and improve staff's understanding of the various factors affecting food access in the community; (2) raise community awareness of issues affecting food access; and (3) build capacity to improve food access through community partnerships. While staff saw that their Division's early 'food-related' activities lacked a focused direction, they continued to look for opportunities to influence healthy public policies and other environmental factors as part of a larger strategy to improve the health of the community.

As part of their 'healthy communities' agenda, an early investigation into the various factors affecting rural health helped PH to gain new insight into the issues affecting food access at the community level. Specifically, staff identified a number of larger, upstream factors that affected

producers' ability to distribute foods locally and consumers' access to healthy, local foods. Importantly, threats to farmer viability, local economic development, and land use planning were among those factors that were identified and helped to expand staff's understanding of community 'food access'. PH's rural community research supported a 'food systems' view of the problem and set staff on a trajectory of targeted projects, initiatives and advocacy efforts that, together, created a more comprehensive approach to addressing community health in general, and community food access in particular. Perspectives on PH's early food system groundwork were captured by the following:

"We wanted to look at the idea of access to food more globally and we wanted to see if there were research areas that we needed to look at, and from that information, what would be the best way to proceed."

"At first it was hunger- 'Why do we have hunger when we have so much food?'. And then it was 'Why are we growing so much corn and not more vegetables? Why are we importing half our food from California?' And as you started asking more questions, you would spend a lot of time looking for the answers."

"From a public health perspective, recognizing that one of the most effective ways to impact health is from a policy perspective, that Division focused more on policy-type initiatives and so the two things [a food and policy focus] kind of leant themselves to taking a food systems view of the issue"

7.2.1.1 Early Challenges and Opportunities

In the beginning, PH did not have a mandate to address issues affecting food access. This was a reflection of the Ontario Public Health Standards (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2011) at the time which, along with budgetary constraints and a lack of committed regional funding for their food system agenda, was identified by staff as an important early challenge. To support their ongoing food system research activities, PH established community partnerships as a way to: (1) apply for external funding; (2) build capacity for change, and (3) support non-partisan lobbying and advocacy efforts to improve the regional food system. Challenges and opportunities related to PH's early food system groundwork are noted as follows:

"This was never done in a way where someone said 'Here's five million dollars over 5 years, we want you to do a comprehensive research program on food systems. That never happened. If that had happened, this would have rolled out in a whole different way... We took it on, as an add-on [to our mandated activities]. Because we were in the middle of the Regional Growth Management Strategy, as we got into it, we got more and more keen and more and more interested, and then it started to snowball a bit."

"We launched Foodlink at a time when we [Public Health] needed some external partners. None existed, so we got this group up."

“We were very much involved in the creation of Foodlink Waterloo Region. That came out of our first round of community-based planning, which happened in the Fall of 2000...people identified a number of issues and one of them was a mechanism to link local farmers to local consumers...And the Region of Waterloo funded Foodlink in the amount of \$50,000 and we helped with their initial grant, and helped bylaw development and hiring, and all kinds of things, so we worked really actively in that area. We launched the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! map.”

In partnership with Foodlink (FL), PH worked to improve the health of the Region’s agricultural community through research and other food system initiatives targeting farmer viability, redundant trade, and the local agricultural economy. An important outcome of PH’s partnership was the success of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! (BLBF!) map. The map was an important strategy to promote local food in the Region by linking local producers to consumers. The map’s popularity contributed to PH’s early reputation as a strong regional food system supporter and an active participant in food system change. PH’s established credibility and external partnerships also attracted public interest and attention and furthered their unique and untraditional role as food system change agents.

Dominant community values and beliefs also presented a challenge to PH’s early groundwork and advocacy activities (dominant societal values were noted previously as system-level barriers to food system policy making in Chapter 5). Staff noted that their efforts to raise awareness of the costs of the industrial food system and its impact on health and farmer viability were met with resistance by the community and that, at the time, people “weren’t ready” to consider and address food system concerns. Staff further acknowledged that the ability to “think outside the box” was a necessary skill in navigating a new area of practice and helped them to challenge dominant community values and beliefs. This was particularly important in light of a community health mandate that did not address community food access concerns. PH’s role in influencing Waterloo Region’s social environment by ‘thinking outside the box’ is illustrated as follows:

“It was a process of thinking outside of the box because even at that point in time, our Provincial Public Health Standards did not look at those areas. They did not address policy. They did not address putting environmental supports in place for people to make healthy choices the easy choices.”

“We had to make the case that community health includes rural health, it includes farmer viability, right? That was out-of-the-box thinking completely, right?”

“[Regional decision makers] were quite upset that there was the suggestion that [regional] farmers weren’t doing well...[Decision maker] was ready to cut all the money to the Health Determinants division. I mean this is not

something mandated by the Province, this is new and different and out-of-the-box and the minute that we started to do stuff that suggested that things weren't right, you got politicians who were not happy with that.”

Despite these early barriers, PH staff continued to promote supportive social and physical environments by engaging the community in local food system dialogue and creating partnerships to influence land use planning considerations. Staff also looked for opportunities to establish healthy public policy as a key factor in contributing to system-wide change, as reflected below:

“So when you create a climate of change, it's a lot of work and we knew we wanted to change policy but we didn't know which policy...we didn't know any of that, we just knew we had to start. We knew we had to start talking to people, building rapport, holding events, writing reports and all that stuff and we trusted that it would somehow lead to policy changes.”

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS) presented a timely policy opportunity for PH to gain RP support for their food systems agenda. Specifically, PH strategically drew attention to the value of a health agenda as a way to protect agricultural land and advance goals for urban intensification. PH helped regional planners understand how they could play a role to improve food access through supportive food system planning considerations by raising their awareness of food deserts and issues affecting farmer viability. To inform these considerations, the Region provided funding to establish the Food System Roundtable (FSRT). Under PH's direction, the FSRT was intended as a community networking group and served as a channel for stakeholders to raise their concerns about regional food system issues.

7.2.2 Building Capacity for Food System Change in Waterloo Region: Introducing Food Ideas, Language and Policy Options and Giving Voice to Food System Stakeholders

Dominant community values, attitudes and beliefs about food, the food system, and the appropriate role of government in addressing food-related concerns were discussed as key underlying challenges in building capacity and creating a climate of change in Waterloo Region. For example, dominant 'cheap food' values reinforced the marginalization of farmers by reducing their ability to *participate* in food production and to sustain a reasonable standard of living growing food. As well, consumers' disregard for the state of local food and agricultural economies and lack of environmental consideration with respect to long distance food travel

were identified as social barriers that contributed to attitudes of food indifference, reinforced the current status quo, and supported the dominance of the global industrial food system. The inability of many regional food system stakeholders to remain viable in food production, distribution and retailing activities was recognized as an important negative consequence of these values and affected PH's ability to build capacity for change, as reflected by the following:

“The idea that you could make change was not on the radar for them.”

“But we couldn't get people excited about it because they weren't ready. They weren't seeing how absolutely entrenched our whole food system is and how unbelievably powerful the owners are. They influence our federal policy makers and the global policy makers to make sure that they are secure in their power.”

PH staff also identified their traditional government role in farm and food safety regulation as an initial barrier to food system change. Specifically, it took many years for staff to develop rapport with local farmers and through consultations, focus group activities and ongoing advocacy work, PH's work was successful in: reducing fears of government inspection (and interference in private sector activity); giving voice to marginalized food system stakeholders; and establishing trust between government actors and members of the agricultural community. As in other parts of the country, many regional food system stakeholders had experienced tremendous financial loss through recent global and economic agricultural crises and felt marginalized and devalued by society. In working to overcome these significant societal barriers to food system change, PH staff described the importance of championing local agricultural issues and working to identify appropriate cross-sectoral opportunities for food system stakeholders to remain viable:

“It takes capacity building, it takes confidence building, it takes awareness raising...all these farmers who feel so marginalized, they don't feel like anybody is a champion of their issues. And all of a sudden when they see that it's there, it's embedded, it gives them an opportunity to act.”

“And the farmers, when we did all the consultations and focus groups with them, when we started to build more rapport with them over the years, it took years to build that rapport with them!”

PH learned more from farmers about the ways in which restrictive planning practices and policies affected their ability to produce and retail local farm goods. Specifically, PH heard that regional farmers wanted the right to process food on the farm, sell local foods from farm stands and develop on-farm retail stores - activities which were not permitted by current zoning bylaws at the local level (discussed in Chapter 6). Thus, PH acted on behalf of the agricultural community to create a climate of change within regional government by raising awareness of the

impact of planning on rural health and farmer viability and by advocating for changes in current regional and municipal planning practices. An important aspect of this work involved transferring new food ideas and policy options to planners, including the need to address “community food security” and “food deserts” as relevant considerations for professional planning practice. The following examples illustrate the importance of PH’s early role in engaging planners, expanding current thinking, and initiating the process of community food system change through knowledge transfer (KT):

“I don’t think the food system phrase was even in use at the time, food security was the term in use and people might say ‘community food security’ when they meant issues besides hunger.”

“When you say ‘food security’ to people who are involved in land use planning, all the wrong images come to mind...you know, you’re imagining large barb wire fences and dogs and search lights and people protecting their farms and that’s not what we [Regional Planning] had in mind, and certainly not what food security is all about.”

“[Public Health] invited planners from all the area municipalities and [the ROP lead author] was involved...and we just met and talked, kind of brainstorming what we could do with planning, zoning regulations and official plans to support the development of a healthier food system.”

“They’re really busy people so they couldn’t all come. So I think we spoke to three rural planners, it wasn’t a large number or anything...we did recognize that a lot of changes we wanted to make had to do with bylaws that were there, that needed to be changed...we had to talk to people who could tell us about that. And most of these planners really didn’t have much interest in food systems issues.”

With respect to capacity building, PH staff acknowledged that the feedback they received from planners during these early stages also helped them to understand how barriers were embedded in the system, and often outside of regional or local government control. This finding is relevant to an understanding of KT in this case study in that it suggests that there was a mutually-benefiting increase in knowledge for both PH staff and planners. Despite embedded system barriers, PH’s persistence in engaging planners was critical to changes in planning practices as noted by the following:

“But they [planners] started to see that maybe there would be some good in that, and that there would be some need in that.”

“And it was as much us, Public Health, learning from them [planners] as the reverse because we were introducing the idea that they as planners should be thinking about these things and for most, that was a new concept. But at the same time, they were making us aware of the reasons why certain regulations exist the way they are.”

“They [the farmers] started saying ‘We want this’ and we started going to the planners and the planners were saying ‘Well, actually, maybe there isn’t so much of a reason why we shouldn’t [permit that], and we could look at it [our

zoning]...Then we [Public Health] helped write up stuff for their Councils and then their Councillors said ‘Well actually, I don’t know why we have that law, maybe we should change it!’.”

The ability to establish trust with regional farmers was critical to the creation of an informal agricultural networking group and later served as a strategic asset in PH’s efforts to influence the ROP. PH took advantage of a strategic opportunity to share their agricultural contacts with RP and saw their ability to transfer community trust as a turning point that forged an important internal partnership and secured their position in regional food system policy change:

“And so we collaborated...and they [RP staff] got such rich rich input and they were so happy by that, and so delighted that, I think, that was probably a watershed that forged the partnership because they saw how we could be useful to them...Because we had a history with [the agricultural community], and we had trust with them, we could actually transfer trust to the Planning Department through that. So we kind of became “trust transferers” and then that really started to make a difference.”

In summary, as early as 1999, PH was actively involved in food system groundwork and capacity building activities in the Region. The early work of PH staff in the HDPE Division involved leading and facilitating community-based food projects, research and report writing, and raising awareness of food system issues within and across regional and local governments. PH’s early activities were important in that they challenged dominant community values (i.e., through social change); established a strong network of community partnerships; empowered marginalized regional food system stakeholders; and informed planners’ understanding of their role in improving food access in urban and rural areas. By raising awareness of food system issues, PH also developed an important reputation as a non-traditional government supporter and established credibility and respect as a *legitimate* voice on regional food system issues. The concept of *legitimate* participation in food system change is discussed next through an examination of the roles and motivations of new and existing food system participants during the ROP’s consultation and review activities between 2005 and 2009. Key overarching themes and sub-themes are illustrated with examples and considered through a series of questions concerning food system participation. Chapter 7 concludes with a description of the theoretical framework from this research.

7.3 Legitimacy within the Regional Food System: Who Can *Legitimately* Participate?

Legitimacy refers to having an undisputed credibility with respect to an action or position, and relates to the quality of being believable and trustworthy (Oxford, 2002). With respect to food system participation, legitimacy relates to the way others perceive a participant's role, or their ability to engage as a valued player in regional food system activities (i.e., local production, distribution, retailing, etc. or policy making). In this case study, the concept of 'legitimate participation' emerged through participants' descriptions of individuals and groups who had established credibility (e.g., knowledge and skills) or demonstrated authority or expertise on food system issues in the policy making process. As well, the concept also included those who had contributed to meaningful food system changes in the Region through the transfer and dissemination of innovative ideas or practices. In most examples of 'legitimate participation', it was participants themselves who, by reflecting on their own experiences and those of others, constructed an answer to the question of '*Who can legitimately participate in regional food system activity?*'

A number of examples were identified where food system participants and policy actors either worked to establish a genuine and authentic role as a regional food system participant, or to establish a *legitimate* voice in food policy making. The most frequently cited examples were in reference to the new roles and motivations of PH staff but also related to the new motivations of traditional food producers. An overview of the sub-theme of legitimacy is described through relevant examples of the roles and motivations of PH, the Old Order Mennonite (OOM) farming community, Foodlink (FL) and RP and helps to shed light on underlying considerations regarding legitimate participation in food system activity.

7.3.1 Public Health: Working to '*Legitimize*' Fringe Activity and Create System-Wide Change

PH's groundwork and capacity building activities were instrumental in creating a climate of regional food system change. PH developed an early reputation through their work with community stakeholders, and through the dissemination of food ideas and policy options throughout the Region. However, PH lacked an appropriate provincial mandate to do food systems-related work and funding and legitimacy concerns posed a challenge. Specifically, some questioned PH's motivation and staff investment in non-mandated public health activities. Thus,

an important motivating factor for PH was to convince others (particularly regional decision makers), that community food system issues were worthy of attention, regional funding, and consideration from other regional and local departments. By raising public awareness of the conventional food system's impact on health and farmer viability, PH was effectively building a stronger case for continued regional support, and at the same time, attempting to '*legitimize*' what was regarded by some as "fringe activity". In this context, fringe activity was used to describe the local food production and distribution innovations that were emerging in the Region, and potentially, included PH's new and untraditional food systems agenda. The quotes below shed light on the latter:

"Every study we did scrounged money from existing budgets, we found \$3,000 that we didn't spend elsewhere 'Ok, now what can we look at?' ... We didn't have money for consultants, or to bring in additional expertise ... our budget for local food work was slashed during the course of all this work" – no money for running the Roundtable ... So it was kind of a backwards way to do research, that's why I'm glad that it actually made a difference, and also because it happened not within the core mandate of the Region of Waterloo Public Health Department. This research wasn't required of us by the Province, and Health Units all function in a set of mandatory requirements that the Province funds them for. So there's no place that requires Health Units to do this work. Because they're not required to do this, there's nothing that requires them to do this. They're not funded to do this, this is not their job."

"It's a huge persuasive argument so it legitimizes what otherwise might be seen as a fringe activity"

PH used the ROP to push for stronger regional consideration of food system issues. The inclusion of food policies and planning actions in an official planning framework was regarded by PH staff as an important opportunity to: overcome gaps in their provincial mandate, justify future requests for regional funding, ensure ongoing participation in addressing food system issues (through the coordination of the FSRT and other community activities), and gain credibility for their earlier food system work in the Region. RP's indirect reference to PH's 'Community Food System Plan' (Mann Miedema and Pigott, 2007) in Section 3.F.6 (see Appendix C) can be seen as a critical factor in supporting the legitimacy of PH's continued work in this area. From a regional planning perspective, this was acknowledged as a way to "back up" and "support" the work of their internal partner as noted by the following:

"It [Section 3F] is consistent with the work that Public Health was already doing, because they've already done a food system plan. So we thought it was logical to, kind of, mesh in with that and if anything, provide some support in our Plan to the work that they're doing in Public Health and to see if there was a way that we could continue to have that work continue in the future. Whether they want to review it, or update it, and so on. So Public Health could turn to this Plan one day and say 'Well, Regional Council adopted a Plan which supports this idea of a food

system plan. So in keeping with that policy, we want to update our Food Systems Plan.’ So it’s kind of solidifying those links a bit more.”

As suggested above, RP’s internal action provided immediate policy support for PH and helped to ensure that they maintained a legitimate voice on regional food system issues going forward. This finding supports a second overarching theme of this research and illustrates that, in this case study, ‘legitimacy’ was not only an important feature of food system ‘*participation*’ but also an important sub-theme of ‘*partnerships*’. External support for PH’s activities and a growing reputation for their food system work outside the Region were also regarded as important factors “fuelling” (or *motivating*) PH’s food system direction:

“As food systems actually struck a chord that made sense, other jurisdictions came to our Public Health Department saying ‘Wow, you’re doing all this, you made this association...’. Of course, Public Health is going to move forward because that sort of fuelled their ah...it justified their initial investment. And so they were seen as leaders and pioneers, it’s hard not to pursue that even further.”

A critical example of PH’s efforts to legitimately engage as an important new player in regional food system policy activity can be seen through their later success in influencing the Ontario Public Health Standards (Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2011). This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8 with respect to the policy and practice relevance of regional food system planning activity in Waterloo Region.

7.3.2 The Old Order Mennonite Farming Community: Establishing a Reputation as a ‘*Legitimate*’ Local Food System Participant through Production, Innovation and Community

Through participants’ reflections on the roles and motivations of regional food system stakeholders, ‘resilience’ emerged as an important early theme. The theme was best captured by examples illustrating the ability of regional food system stakeholders to recover from, or persist through misfortune, including agricultural and economic changes. Of particular significance to Waterloo Region was the impact of the pork and beef sector income crises in 2003-2004 (Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, 2007) on the Region’s hog and cattle producers. Specifically, the Old Order Mennonites (OOM) were deeply affected in light of their community’s strong focus on these commodities. Importantly, the OOMs responded by shifting away from a traditional role of raising hogs and cattle for global markets into a *non-traditional*

role of intensive fruit and vegetable production for local markets. A change in the roles and motivation of OOMs was noted by participants and seen as an attempt to *position* themselves as ‘*legitimate*’ local food system players. Participants recognized that not only were OOMs concerned about maintaining their own position in local food production, they were equally committed to ensuring opportunities to advance the positions of others in their community (this also illustrates the key overarching theme of ‘*strategic positioning*’).

By establishing a reputation for high-quality produce, sustainable farming practices, and dedication to agricultural production, the OOMs gained credibility and respect as important local food producers in the Region. In addition, the Region’s OOMs were also recognized for their innovative food system ideas including the establishment of the first wholesale produce auction in Canada in 2004 (Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative, nd). Public recognition of the OOM’s skill and expertise in labour-intensive farming, and their perceived trustworthiness as a faith-based community contributed to their widespread acceptance as *legitimate* food system stakeholders. Several participants described examples where retailers had taken advantage of the Mennonites’ reputation by hiring them to sell another producer’s goods as a way to convey an image of locally-grown, high-quality produce to consumers. Although most examples were in reference to practices in the US, activities to “brand an OOM image” were also noted to occur in Waterloo Region. The following examples illustrate the challenges and advantages associated with maintaining a legitimate role as an OOM in local food system activity:

“As far as farmers’ markets go, there will be people that hire Old Order Mennonites to work their booth, just so it looks like it’s the local Old Order Mennonites that produce it. Their food gets bought at the Toronto Food Terminal and is driven to Waterloo of all places.”

“After bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), they went into local food production, but still kept hogs. And so that was still a significant part of their income and then in the last two years, hogs tanked too. So you can’t make money growing hogs...even a low low-cost Old Order producer...so that has driven even more of them into local food production...And then they developed these wholesale produce auctions which, for the most part down there [Lancaster County in Pennsylvania], supply local vendors...Most of the produce on those roadside stands is actually purchased at wholesale produce auctions and the roadside stand people are just resellers. They may be Old Order, but they’re reselling. They don’t produce everything on their own stands...There’s a caché almost to local food, especially if it’s grown by Old Order for some reason, because it’s looked upon as being more traditional or more wholesome or something...Yeah, it’s an advantage. So they take advantage of an advantage.”

These examples shed light on public perceptions of ‘*legitimate*’ local food system players. Participants in this sample recognized the OOM’s motivation to remain on the farm and to

participate viably in the local food system. Public recognition of the importance of the OOMs as a community asset (discussed as an important decision making factor in Section 5.4.1.5.2 in Chapter 5) supported their efforts to maintain a legitimate role in the regional food system, as noted by the following:

“[The Old Order Mennonite community] have been very committed. The fact that they’re the one group that you can almost rely on, that their children will also continue on with farming... So it’s incredible the influence that they’ve had continuing on from generation to generation. And then again, by hard work, dedication, and being able to produce quality. Like if you want stuff, they make sure they get it done for you. So the work ethic is quite phenomenal.”

Reputation was noted as an important underlying feature of *legitimacy*. A critical aspect of the OOMs reputation stemmed from their religious and cultural values and the importance of family, farming and community. This is discussed further in Section 7.4.2.

7.3.3 Foodlink and the Food System Roundtable: Competing for Public Attention and ‘*Legitimacy*’

FL’s role and motivations in food system activity offered another illustration of ‘*legitimate*’ participation. With regional funds, PH established FL as a way to address regional food system issues and advocate on behalf of local food system stakeholders. As an important community partner for their food systems work, PH’s hope was that FL would become an independent food system advocacy organization that could apply for community grants and other forms of external support. However, as they gained more autonomy from PH and developed their own Board of Directors, some participants saw FL as placing a stronger emphasis on local food marketing and promotion rather than community advocacy, as noted by the following:

“Well, it didn’t really happen the way it was supposed to, hence community development. Like you give birth to things and they really go in their own direction, you can’t control it anymore. But the idea was to have an independent not-for-profit organization, with a Board, that really took on the policy advocacy work that was going to be necessary in this system... And I think then it began to take much more of a solely marketing kind of shape and dropped the whole advocacy piece”

Despite differences in their *vision* for the regional food system, PH worked with FL to establish the Food System Roundtable (FSRT). The FSRT was intended as a networking group for concerned regional food system stakeholders to share ideas, build connections and discuss potential solutions to various regional food system issues. As noted previously, PH’s

coordinating role offered stakeholders a way to register their concerns with the regional government. Importantly, according to food system stakeholders in this case study, the FSRT was also seen as a way for PH to ensure that there would be at least one avenue for non-partisan food system advocacy in the Region (particularly since some PH staff perceived FL to be no longer interested in this role). PH's vision and motivations regarding the FSRT are captured by the following participant perspectives:

“It [Foodlink] just wasn't what we'd hoped in setting it up. And I think, the creation of the Roundtable was partly in response to that because I remember having this conversation with [PH staff] ‘Ok, we can't just start another organization!’ Like ‘Oh, that one didn't work, let's start another organization’. We weren't going to do that but we could start a network or something different that takes on the advocacy [role]....”

“They [Public Health] actually started Foodlink and then they spun it off and it became an independent non-profit. As time went on, this would have been 5 or 6 years ago, Public Health realized that they had let go of something that was really special. And I think [PH staff person] wanted it back and couldn't get it back because local food became the in thing all over North America. And so they [Public Health] started the Food System Roundtable.”

As reflected by the comments above, FL's motivations for regional food system participation differed from those of PH. Key experts noted that PH's plans for FL's advocacy role in the Region “didn't work” and led them to establish the FSRT as an alternative vehicle through which to affect food system change. Throughout the FSRT's first year, members and PH staff worked to establish an appropriate mandate and direction for the organization and FL remained involved in these activities. As the FSRT became more established and considered the types of policy issues they planned to address, tensions between FL and PH/FSRT arose over competition and overlapping mandates and resulted in a split between the Region's two ‘legitimate’ food system groups, as noted by the following:

“[Foodlink's] original vision and reason for committing to working with Public Health and some other groups to create the Roundtable was to bring together existing organizations that were charged with a component of food systems work. The Roundtable quickly evolved into almost a grassroots organization unto itself, which didn't take guidance from the organizations, it took guidance from just individuals. So those recruited by the Roundtable, the sort of diverse make up of those individuals, actually mirrored very much [Foodlink's] Board structure...I mean it became a little bit too close to being an overlap with Foodlink. So that's why [Foodlink] parted company.”

“Foodlink no longer sits on the Roundtable Board, which was a significant break because they felt they were competing for funding and competing for people's attention and it's somewhat resolved but not completely resolved.”

“[Foodlink] wants the Roundtable to sit around and chat, that's fine, but when it comes to doing some of the food connection work, projects, activities, as long as [Foodlink] is that starting point, fine.”

As shown, unresolved tensions between the Region’s food system advocacy groups presented a challenge in terms of their credibility and public acceptance as a ‘*legitimate*’ voice on regional food system issues. This example also illustrates that food system advocacy activities can be threatened by competition for funds, public recognition, and by the lack of clearly defined food system participation roles. Tensions between FL and PH/FSRT resulted in deep relational fissures between key food system champions and divisions between regional food system stakeholders. Participants’ perspectives on the competition, tensions and different motivations of PH and FL are noted as follows:

“It’s [Foodlink’s] mandate, so I mean [Foodlink] wants to interact with the public, with the hospital industry, with food distributors, with university food purchasing...unless [the Region] needs two or three groups to do it, that is [Foodlink’s] mandate.”

“I think it’s really sad about Foodlink and I don’t know, if Foodlink is right and it’s true that there isn’t really room for two [food advocacy groups], it would be interesting to see what ends up happening here.”

“The biggest barrier has been the creation of the Roundtable as now a grassroots community entity. The general public is somewhat- a little bit confused as to where it should go for food policy work.”

“Everybody sees their own piece of the puzzle and you’ve got so many different funding organizations and champions of food systems that they’re tossing money at different things and different initiatives, and at the end of the day, I see very little true collaboration.”

It was not clear from the findings whether FL *actually* reduced their advocacy work in the Region in favour of a stronger business agenda. However, there was evidence to suggest that tensions with regional staff fuelled FL’s motivation to defend their reputation for food systems work (i.e., from being overshadowed by the mandate of the FSRT) and led them to participate in a number of subsequent food system advocacy activities in the Region. FL’s absence from the ROP food policy making process was seen as a consequence of their break from the FSRT/PH and a failure to resolve personal differences. As such, it was considered a significant threat to advancing a coordinated food systems agenda as noted by the following:

“So the very fact that Foodlink wasn’t active in this ROP drove me crazy, it kept driving me crazy all through because there were things that [Public Health] couldn’t say!”

“They didn’t play a role at all, which was noticed. The absence of a role was noticed, and people would ask, ‘Where is Foodlink?’ If this organization isn’t saying anything, maybe these are bad policies? Maybe they’re quiet because they didn’t agree, but they don’t feel they can say they disagree. So that idea was kind of out there.”

“So any Executive Director of a small non-for-profit organization, fighting for money, makes priority decisions for their time.”

“So a bit of our mandate has been taken over by the Roundtable and there will be this tendency, I think, by regional planners to give undue voice to the Roundtable that should be given to others.”

Importantly, as reflected in the comments above, PH recognized FL as an important and *legitimate* regional food system actor. Other stakeholders also confirmed that, despite being ‘silent’ with respect to the ROP, FL continued to maintain an active role in food system policy advocacy. Multiple examples of the organization’s role in creating capacity for local food system activity in Waterloo Region were identified. In addition to creating local food business opportunities and serving as a credible source of local food information, FL’s active role in influencing food system policy at various levels of government was noted.

7.3.4 Regional Planners: Respecting ‘*Legitimate*’ Boundaries

The concept of ‘legitimate participation’ was also seen through an examination of the role and motivation of RP. As noted previously, the Region of Waterloo was one of the first regional municipalities in Canada to include food system planning considerations in an official planning document. Thus, in light of their inclusion of Section 3F in the ROP, regional planners were regarded as *new* policy actors and participants in food system issues. As an unintended consequence of their new, non-traditional role, RP staff experts faced jurisdictional challenges and tensions with local planners by attempting to influence the size and location of food stores as a perceived course of *legitimate* regional action. As discussed in Chapter 5, RP’s initial intent for the inclusion of food-related considerations in the ROP was to move forward on plans to integrate food destinations into a broader concept of mixed-use development. Specifically, their aim was to have a greater mix of uses when developing new communities and the establishment of food destinations in walking distance from places where people live and work was an important consideration in their long-range regional plan. However, according to local planners, RP was attempting to influence commercial planning at the municipal level and not acting within their jurisdictional authority. From RP’s perspective, the challenges of defining a new ‘*legitimate*’ role in food system activity are captured as follows:

“I guess what I mean to say is that whenever we’re getting into an area where we’re trying to achieve something new, we always have the risk of someone saying ‘Well, is this a regional issue?’. That’s a question that we

commonly get asked. ‘That’s a good point but why is this a regional issue? Why does the Region need to have this in its Official Plan?’.”

“It’s a bit of a struggle to find wording that you can say, legitimately, in an official plan around these [food] issues. We’re stepping into areas of jurisdiction over which some would question why we’re even involved.”

In summary, ‘*legitimacy*’ emerged as an important sub-theme, or feature, of the overarching theme of food system participation and sheds light on the roles and motivations of PH, OOMs, FL and RP as new and existing food system participants and policy actors. Reputation, values, and overlapping/non-existent mandates were described as important factors affecting ‘*legitimate participation*’ in the regional food system in Waterloo Region. Legitimacy is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.7 below.

7.4 ‘Participating’ in Regional Food System Activity: Why *Participate*?

‘Food system *participation*’ or the concept of ‘*participating*’: that is, being actively involved in efforts to advance a local food system agenda, emerged as an overarching theme in this case study. The analysis of multi-sectoral examples of food-related activity in the Region revealed that participants were constructing meaning and describing patterns of food system participation. Further, the examples also highlighted participants’ perspectives regarding a number of perceived ‘unspoken rules’ (or common practices) guiding food system ‘participation’. Importantly, as illustrated below, the following pattern, or ‘rules’ of engagement, emerged from local food system participation in Waterloo Region: (1) values are a strong motivator to participate; (2) adaptation often occurs in order to participate locally; and (3) supportive partnerships are needed to remain active as a food system participant or policy actor. The following examples examine food system motivations and the overarching theme of ‘participation’.

7.4.1 For the Public Good: Public Health’s Shift from Enforcement to Empowerment through Community Partnerships

“Public Health has a vested interest...well, they’re looking out for the community in general and this is their spin on what a healthy food system is.”

“Yeah, this is something that is in the public interest, we [Public Health] just need to do it. We just need to provide this for them [the public].”

“We [Public Health] were keen in terms of our broader vision of creating a healthy local food system to see that the Regional Official Plan, to whatever degree it could, could be supportive of access to healthy food. We see that as part of our overall vision or strategy to create a healthy local food system.”

A key motivator for PH’s participation in regional food system activity was to improve public health through healthy public policies and social and physical environmental change. PH’s food system direction and activities were driven by an understanding of the determinants of health, and shaped by values and beliefs about community food security, including a drive to create conditions where all residents obtain safe, culturally appropriate and healthy food through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system (Hamm & Bellows, 2003). An important challenge, as previously described, was deeply entrenched community values regarding cheap food, lifestyle conveniences, and an overall disregard for food system issues as reflected below:

“And then there’s the whole group of people in the public who don’t care. They don’t follow the news, they don’t follow Regional politics and they probably wouldn’t even know we have a ROP...How many of them would be aware of food access as an issue of food policy?”

Thus, PH’s participation in food system activity was not only focused on influencing policy changes to improve the physical environment through supportive land use planning considerations, they were also actively engaged in addressing barriers in the social environment in Waterloo Region. PH staff experts described their work in raising awareness of food system issues as trying to “get the community excited about the potential for something different”. However, as noted previously, staff needed to challenge the agricultural community’s view of PH as food safety regulators. As captured by the following, PH had to “adapt” from a traditional enforcement role to one centered on community empowerment:

“Early on we still thought that we could be the big stick that said ‘No, thou shalt not!’ We had to let go of that and that was hard. I would say [to staff] ‘We don’t have big sticks,’...There were all these discussions about the Health Protection Act and if we call something a health risk, maybe we can go in and enforce it...”

In this case study, PH’s ability to adapt from their traditional role was facilitated by establishing a strong program focus on community partnerships. Specifically, PH staff recognized that they needed partnerships to build trust with key stakeholders and to ensure non-partisan support for their agenda and that without this; they had a limited capacity to affect meaningful food system policy and environmental change. Importantly, there was some evidence to suggest that PH’s

motivation may have been due to the personal and professional interests of the Department's internal food system champion. Despite this, PH used their connections, partnerships, community collaboratives, and the FSRT as a way to disseminate food system ideas and policy options, raise awareness of food system issues, and advocate for change. The following examples illustrate multi-sectoral perspectives on PH's motivation, and ability to use partnerships as a way to remain active in regional food system policy and environmental change:

“So Public Health, as part of the Region, knew that this [the ROP review process] was coming up and wanted me [external partner] to be a part of this.”

“[Through our Collaborative], [I] received the [ROP] draft and then [I] was notified that there were going to be public consultations. So [our Collaborative] drafted a letter with some policy recommendations. This had been sort of a compilation of things that I had heard, feedback from [our members], because [the Collaborative] had done focus groups ... [I] tried to make sure those needs were addressed. And then [the PH staff person] included suggested policies too. So [I] put those together in a letter [to the Region].”

“[Public Health] has supported many autonomous groups, and worked with them, but they also bring strong biases to the table and if those groups aren't mirroring what they want to see, they will invest the resources and do it themselves. Hence, the Roundtable.”

Thus, PH's motivation to '*participate*' in regional food system activity arose from an understanding of food access as an important determinant of community health and from strong personal and professional *values* regarding the most effective ways to improve public health. PH *adapted* from a traditional enforcement role to one of empowerment and used community *partnerships* as a way to influence non-partisan direction for environmental and policy change.

7.4.2 For the Old Order Mennonite Farming Community: Values, Motivations and Pressure to Adapt

In the same way that PH was motivated by values, adapted and formed community partnerships to participate, a similar pattern of food system *participation* was noted among the OOM farming community. For example, deeply-rooted cultural beliefs in the value of family and farming were identified as a strong motivator for OOMs' participation in regional food system activity, and an important factor in their willingness to adapt. As noted previously, OOMs shifted from their traditional role as global producers and exporters of pork and beef into local produce distribution. Although not stated explicitly, it is possible that this shift to local food production

was an attempt to regain control lost through global food system participation, as suggested by the first quote below. The latter examples similarly highlight OOM's willingness to adapt:

"Because they [the Old Order Mennonites] are fully committed to remaining on the farm and continuing to farm even though it represents a much smaller percentage of their income than it did before. It use to be 100% for all of them but that's no longer the case. But they will not give up that rural lifestyle and the farming that they do."

"A large and growing number of mostly Old Order [Mennonite farmers] are supplying the Elmira Produce Auction, and producing local food, which they DID NOT DO five years ago! But with the collapse of the hog market and the cattle market, they had to find something else to do, and they went all in on producing local food."

"Growing fresh fruits and vegetables is something that was really not done in their culture around here. But that is gradually changing. But some of their leaders have seen that if they're going to maintain their way of life, having to buy a farm for a million dollars and then having to buy two million dollars for the quota, even for forty cows, which you can barely eke a living out of... That's not a simple way of life, by any stretch, and they're starting to admit that. And they didn't have any choice. If they had their way, there wouldn't be quota. They'd be happy to take the mark and take the price. But they work good in the system, they don't fight it. But because the system has demanded that of them, it has become anything but a simple way of life."

With regard to the OOM community's participation in regional food system activity, a key observation and potential concern among study participants was the extent that the traditional, faith-based community was willing to adapt. In particular, it was recognized that the OOMs faced additional challenges as local food system participants in light of their reliance on manual labour (versus energy-powered equipment); lack of electricity; and horse-and-buggy transport. A lack of mainstream conveniences, including websites/Internet access and cell phone technology were seen as limitations in their ability to participate easily as local food system participants. With respect to the perceived erosion of strongly established cultural practices, the following observations were made regarding pressure on the OOMs to adapt:

"I recognize that they have an extra barrier to marketing, which is... Well, several [barriers]. One, is a transportation barrier. They don't use email and websites. Plus a lot of them don't want to leave the farm, they don't want to hang out with [or among] city folk. They just want to farm with their family."

"I mean, you have to respect their beliefs. But they [the Old Order Mennonite farmers] are a little more connected than they used to be. They all have cell phones and everything else now"

"The Mennonites have taken to [grocery] delivery... For them, it's probably an hour and a half buggy ride in, and an hour and half home. So they can spend those three hours working in the field instead of wasting it coming in [to town]."

"I've always found the Mennonite-Amish [farming] community, for me anyway, a contradiction at times. Like this willingness to accept some technologies, and not accept other technologies. So they're not willing to be recorded, but at the same time they'll use cell phones. Or they won't use tractors but at the same time they may use diesel

engines to power a woodworking shop. Or they won't use tractors but they'll have their horses pull a sprayer applying chemicals."

As suggested by the comments above, participation in local food distribution includes certain 'rules' or 'practices' (i.e., the need to be accessible by phone or email) that place additional pressure to adapt on groups that wish to remain 'less connected' to mainstream activity. In Waterloo Region, while there was some indication that OOMs were willing to adapt, there was also strong evidence to support that this traditional farming community preferred to work with other Mennonite producers where faith-based principles and values would continue to dictate the ways in which they produced and distributed food to the wider regional community. The Region's first wholesale produce auction, and a second recent distribution initiative led by the OOM community is consistent with this finding as captured by the first-hand accounts below:

"The Old Order Mennonites put much emphasis on "family", and we feel the farm is a most appropriate place for a family to live, work and play together. This philosophy of get big, or quit, simply does not fit our way of living. My hope is to establish a marketing system where growers can sell their produce whether they are a big or small grower."

"You had asked what the motivation behind our marketing is and I am not sure I gave you a proper answer. When I was working for the produce auction, my goal had always been to establish something that would benefit the whole community. Over the years I started to get an uneasy feeling that the auction method may not be the only way to establish the price of produce. I have no regrets, and take pride in having been a part of the auction. Having seen the missing links of the auction concept, I got a vision of an alternative marketing concept to SUPPLEMENT what the auction is doing. The two methods combined should target a much broader clientele than either one of them would do alone."

Others' perceptions confirmed that the innovative ideas and community-centeredness of the OOMs reinforced their valued participation in the regional food system:

"We think of the Amish-Mennonite population as being relatively conservative and yet, at the same time, they seem to have been much more willing to grab a hold of the new vision of agriculture, a more liberal way of thinking about it than mainstream agriculture has been...If I reflect on some of the Mennonite farmers that I know...when we go back to the income crisis of a few years ago, they were willing to broaden their perspective and think 'How do I make a living in this difficult economic climate?'. And I think as part of that process they were willing to switch into the production of local food, realizing that they could create some of their own market in a way they weren't able to historically. And my sense is, and I don't know this as a fact, but my sense is that they have made this transition whereas conventional farmers have kept trying to do the same thing."

As illustrated by these examples, the OOM farming community was driven by personal *values* and a commitment to family, community and farming. There was a strong recognized need to *adapt*, first in light of the pork and cattle income crisis, and secondly, to meet the demands for

local produce in Waterloo Region. Several innovative OOMs worked to establish more effective distribution channels for local produce as a way to benefit the entire farming community, and to define their own rules for participating in food system activity.

7.4.3 For Local Food Business Interests in Waterloo Region: Foodlink's Role in Creating Community Connections Around Local Food

Although initially established by PH for food advocacy work in the Region, FL's work as an organization was believed to have evolved and adopted a more pronounced focus on protecting and promoting the business interests of local food system stakeholders. FL's Executive Director was regarded as having strong marketing skills which he used to create a local food image for the Region, a community network (through committed partnerships between stakeholders), innovative promotional materials (i.e., the BLBF! map), and a well-recognized Foodlink brand name. From a business perspective, FL's motivations can be seen through the following participant observations of the organization's activities:

"[Foodlink] connects producers and consumers, and all the points in the chain are very much in keeping with the Region's desire to keep local food on the agenda. So [Foodlink's] work has proven that a) consumers truly care about local food, and there's demand for it, and b) there are opportunities for farms and the extended farm industry to work together to make food more accessible."

"When you look at [Foodlink's] key impacts, number one is that [they have] created the sustainable tools for the community to find local food. And [they have] created the educational pieces to guide people in valuing local food and [they have] become the One-Stop-Shop for the farms and food industry to engage in local food branding or practices."

"Foodlink has become the model for food localism strategies across the Province. [They] have shared [their] example through a shared license agreement with ten other counties across Ontario. And [they have] shared [their] business model, as a non-profit, [they] have a business plan, with other counties quite extensively. And [they're] building all of [their] programs and services on a cost-recovery basis, so that [they] can be sustainable over time."

A critical feature of FL's role and motivation in Waterloo Region was their aim to help the local agricultural community overcome participation barriers presented by the global industrial food system. Specifically, FL worked to create more opportunities locally so that producers, processors, distributors and retailers could be viable, regardless of whether they were big- or small-sized food operations. The "get big or get out" rule of the conventional food system, and other 'rules' defining global food system participation (illustrated below) were key concerns

noted by food system stakeholders in this sample and provided motivation for small-scale producers and processors to stay connected to FL and other networking channels:

“You can’t get into the big chain stores because they’re through large distributors, they do not buy local. No matter what you say, they don’t buy local. It’s not that there’s not enough, and it’s inconsistent, they could sell every item of produce that’s grown in Waterloo Region at their existing stores, in season, if they choose to buy that product. The resistance comes from the international distributor who they would need to rely on for the other 80-90-95% of the year who says ‘No, no, if you’re going to buy from us in February, you’re going to buy from us in August too’. And then that’s how they get trapped.”

“When you go to access local food in the city, like trying to get the grocery stores on board, and that this is not just a fad and that people are wanting local...it’s a hard thing. I know Loblaws says they’re committed to local and that, but until they allow their produce managers to buy it directly from the farm...But as long as you have Loblaws and Food Basics and stuff like that, that are completely price driven and are run by people in an office in Toronto, in a high-rise building, they don’t care about what goes on the shelf. They just care about the bottom line...they basically mandate it to their produce managers that they have to buy from the warehouse in Cambridge or Mississauga...”

“But the average person that makes a bit of salsa, or a little bit of this or that, will never get into a [large] retail store. They’re large chains, they won’t handle just a one item thing.”

In contrast to the ‘rules’ or challenges noted above, FL helped to create a system where regional food system stakeholders could participate locally and could define their own rules, or at least have a voice in negotiating how they were willing to participate. The following comment captures FL’s motivation to “fight for the small”,

“When you talk about real policy affecting local food, it’s not the Big [corporations], it’s the small that really need help. That will give people the precedence. You know, that’s where we need to be fighting because food production is very much an industry that favours large-scale operations”

“I really believe that the best way that we can preserve our local food supply is by making it as easy as possible, and as little red tape as possible for growers to market their product, whether it’s through retail stores, on their farms, farmers’ markets...then that also puts the pressure on the larger chains to meet that kind of quality”

In the same pattern of *participation* noted earlier among PH and the OOMs, FL was also motivated by *values* and a commitment to support “the small” food system actors. FL *adapted* from a sole focus on advocacy (i.e., by developing a strong business approach) and created an established local food network of community *partnerships*. In this way, FL’s active participation in the regional food system was seen as an effort to protect the business interests of local food stakeholders by helping them to overcome the barriers of global industrial food system participation.

The following short example illustrates the public-private tensions associated with FL's efforts to protect local business interests. Specifically, PH's Neighbourhood Markets Initiative (NMI) (described previously) was an effort to establish a series of publically-funded neighbourhood produce markets in the Region. However, tensions between the Region and various local food businesses and partnerships resulted. As illustrated by the language and overall strength of the following comments, many local food retailers opposed the government's involvement in private food interests,

"The Neighbourhood Market experience, which is Public Health's little pipe dream to set up sustainable markets across the Region, they didn't fly! They funded these entities and not only did they tick off real businesses, they didn't realize they set up two of these markets within walking distance of the Kitchener Farmers' Market. And they were happening in less than 24 hours of the Kitchener Market."

"So you buy a whole bunch of produce, undercut the prices of other businesses, and then coordinate them using Public Health staff, you call that a success? They didn't listen to [Foodlink's] advice [which was that] you don't need any public investment at all. Tender out the vending of produce in these areas to existing businesses, you'd have no problem."

"So this is a prime example of not wanting any food systems project to compete with an appreciation of the business value of food....So if you let too many folks start developing strategies to feed our residents primarily with local product, there is a bit of business reality that they might not fully be appreciating.....That's why [Foodlink] doesn't want them [Public Health] operating at all when it comes to projects for food. Stick to community education, stick with working with policy and planning, but don't pretend to be businesses."

Thus, with regard to the 'rules' and 'practices' defining local food system '*participation*', these tensions suggest that there may be silent barriers to entry for public interest groups that pose a threat to private businesses. In this case study, it was clear from the following comment that PH staff understood this unspoken 'rule' and despite resulting competition tensions with established businesses, participated in bulk food purchasing from the Produce Auction as a way to distribute local food more affordably to high-needs residents. The quote below captures decision makers' initial concerns about the public markets from a PH perspective:

"They [decision makers] were initially very nervous about the project. They didn't want additional competition and they were questioning the role of the Region in running these markets. It got into a turf war kind of thing. ... We [Public Health] were at the Auction the first year and we were bidding high. We were new in the equation, and we didn't care. We knew we could sell what we had bought at some price. We would just keep bidding for it, and we would take it. That really put a lot of people in a...in a bit of a...So many [regular buyers] emailed the Regional Councillors saying 'the tax payer' dollars were being misused and it was hurting their livelihood, and [Public Health] had [public] funding to do it.'

Overall, FL was committed to the promotion of local food system activity as a way to promote the business interests of the Region’s agricultural community. Their ability to *adapt* (that is, to independently create their own local food mandate apart from the direction of PH), and to establish a committed local food network were found to be consistent with the motivations and pattern of local food system participation among PH and OOMs discussed above. Like other food system actors, participation involved adaptation, differentiation and dealing with tensions – here it the clash between public good and private business interests. This finding is explored further through an examination of regional decision makers’ new role and motivations in food system activity.

7.4.4 For the Regional Community: Regional Government’s ‘Participation’ in Food System Issues (Connecting Public and Private Interests)

In light of the adoption of Section 3F in the ROP, the Region’s government can be seen as a new participant in addressing food system issues. As discussed in Chapter 5, an important system-level barrier limiting decision makers’ *participation* in food policy making was the fear of interfering with private sector interests. Specifically, in light of political philosophies (i.e., values) regarding a ‘free market economy’, the ‘financial’ and ‘relational’ costs of inappropriate food system action were identified as key concerns in this case study.

A common element of participants’ perspectives was an attempt to define the “appropriate” role of government in addressing regional food system issues. Specifically, while access to food was acknowledged as a legitimate government concern, any regulation of private sector agri-food activities was seen as controversial and thus, a limiting factor in affecting positive food system change. Based on multi-sectoral perspectives, it was evident that there were different levels of acceptance, or ways in which decision makers were willing to engage, or *participate* in food system policy activity. These were seen as unspoken ‘rules’ or acceptable ‘practices’ with respect to food system governance activities and included: (1) respect a free market (i.e., concerns for a free market economy limited how much the regional government was willing to interfere with the private sector); (2) provide a framework (i.e., the government was willing to create opportunities but other stakeholders and partners needed to take action); and (3) minimize competition between public and private interests. Examples of these ‘rules’ or defining

considerations for regional food system governance are described as follows and shed light on the motivations for regional government ‘*participation*’:

7.4.4.1 Consideration #1: Respect a Free Market Economy, Let the Market Dictate What Can Be Done

Regional decision makers’ considerations of policies to improve access to healthy, local food reflected their values and regard for a free market economy as captured by the following participant perspectives:

“Every time we bring a policy issue forward, they [members of Regional Council] are always concerned about the impact on the private sector, ‘Are we interfering with private enterprise, capitalism?’ right? So there are a lot of biases in the system that are market-driven. There are reasons for them, they’re related to the bottom line and decisions made by big corporate owners somewhere.”

“Official plans are important but a lot of it is going to be driven by market and what people want. It may be steered by policies but a lot of things are going to happen on their own, right? Things progress naturally. So something like this, if people want it, it’s going to be driven by the market anyway. Because regardless of the policy, if there isn’t a market for local food, it’s not going to happen.”

“Let the marketplace dictate what can be done. They [country farm stores] are very successful. But it’s because they have a business model, and a business plan...but it forces people to come to them. To me, that is the direction to go.”

“It would be nice to see the smaller markets, you know the Ma and Pa’s stores but at the City, we can’t force that to happen. It’s all market-driven and people have to say ‘Hey, I want to open up a market.’”

“The Region can’t really support those things financially but can make it easy from a zoning point of view so they can exist legally but they’re going to have to compete in the marketplace.”

Decision makers in this case study were willing to support local food system initiatives by making them “easier” from a planning perspective but were in agreement that the market should “dictate what can be done” with respect to local food supply and demand.

7.4.4.2 Consideration #2: Provide a Framework to Promote Community Partnerships

The last quote above, while highlighting decision makers’ respect for a free market economy, illustrates that there is also an important role for government to play in reducing the number of zoning barriers and other restrictions for local food production, distribution and retail. Minor differences were noted with respect to the degree to which governments should “do more” but there was overall agreement among decision makers that an appropriate role for regional

government is to provide a community planning framework as a “signal to the community to respond”. Thus, rather than attempting to *direct* private sector activity, a planning framework was seen as an opportunity to advance both public and private interests based on the resources and capacities of the community, as noted by the following:

“As I said earlier, this government could always do more. It’s a question of how many resources does government have and in what areas does government do more. And maybe government does more by providing a framework for community organizations to take on these roles and to incorporate these kinds of progressive initiatives and to help communities develop it and grow, rather than the government coming in and doing it for everybody. I think what we’re doing here is we’re laying the groundwork, and framework and it’s up to the community to respond. If there are interested parties in the community who want to engage MORE in the process, I think the framework exists to do that.”

“And that’s one thing about having strong policies here [in the ROP], that they [the community] now has something to bring up to the Councillors and to the staff of their local community in support of it.”

The above perspectives reflect decision makers’ willingness to provide a signal to others, including private interest groups and non-government organizations, to form collaborative community partnerships as a way to promote local food system activity. In contrast, others felt that the government itself should participate more actively as a community partner by creating and facilitating opportunities to increase access to healthy, local food:

“One of the things, in my opinion, Council is all about is to provide the opportunity for people, whether it be in agriculture, whether in industry, whether it be in retailing, that’s our job to make sure there is adequate space [opportunities] and balanced amounts of those kinds of businesses.”

“I think what we tend to do is lead and that what we have done to encourage [food access] is where I’ve been to a couple of things where [government] talks with planners and consultant and developers and we’ve sat around and we’ve made ideas of how they can actually put some of those concepts in...some businesses close to where people live and work.. and some of them are food stores.”

However, it was also recognized that there were limits to what is feasible or ‘appropriate’ for a regional government and that other levels of government would need to be active participants in regional food system change. Specifically, the need for municipal food system implementation activity and provincial funding partnerships was identified as follows:

“A lot will depend on the Area Municipality’s Council directing the staff to bring these [food policies] to the fore, and for area municipal staff and Councillors to get excited about this to say ‘We need to have this at the fore!’”

“The policy direction and the tools are economic, they have to be at a higher level of government. I guess what I’m trying to say is we don’t have the resources. We don’t have the resources. If you gave me a 6 or 7% bump in the tax

base in one year, and guarantee to keep it there, we could likely implement some strategic direction and policies and give the tools to be able to have a phenomenal locally grown food regime.”

These comments also point to an awareness of the need for internal and external community partnerships. This is consistent with the ‘pattern’ of food system ‘*participation*’ described previously which included value motivations, a willingness to adapt and the need for partnerships to advance food system change.

7.4.4.3 Consideration #3: Minimize Competition Between Public and Private Interests

A third ‘rule’ defining food system governance at the regional level related to competition between public and private interests. Specifically, relevant considerations were discussed in relation to competing public and private sector interests at the regional level and economic and trade considerations at the global level.

Regional concern regarding public and private sector competition was noted above regarding PH’s NMI. Tensions and sub-politics resulted from PH’s attempt to subsidize the cost of local food with public funding which upset private businesses, created a tense environment, and limited the capacity for the program to increase access to food in the Region. Similarly, there were also concerns about the negative impact of the NMI on the Region’s already successful, tourist-driven markets. Thus, with respect to decision makers’ considerations of “doing more” in light of existing competition, the presence of an already established network of successful, independent producers, wholesalers and retailers and the fear of affecting longstanding regional relationships were key factors affecting their level of participation in food system activity as noted by the following:

“There are Ward Councilors who initially didn’t want to take a stance and be caught on the wrong side, supporting their own city-run market versus a regional-run small produce market.”

“We had some questions [from Public Health] about whether we could require Area Municipalities to create zoning categories in their particular municipalities that would preclude anything except healthy food. Put another way, ‘Can you put something in your Official Plan that makes Area Municipalities unable to permit fast food places, drive-thrus and we said ‘No, we can’t. For one, that’s a competition issue and in Planning, we can’t deal with competition, That’s a market-related element.’”

“There were a lot of practical things that came into this question of healthy food, local food and what you can and cannot do from a competition [perspective] through to how do you regulate it, what’s the difference, and what would it mean. When you read our urban structure policies in Chapter 2, there’s a policy there – I think the word is ‘encourage’ but we’re looking to try to have food stores located near major transportation areas because it makes

sense...It's a natural place to put food stores. From that perspective, whether the food stores can be developed in a manner that will allow them to pay the rent in those locations is the other thing. We can encourage our brains out but the difficulty that we've discovered is that, with food corporations, we can't touch this and neither can Area Municipalities – it's the competition element.

In addition, competition between local and global interests was also an important concern related to international trade policies, and was seen as creating a “fine line” over which decision makers’ were reluctant to cross. This is noted by the following:

“In broader terms, how much are you going to let governments of any jurisdiction contravene the World Trade Organization? By attaching yourself to any strategy that favours local, you are getting yourself into hot water. We can do it as a non-profit organization but maybe the government can't, or shouldn't go on record...”

Thus, in light of a political regard for a free market economy, a recognized need for collaborative community partnerships, and the risks associated with interfering with existing competition, decision makers in this case study chose to take a more cautious approach in their level of engagement, or *participation* in regional food system issues. These ‘rules’ or considerations defining regional food system governance shed light on the extent that decision makers in Waterloo Region were willing to actively ‘participate’ in food system activity. A community planning framework (i.e., signal to public and private interest groups to respond to food system issues through collaborative community partnerships) was well supported by decision makers and, apart from their respect for market-driven activity, regarded as an ‘appropriate’ government action for addressing food access concerns. With regard to community partnerships, this was a consistent and recurring finding in this research. The overarching theme of ‘partnerships’ is examined in greater detail below.

7.5 Establishing Networks and Partnerships: How to ‘Participate’ and ‘Transfer Knowledge’ to Others

The significance of ‘partnerships’ was shown in Chapter 5 as a way to advance food system ideas and policy options in the Region. A critical partnership between RP and PH was discussed. In addition to their value in policy making, community partnerships were also identified as part of the ‘pattern’ or ‘rules’ guiding food system participation discussed above. Several additional findings related to the value of partnerships and community networks were noted by participants and concerned: (1) reputation; (2) capacity for change through knowledge transfer (KT); and (3) hierarchies among food system actors. An exploration of these findings sheds light on the roles

and motivations of new and existing food system participants and highlights the specific ways in which *partnerships*, *networks* and *knowledge transfer* can be used to affect meaningful food system change.

7.5.1 Concerns with ‘Reputation’ in Partnerships

A reputation for success and innovation was found to be an important way to increase one’s legitimate participation in food system activity. In addition, through stakeholders’ described experiences of establishing local food businesses in the Region, it was found that producers, wholesalers, and retailers in this case study were highly selective about their partnership with other participants in the food system. Specifically, ‘a good reputation’ for quality and service was noted as something that needed to be guarded, and protected within a small local food network. The importance of reputation in establishing partnerships is reflected by the following:

‘The owner emailed us and asked if we could supply [our product] to them....But we’re very selective about our reputation. And we have to guard it because you can lose a good reputation in no time.’

“We’re probably the largest in Waterloo Region and we mainly retail everything through our market...And we have a very strong brand with our name so if we were to sell to other areas and people were to get our stuff somewhere else, they’re not going to come to our [market]. So we’re very protective of that.”

With respect to decision making power, and the ability to define one’s own ‘rules’ of participation in local food system activity, the quotes above underscore the value of having a choice in selecting partners and deciding which relationships will support and align with one’s values as a local food system player (i.e., quality, values, local food image, etc.).

7.5.2 Greater Capacity to Affect Change through Partnerships and Knowledge Transfer

A second identified feature of this overarching theme was that there was a greater capacity to affect system-wide change through local partnerships and networks. Specifically, these were seen as an important way to expand opportunities within the local food system, particularly through information sharing and the transfer of other forms of knowledge. In contrast to the global industrial food system, participants acknowledged that there was not the same pressure to ‘get big’ in order to participate locally. Rather, it was shown that in a smaller food system network, the interconnectivity and close partnerships between local food system stakeholders were critical advantages in being able to adapt to meet the demands of consumers’ changing food

preferences. As noted by the following, partnerships were seen as a way to “organize and communicate” collective food needs and an important mechanism for increasing capacity to affect food system change in Waterloo Region:

“I hear through lots of casual conversations with people ‘Oh, I wish I could get...’ But we live in the bread basket of the country, you can say what you want, and you need to organize a little bit and get a few other consumers who want it too, and then communicate that to a farmer and you’ll have it!”

“A lot of farmers are really willing to say, “Hey, whatever you need, I’ll plant it.” Because if I’m going to come every week and purchase, and if I’m a great supplier of their product...So we’ve developed a great partnership.”

As illustrated by the following caption, the value of local food system partnerships was found to affect change across the entire system through KT. ‘*Knowledge transfer*’ was an important underlying theme in this study, and linked closely with ‘participation’, ‘partnerships’, ‘visioning’ and ‘issue framing’. A partnership between a local retailer and a network of committed growers was described as a way to not only meet consumer demand, but to improve retail dependability, reputation, and the viability of local producers across the entire local food system. As shown below, the retailer served as a ‘knowledge broker’ between consumers and local food producers:

“So what I’ve established is that there are a few farmers that I’ve really focused on working with. Eventually, I hope to have an incredible support system as I continue to grow, but currently, I focus on a couple of farmers where we focus on what my customers are consuming, what they are needing. If you have a whole field of lettuce but I need spinach, well then...So we’ve developed relationships...These farmers need to know where there is demand. And that’s what I’m trying to really establish with them, is this system of what is in demand, and what I’m going to move for you. And this is where you’re going to maximize your land and your seed, and money, so you can actually have a quick turn-around in the crop department.”

Participants also provided a number of examples that illustrated the value of local food system networking as a resource for information (‘*knowledge transfer*’) to expand business opportunities and navigate various zoning and other land use planning obstacles. Importantly, both FL and the FSRT were noted to be important networking groups (or ‘knowledge brokers’) for local food system stakeholders and were recognized for their role in affecting system-wide change:

“So we went to [Foodlink] and [they] said, “We just went through this [zoning amendments] with the Township of Woolwich. I can get the whole binder of the process and everything and get it over to the planner in [your area].”

“[Foodlink] has shared their experience with advancing food systems across the Province... So Huron, Perth, Chatham, Kent, Hamilton, Wellington, Grey-Bruce, Oxford, Brant, Rainy River- they’re all using [Foodlink’s] Buy Local, Buy Fresh! model and [they] even share their business plan on how to, not only advance food systems goals but to keep them serving the farming community.”

“I’m a member of the Food System Roundtable with Public Health. I’ve gone through them to find the farms that I want to work with and I know they’ve all been very influential. Like [name of farm] and other farms that I’ve gone to say ‘Hey, you should see so-and-so’. And they have direct connections. So when I’m out dealing with them, they’ll say ‘Hey, our cousins are just up the road, they have eggs and meat and other stuff...So it’s funny, once I got connected, I started getting phone calls from other farmers...So they [local farmers] have a very quick connecting group already established.”

Thus, connections to other participants through networking groups and shared information through informal and formal KT channels were shown to be important ways for new and existing stakeholders to remain viable as well as to improve their contribution to food system change.

7.5.3 Hierarchies in the Local Food System: Improving One’s Position through Partnerships

An ‘invisible’ social hierarchy among food system stakeholders was noted to exist within the agric-food sector. The various positions were described as a measure of stakeholders’ ability to participate and affect change in their level of control over decision making in the food system. Based on participants’ perspectives of those involved in the Region’s food system, it was suggested that some producers were among those at the bottom of the hierarchy. Specifically, participants believed that, in the absence of committed partnerships, many small-scale producers involved in supply channels through the conventional food system were unable to sustain a living in farming and were restricted in their capacity to affect change, as captured by the following:

“There is so much where they [local farmers] are not making it. They’re working other jobs just to break even.”

“As producers of food, this should stir in us a slow anger. We produce food, often at a cost that is too low to sustain”

“Because the crunch is always at the grower end of it, because in the processing and retailing sectors, if they don’t make money, they stop very quickly.”

However, participants in this sample also felt that the establishment of partnerships and a connection with an active local food system network could improve their position in the hierarchy and therefore, increase the degree of control, or inclusion in decision making. In addition, partnerships formed within a regional food system network were described as a way to empower farmers, provide mutually-benefiting opportunities, and help local stakeholders to regain control in decision making. The following comments illustrate the value of network connections in supporting, and improving regional farmers’ participation in local food system activity:

“And we have to make sure they have stuff for the whole year. Like if they just have things for the spring—well, they have to be prepared for the summer and fall as well. So now I’ve hopefully been able to, with a couple—we’ve actually worked together now, currently, in December of what they’re going to plant, so that we can actually predetermine the planting system. And that’s very important. A lot of farmers are really willing to say, ‘Hey, whatever you need, I’ll plant it.’ Because if I’m going to come every week and purchase a great supply of their product - we’ve developed a great partnership. And that’s all they need is to have the continual income, the continual purchase, not a one-time going in, and then ‘Thanks, see you next year’. It’s got to be a continued process.”

“It’s all of them [the Old Order Mennonite farmers] bringing their goods to the auction, and because we’re local [food suppliers], we want to support them. Their customers of ours, so we want to support them as well... They support us, we support them.”

“We have probably 10 or 12 Old Order Mennonite [suppliers] and I’m interested in supporting them because they’re often the kind of farm I want to support, the small family farm.”

“We’re talking about double disempowerment. The disempowerment that certainly conventional farmers feel and the disempowerment that consumers feel and so unless somebody starts to feel like they can do something... because small not-for-profit groups that are organized around various kinds of food system entities really can only move so far and so much.”

Due to a lack of resources, some consumers and not-for profit organizations were also regarded as having little control or ability to participate (i.e., buy fresh, local produce) or affect food system change. Collaborative community partnerships between the public and private sectors were identified as an important way to overcome this perceived effect of hierarchical food system positioning. An important earlier illustration of this was PH’s NMI. The objectives of the project were to improve access to healthy, local food among vulnerable consumer groups and to support local farmers by increasing the sustainability of the farming sector (Mann Miedema, 2008). PH established partnerships as a way to bridge the gap between low-income consumers and regional producers. While the importance of these activities was clear from a public health and farmer viability perspective, some participants were more critical of government involvement and suggested that PH’s ability to overcome zoning and other regulatory barriers in establishing the public markets was tied to their ‘*position*’ and advantage as a regional department:

“A colleague of mine who worked on the project spent a couple of months dealing with the backing and forthing with the [local] Planning Department, with the Bylaw Enforcement...smoothing it out. Ultimately I wonder if the reason it was approved is because it was the Region, not because they support this idea.”

“There’s some question as to whether...well, the only reason those things were allowed was because the Region was running them. Would a private entrepreneur wanting to do the same thing be able to do it with as few barriers?...It remains to be seen.”

“So this is something that Public Health is doing where they’re setting up these little farmers’ markets. They’re setting them up, but you know, they’re the Region. So they can obviously get things approved pretty quickly wherever they’re going to set up.”

The above quotes further supported findings regarding a social hierarchy within the regional food system and suggested that there were advantages in Waterloo Region based on PH’s regional position and community partnerships. Partnerships and KT are discussed in greater detail in Section 7.7 below.

7.6 ‘Strategic Positioning’: What Can Be Done to Affect Meaningful Food System Change through ‘Aligned Agendas’, ‘Visioning’ and ‘Issue Framing’?

The overarching theme of ‘strategic positioning’ emerged in this case study as an important way to ‘influence’ others and affect food system change through policy. It was considered the goal of the other overarching themes and sub-themes. Specifically, ‘partnerships’, ‘participation’, ‘knowledge transfer’ and ‘historical and local context’ were identified as channels or situations (i.e., ways to organize) where a participant, or group of participants (i.e., policy actors, food system stakeholders) could influence others to advance a food system agenda. Likewise, sub-themes offered a more specific illustration of ‘strategic positioning’ and helped to explain the connections between each of the overarching themes. Sub-themes in this study included ‘aligned agendas’ (i.e., aligning a political agenda or business intention with others in a position of influence); ‘visioning’ (i.e., setting out a vision for the community as a way to influence values and practices) and ‘issue framing’ (i.e. framing an issue in a way that influences consideration and acceptance by others). (‘Legitimacy’ was discussed as another sub-theme, or feature, of ‘participation’ and ‘partnerships’ earlier in this chapter). Briefly, examples of each of the sub-themes are provided below and discussed as critical features of strategic positioning. The overarching theme of ‘strategic positioning’ is also examined as a way to identify the most meaningful (relevant) actions in this case study used to intentionally affect food system change.

7.6.1 ‘Strategic Positioning’: Influencing Others to Affect Food System Change

The best examples of strategic positioning were described in relation to the role and motivation of PH staff in general, and PH’s internal food system champion (“PH champion”) in particular. In most cases, participants’ descriptions of PH’s strategy and intentions to influence food system

policy change through the ROP provided the most insight into ‘strategic positioning’ as an overarching theme. Importantly, PH staff experts’ accounts of their ‘strategic positioning’ portrayed a clear understanding of their level of influence as a regional department. In addition, staff recognized that there was a “fine line” where political strategizing would become controversial if not driven by the regional community. With respect to securing community and regional buy-in for a food systems agenda, PH’s intentions and channels of influence were captured best by the following:

“In addition to providing the clinical services which are really important, we also need to have other strategies that relate to, you know, how we can influence others”

“Our main methods of influence have been related to the fact that we are a regional department”

“Now [the Medical Officer of Health] works for Regional Council so they have to listen to her because she is their employee. And they [Regional Council] are also the Board of Health. So, automatically that gives [the Medical Officer of Health] an advantage to be involved in all kinds of conversations, to have more influence, simply because she is at the senior-management table.”

“Staff shouldn’t really be making the decisions about what gets included and what’s not [included in the ROP]. But of course we have a fair amount of influence...So it’s kind of walking that fine line between us making decisions and us responding to what the politically elected representatives want to see there.”

Although not explicitly discussed, several comments were made that were indicative of strategic positioning at a higher-level in the regional organization:

“At some point it did become a senior-level project, I mean compared to other projects, it has never become this senior...like it’s always been total communication. At some point, things weren’t communicated and couldn’t be, not because it was secretive...it was secretive in a good way. Because you can’t talk about this too much because you run the risk of others seeing your strategy and if others see your strategy, they have a strategy against it. But if you keep your strategy a secret, you can make it through until the end...so I think there is an element of that.”

PH staff experts identified several advantages and critical opportunities to influence the Region’s food policy direction and highlighted the ‘strategic’ nature of their activities and intentional use of internal and external partnerships. Several examples of PH’s ‘strategic positioning’ (i.e., efforts to intentionally *influence* others and/or to affect a food policy process) were captured by PH staff experts and are summarized in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Public Health Perspectives on Staff and Department Influence in Food System Policy Making and Food System Change

Area of Influence	Example:
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Provincial direction	“So under the standards that actually relate to healthy eating and active living, our staff were influential in ensuring that food systems policy got included in the standards.”
Regional planners	“I managed to capture [name]’s attention who was the planner with the lead on the ROP” “But on the other hand, like knowing he was a planner, and knowing the role of planners all along, we had made efforts to get to know them, and to get to know more about bylaws.”
Municipal planners	“So [we thought] ‘We’ve got to start getting our heads around land use policy’, right? Cuz we think we have a toe in the door with planners to influence this, but we need to know what we’re advocating for.”
Decision makers	“I mean I wouldn’t underestimate the amount of resources that we did put into influencing this. I mean, it is part of a bigger goal of working on a number of things that could improve the health of the food system and land use policy is just one of them. But I think because it was something that the Region had direct control over, we put more effort into it because we had that sort of inside avenue to decision makers.”
Community stakeholders	“I think what then happened is we realized the other asset we had was huge community support, and huge partnerships with community players ...so we really turned to them. We said ‘You know this is coming to you for comment and you should know that right now it’s not looking good and right now, we’re not sure that these policies are going to live to see the light of day’.”
Policy direction	“We had somebody who was trained as a land use planner at the time working in Public Health and that had been a strategic and intentional thing because we had wanted to influence land use policy.”
Policy language	“We became one of the stakeholders and actually were providing input into the Plan and were responding to comments that were coming from the public. And we had an opportunity to review and comment on the various edits.”

Several additional examples of ‘strategic positioning’ were identified by participants and related to RP’s role and motivations in influencing others. In the same way that PH took advantage of multiple channels of influence in the Region, RP also played a strategic role in trying to influence Area Municipalities, and other stakeholders, to adopt their vision for growth in the Region. Specifically, AMs were seen as strategic external partners and their support and buy-in for the ROP were paramount as noted by the following:

“So we’re out there trying to implement Regional Council’s vision of a growth management strategy and about 70% of things that we had to do weren’t ours to do. So what you had to do was to get other people to do them for you. To buy into it and then adapt their capital programs, their work programs...to do the things that were important to us, not necessarily important to them...But how do you influence their decisions? You work with them. They’ve got to understand how they fit into the broader context of the overall efforts that you’re trying to make.”

Importantly, as noted by the comment above, RP faced a unique challenge within the Region’s two-tier planning context in that they needed to strategically position their agenda between higher- and lower-levels of government. In this case, by “working with them” (i.e.,

strengthening their partnership with AMs) the Region was able to exert the necessary influence to move forward on plans for complete communities. As discussed previously, this influence involved shaping local planning considerations to include food destinations within walking distance from places where people work and live.

7.6.2 *'Aligned Agendas'*: Strategic Positioning through Partnerships, Participation and Knowledge Transfer

Through various multi-sectoral perspectives of regional decision making factors, 'aligned agendas' emerged as a critical underlying feature of 'strategic positioning'. In fact, decision makers' emphasis on 'aligned agendas' was mentioned so frequently and consistently across regional staff and elected officials that this could be considered an overarching theme. As noted in Chapter 5, PH's champion strategically worked to align a food system agenda with the Region's plans for agricultural protection and urban intensification. In the same way, RP and PH aligned Growth and Health agendas to increase the level of community interest and support for the countryside line, and to influence local planners' considerations regarding food destinations and complete communities. The following perspectives from regional senior-level experts point to the importance of 'aligned agendas' as a key feature of 'strategic positioning':

"We recognized fairly quickly that if [the Director of Planning] stood up and said something or [the Medical Officer of Health] stood up and said something, and [they] said the same thing, the MOH got a hell of a lot more credibility than what [the Director of Planning] got. And so we used that, being perfectly honest, to advance the combined interests of our two departments."

"At the Corporate Leadership Table, along with the other Commissioners, we're talking about the Smart Growth Plan, and we thought strategically, we already knew we wanted to have a countryside line, we already knew we wanted to have a transit corridor down the middle, we wanted to have intensification, and we knew that including a health argument would be a hopeful thing to paint the picture of what we were trying to achieve."

"And so from a political point of view, there are a lot of reasons why they want to have a countryside line. And why they don't want urban sprawl. And so, it's not that Health swayed them, it's more that 'Here's a health argument that can help also align with these other agendas which are really important to them... So the Councillors picked up pretty quickly that the health agenda would align with their goals."

As captured above, the importance of 'aligned agendas' in this case study was critical to food system policy making and shown as an important way to link the activities of regional departments. With respect to food system *participation*, 'aligned agendas' were shown to be the link between 'partnerships' and 'knowledge transfer' (overarching themes) and a critical feature

of ‘strategic positioning’. Specifically, PH influenced food access considerations in the Region by aligning a health agenda with other similar regional priorities and forming a strategic *partnership* with RP. Through ‘*agenda alignment*’ (and demonstrated credibility), PH was invited to *participate* in regional food policy and planning decisions, and *informed* regional planners through the transfer of knowledge (i.e., food ideas and policy options for the ROP). As noted previously, the partnership between RP and PH was a critical facilitating factor in food system policy change and gave PH access to influence policy and planning considerations – an opportunity which, traditionally, was rare in light of department silos. In this way, RP gained PH as an important internal supporter of the countryside line. Thus, from a regional planning perspective, the following quotations summarize the strategic use of aligned agendas through internal and external partnerships as a way to participate, transfer knowledge and influence food system policy making and food system change:

“They [Regional Council] knew that there was going to be a lot of debate around this [the countryside line], and in particular, the development implications are huge. And so having as much support for that political point of view, and marshaling as many partners who will support your perspective when it comes to a political- because ultimately all these things are political, they have to go to Council to be approved. If you can line up more partners that actually support your perspective, it makes your case stronger. So it was in their interest to continually align health with what they were trying to achieve.”

“So it was that kind of collaborative effort. I think the Council, certainly, they like to see that. They’re usually looking at this from the perspective of municipal collaboration and external stakeholders. They like to be able to see that. I think they appreciate how big this organization is, and how there are over 300,000 some employees but I think more and more, they are being led to see that a lot of what is done requires people from a lot of different disciplines and groups to be able to work together to achieve these things.”

7.6.3 ‘*Visioning*’: A Strategic Exercise in Knowledge Transfer

‘*Visioning*’ emerged as a second sub-theme of strategic positioning. In Chapter 5, RP’s process of setting out a vision for the regional food system was described as an effort to “push people in the direction that they would *probably* otherwise go”. Importantly, RP’s efforts to shape community food system values were compared to earlier strategies to influence public participation in recycling, widespread acceptance of smoking bans in community locations, and the elimination of plastic bags from retail stores. In light of their limited capacity to act without internal and external partnerships, it was shown that RP used Section 3F as an important channel, or knowledge instrument to transfer a vision of the regional food system to the community.

Specifically, it was hoped that this ‘*visioning*’ exercise would serve as a way to: (1) engage municipalities in food system discussions; (2) encourage supportive food system planning consideration; and (3) create more opportunities for future food system planning in the Region.

RP’s initial intent for food policy considerations in the ROP stemmed from a larger effort to achieve urban intensification targets including: mixed use neighbourhoods, transit-oriented communities, and food destinations within close proximity to places where people live and work. The use of ‘*visioning*’ in this case study was an important underlying feature of ‘*knowledge transfer*’ and sub-theme of ‘*strategic positioning*’. Viewed this way, RP’s *visioning* exercise can be seen as part of a *strategic effort* to shift community preferences away from accepted norms (e.g., single uses in neighbourhoods, grocery stores within a 15-minute drive) and to *influence* public acceptance of a new view for neighbourhood and community design (i.e., transit-oriented, mixed use communities, stores within walking distance, temporary markets in urban areas, etc.). Although not stated explicitly, it was likely anticipated by RP that there would be wider dissemination of the ROP through PH’s multiple external partnerships and networks, and potentially, greater capacity to influence community values and norms. In light of noted jurisdictional constraints, the following perspective points to the significance of RP’s ‘*visioning*’ exercise as a way to *influence*, and *transfer ideas* and policy options as a legitimate planning action:

“If you go through these policies...support, permit, encourage, collaborate, support...ah, not a lot of teeth because a lot of these aspects we [RP] can’t control. But I think a statement of local government interest, and direction, and vision is really important. I think as marketing boards and other organizations look to develop and align vision that it’s really important that we enunciate.”

Legacy barriers (e.g., existing infrastructure and strict adherence to traditional practices) and industry barriers (e.g., restrictive covenants) were identified as key planning challenges in Chapter 6. However, Section 3F was presented as an opportunity to shift cultural norms in a way that would impact private and public sector investment in food system changes. In addition, “softer” policy wording was seen as an attempt to minimize the Region’s interference with free market and competition concerns and a way to align the ROP with PH’s ongoing food system activities.

“So this, at least by putting it in here, has elevated it to the point that it’ll be part of the public discussions as their [Area Municipal] plans go forward. Sometimes moving society in a direction is just prodding them along, it’s not solid regulation. You can’t make people do things.”

Examples of ‘visioning’ were not limited to RP. Other regional food system stakeholders described a vision of Waterloo Region as a prosperous local food hub, or a “place to come for local food”. Most participants agreed that PH’s leadership and networking reach had already helped Waterloo Region to achieve this status. The *strategic use* of the ROP as a way to *transfer ideas* about the Region’s progressive food system policy and planning actions, and to “enshrine” an image, or *vision*, for the future is noted as follows:

“Food systems started to impact on planning departments and planning departments across the Province would always cite Waterloo Region as one of the key movers and shakers in the food system world. So it would be embarrassing for the Region not to enshrine food systems in the ROP.”

The following section examines ‘*issue framing*’ as a final sub-theme of ‘strategic positioning’. The chapter then concludes with a presentation and overview of the fourth research objective of this study which was to develop a conceptual framework to illustrate the theoretical findings associated with the process of food system policy making and regional food system change.

7.6.4 ‘*Issue Framing*’: Influencing the Acceptance of Supportive Food Policy Ideas by Appealing, or ‘*Aligning*’ with Others

The significance of a food systems issue frame in the ROP policy formulation process was discussed as a critical factor in policy making in Chapter 5. Descriptions (and in some cases, personal accounts) of the roles and motivations of food system stakeholders and policy actors revealed several examples where issues had been framed strategically in an effort to influence individuals and groups and/or to negotiate ideas or relationships between actors. Specifically, RP’s ability to secure buy-in from AMs by reframing commercial planning interests (i.e., the size and location of food stores in neighbourhoods) as broader food system policy ideas was captured as one of the best examples of issue framing in this study. As illustrated by the following, RP appealed to internal and external partners by setting out an acceptable issue frame:

“Part of the buy-in was because when we looked at what we had, we realized that by changing the focus to more of a food systems approach, it just clarified what it was the Region was trying to do and it meshed well with a lot of other goals in our Plan related to mixed use, the environmental aspects, the agricultural aspects and sustainability.

And then people started to see that by framing it the way we did, and promoting access to local food, that we were very much in line with what the Region was all about traditionally.”

“We also changed the term food stores to food destinations to provide a little bit more...I’m not sure if we made it worse or better, there’s another whole series of debates about how we tried to de-emphasize the references to stores which got us into the commercial planning aspect and we tried to keep it a bit more general and yeah, food destinations can include a food store but it could easily refer to a farmers’ market. It’s a little softer, a little vaguer which allowed us the kind of ability to get it through our local municipalities.”

Another example discussed previously was PH’s strategic ability to frame the ‘countryside line’ argument as an issue of ‘*food-land*’ protection. This was shown as a way to appeal to regional decision makers and was a critical early factor in PH’s partnership with RP, as described below:

“Public Health started talking to the Planning Department about getting food systems into the thinking there. Like the Regional Growth Management Strategy wasn’t an official land use planning document like the ROP but it was sort of a principle-based thing that they were taking to Council to say ‘Look our population is probably going to grow by about 50% in the next 40 years, where are we going to put them?’ And then we [Public Health] asked the question, ‘How are we going to feed them?’. So Planning was already concerned about containing urban sprawl and protecting farmland but we asked to put the question a bit more pointedly, ‘Are we going to think about food here?’”

“I think we were very smart to frame the meetings around the big huge agriculture questions. They heard directly from farmers about what they would need help with, so that was very good.”

To overcome food deserts and other geographical barriers, PH used the concept of ‘walkability’ to inform and influence planners’ considerations and plans to improve access to food destinations in neighbourhoods. Specifically, PH strategically framed the issue around the need for “places to walk” and transit access (important community planning considerations related to the impact of the built environment on health) rather than on issues of hunger, community food security or other food-related concerns. In this way, it was shown that PH appealed to RP’s growth management strategies and moved into an important position to transfer relevant policy knowledge and insight to RP as captured by the following:

“So food destinations became a really important thing and that was clearly Public Health’s doing. Because we [Public Health] were doing some walkability research...and so in terms of daily walking for health, the destination walking is what makes a difference...And so we had people rank lists of destinations and so schools, places of worship and food. Like those were the big things. That was really concrete evidence for Planning. That was like black and white and no one had done that before, they hadn’t seen that before. And so that was ‘ok, we get the destination thing, we get the thing that people need to walk and we can influence destinations and so that’s why that [Section 3.F.1c] came.”

“You know even when we [Regional Planning] took a look at transit access to some of them, they effectively, by what was defined by Public Health, were food deserts. And so that raised the issue of food access, I think, in everybody’s consciousness.”

As illustrated by the examples above, ‘issue framing’ was used strategically by RP and PH as a way to influence others and secure buy-in and support for a food systems agenda. A final example was shown through FL’s ability to convince Woolwich Township to support food system innovation through flexible zoning on agricultural land. As captured by the following, a representative from FL strategically framed the issue around OOMs and agricultural tourism to appeal (“tug at the heart strings”) of local decision makers and negotiated less stringent zoning bylaws to benefit all food system stakeholders. This example was described as follows:

“In 2005, we [Foodlink] challenged the Township of Woolwich on a specific ruling of a bylaw which would not have allowed the farms to sell local food products, other than those they grew themselves, from their farm stand. This would have had tremendous ramifications, not only for the viability of those farm stands, but also to the growing Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative because many of their buyers would be other farm stands seeking to round out their offerings to the consumer. So we lobbied hard to the Township Council. The Council was not pleased with the findings of their staff because we went at it from a political standpoint...we reminded the Township that not only are these Mennonite farms significant businesses, they’re also part of your Township brand. You know, people come to Woolwich for one reason, that’s to see real farms- real Mennonite farms. Anyway...so that tugs at the heart strings...”

Thus, ‘issue framing’ was found to be a critical feature of ‘strategic positioning’ in that it was used to influence others and advance food system policies and supportive planning considerations in the Region. A common aspect of these examples of issue framing was the ability of the influencer (individual actor or group of actors) to *appeal* to the interests and/or sensitivities of the individual or groups being influenced. Viewed in this way, there was some noted overlap between ‘aligned agendas’ and ‘issue framing’ as critical features and sub-themes of ‘strategic positioning’.

In summary, this chapter described the roles and motivations of new and existing regional food system actors and community participants, including PH, RP, and members of FL, the OOM farming community and the FSRT. An in-depth assessment of PH’s groundwork and capacity building activities and multiple examples of regional food system stakeholder activity were presented. A critical aspect of PH’s groundwork and capacity building activities was the initiation of ideas about change: first, by challenging dominant community values and norms within the social environment, and secondly, by raising awareness of the impact of planning decisions on food access within the physical environment. Key overarching themes and sub-themes were explored in relation to legitimate roles of food system actors; reasons or motivations

for participating in regional food system activity; the value of partnerships to advance a position or agenda in the regional food system; and the various ways in which strategic positioning was used to affect change in Waterloo Region. These included: agenda alignment; visioning and issue framing and were presented as critical forms of knowledge transfer and features of strategic positioning. The findings highlight a number of important changes in regional food system activity including: new actors, new motivations, new partnerships and new policy options and opportunities to affect food system change. The final section in this chapter summarizes the overarching themes, sub-themes and connections associated with change in the regional food system environment.

7.7 Opportunities to Grow the Regional Food System: Insight from Overarching Themes, Sub-Themes and Associations with Food System Change at the Regional Level

Overarching themes, sub-themes and their connections were described as a way to better understand the specific roles and motivations of PH and other food system participants and to address the following four questions concerning participation and change within the regional food system:

1. *Who* can ‘legitimately’ participate in regional food system activity?
2. *Why* participate? (Or *what* are the motivations for participating in regional food system activity?)
3. *How* does one participate in food system activity?
4. *What* can be done to affect meaningful food systems change?

The following overview briefly addresses these questions based on key findings from the research and presents a theoretical framework to illustrate the Region of Waterloo’s policy and planning environment, including key concepts, overarching themes, sub-themes and their association to food system policy making and food system change.

7.7.1 ‘Legitimate’ Food System Participation: Identifying Change Agents

An examination of the sub-theme of ‘legitimacy’ exposed the various ways in which participants in this study understood and communicated ‘legitimate’ food system participation. It also shed light on the roles and motivations of food system participants in affecting food system changes in the Region. Earlier findings revealed that PH’s activities were motivated by the need for policy

and social and physical environmental changes to improve community food access. Gaps in the professional practice standards and a lack of regional support threatened the legitimacy of PH's role in affecting change. However, a growing reputation, credibility, and partnership with RP helped to 'legitimize' PH's "fringe activity" and ensured staff's ongoing participation and leadership in regional food system issues. An established reputation was also shown to be relevant to the OOMs' food system participation. The OOM's commitment to agricultural production, high quality produce, environmental consciousness and community-centeredness were important factors shaping public perceptions of their role as 'legitimate' food system participants in Waterloo Region. In the same way that PH's and the OOM's regional reputation and values helped to increase their legitimacy, FL's recognition as an active food system advocate also positively shaped the way others viewed their participation in the regional food system. However, competition, an overlapping mandate with the FSRT and a tense, unresolved break in their partnership with PH threatened their role as a 'legitimate' voice in regional food policy making. Lastly, 'legitimacy' was presented as an important concern in RP's efforts to navigate a new professional area of practice. Their jurisdictional authority in local-level food planning was questioned and led to a critical period of policy reframing as a way to minimize tensions with external partners and regain a 'legitimate' voice on regional food planning issues. Thus, 'legitimacy' was an important concept in this case study and helped to address the question of 'Who can legitimately participate in regional food system activity?'

As shown by these examples, there was a strong link between 'legitimacy' and 'partnerships' (an important underlying theme of this research). Through partnerships and a reputation for food system ideas and innovation, policy actors and participants gained acceptance and recognition as change agents and as credible sources of food system information. It was also found that partnerships can have a negative effect on 'legitimacy', particularly when tensions and other threats to participation (i.e., competition, overlapping mandates, etc.) affect the relationship between individuals and groups and reduce the capacity to act. In this way, supportive 'partnerships' and an established reputation and credibility increase one's legitimate participation while tensions and other threats reduce one's acceptance as a legitimate player in food systems change at the regional level. In Waterloo Region, participants found to be most active in contributing to food system policy making and food system change were those who had:

established a history of significant food system involvement; built a reputation for innovative activity and progressive ideas; operated within an appropriate mandate (despite adapting and adopting an untraditional role); and ‘participated’ in a manner that minimized threats, competition and tensions with other food system actors.

7.7.2 Uncovering Reasons and Approaches to Food System Participation: Signs of Supportive Social Values

A number of reasons were identified to explain the motivations of new and existing food system participants: specifically, PH was seen as acting in the public’s interest by shifting from enforcement to empowerment; OOMs, for the benefit of their community and as a way to remain viable in food production; and FL, as a way to advance the business interests of food system stakeholders. In Chapter 6, regional food system coordination was an overarching challenge in the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail at the local level. Similarly, tensions and overlapping mandates between FL and the FSRT/PH suggested that gaps also exist in the coordination of social agendas and can pose a threat to food system participation and change in the Region (particularly when there is competition for funds and public recognition). These findings demonstrated that, in the absence of coordinated regional food system activity and clearly defined roles and mandates, some actors may not be motivated to participate and risk losing their position in food system activity.

Additionally, for the first time, RP and Council (i.e., regional government) were also engaged as new actors in food system activity and were attempting to exert influence by: balancing free market concerns; providing a community framework for potential future partnerships; and minimizing competition between public and private interest groups. In this way, RP and Council’s long-range planning activities can be seen as looking out for the best interests of the regional community and its future generations. It was shown that decision makers in this case study took a cautious approach in their level of involvement in regional food system issues. This suggests that, for some groups, there may be significant underlying societal barriers (values, attitudes, beliefs, and other established cultural norms) hindering food system participation. In the same way that PH, OOMs and FL were motivated by values, adapted from a traditional role, and formed partnerships as a way to participate in local food system activity, decision makers

were also driven by personal and political values and adapted by taking on a new role in regional governance through the adoption of Section 3F in the ROP. However, significant public interest, rural sensitivities, and a “fertile” environment for food system change were important driving factors in decision makers’ willingness to participate. Thus, with respect to affecting greater local food system participation and environmental change, supportive social values and a willingness to adapt and create partnerships with others were noted as important considerations guiding food system participation.

As discussed previously, local retailers were not fully in support of government interference with private sector issues. This was shown through tensions and competition resulting from PH’s urban market initiative. With respect to food system participation, and the ‘rules and practices’ governing the various roles of participants, these findings also suggest that there are barriers to entry (*participation*) when public interest groups pose a threat to private businesses.

7.7.3 Partnerships and Knowledge Transfer: Connecting to Others and Sharing Information and Ideas

The themes of ‘*legitimacy*’ (sub-theme) and ‘*participation*’ (underlying theme) were discussed above as ways of explaining or better understanding the roles and motivations of new and existing food system participants. Likewise, ‘*partnerships*’, (another underlying theme), was also discussed as a way to increase legitimacy and to support a participant’s or group’s ongoing activity in regional food system change. Examples illustrated how partnerships could hinder or support one’s reputation, expand capacity and opportunities for policy making and food system innovation, and increase control and decision making power. Importantly, partnerships and community networks were shown to be a key facilitator of ‘knowledge transfer’ (another important theme), particularly when used to inform food-related needs and share practical advice to overcome food system planning challenges. In Chapter 5, partnerships and networks were identified as critical facilitating factors in food system policy making, and the overarching theme of ‘*strategic positioning*’ was presented as a way to help explain ‘how’ and ‘why’ partnerships were formed. Specifically, PH’s ability to strategically position a health agenda through an important internal partnership with RP and through other channels of influence helped to advance their strategy to improve food access in the Region. With respect to the overarching

theme described here, it was clear that in considering the question of ‘*How does one participate?*’ within the regional food system, participants in this study placed a strong emphasis on partnerships and networking as a critical way to connect to others, transfer ideas and positively affect one’s position in local food system change.

7.7.4 Shifting the Balance Toward Regional Food System Change: Strategic Positioning through ‘Aligned Agendas’, ‘Visioning’ and ‘Issue Framing’

The final question of interest in examining this case study’s overarching themes, sub-themes and connections was ‘*What can be done to affect meaningful food system change?*’ In other words, ‘*In which ways can regional food system actors and stakeholders influence lasting policy and environmental changes in Waterloo Region?*’ ‘Strategic positioning’ was identified as the most significant of the key themes in that it represented the presumed goal of each of the underlying themes and sub-themes. In particular, ‘participation’, ‘partnerships’ and ‘knowledge transfer’ (as well as ‘historical and local context’) were shown as channels, or situations, where actors and stakeholders could exert influence to gain support for a food systems agenda. Even more explicit were the ways in which the sub-themes – ‘aligned agendas’, ‘visioning’ and ‘issue framing’ (as well as ‘legitimacy’ discussed previously) – emerged as specific examples of how to meaningfully affect the food system balance by shifting the Region toward policy and environmental change.

Although not explicitly discussed by senior policy leaders, there was some evidence to suggest that RP’s decision to put stronger policies in place to protect agricultural land (and subsequently, to include Section 3F in the ROP) may have been part of a strategic attempt to take advantage of the current Council’s strong rural-orientation and sensitivity to farming interests. Specifically, RP may have appealed to decision makers’ ideals and values regarding regional leadership by presenting the countryside line, and other food system considerations as important accomplishments for the Region.

A food system policy frame and the ability to strategically align a health agenda with other regional priorities were critical facilitating factors of food policy making in the Region. As well, RP’s ‘regional food system vision’ was seen as a strategic exercise in knowledge transfer to the community and an important influence in future planning considerations, practices and

opportunities at the local level. ‘Visioning’ was shown as a strategic and effective approach to: minimize tensions with local planners; maintain jurisdictional boundaries; and shift community values toward wider acceptance and participation in food system change. Lastly, ‘issue framing’ was a final critical feature of ‘strategic positioning’ and used strategically to appeal to the interests and sensitivities of others as a way to increase buy-in for a supportive food policies. In sum, it can be seen through these underlying features and examples of ‘strategic positioning’ that the most significant, and intentional activities were those that responded to a timely policy window, took advantage of opportunities to raise awareness and shift values and cultural norms, and strategically assessed and utilized available channels of influence to transfer innovative and progressive food system ideas and policy options. The outcome of successful strategic positioning was described as shift, or a ‘tip’ in societal values toward an invisible ‘tipping point’ – that is, the point where local food production, distribution, retailing and consumption activities are accepted as ‘normal’ everyday behaviour and drive subsequent food system change, as illustrated by the following:

“You’re trying to build in [to the ROP] some things that you think are good and that you think will have some support in the community. You’re out there as a planner, public health or otherwise, and if you’re doing your job, you’re probably way out in front of the curb...and you’re out there, hammering away trying to get some traction on something you think is good...There’s a point at which the switch flips and you’re no longer fighting, it’s now suddenly part of the community and the community values it, it’s part of what they do...My experience is that it just gets to the point where suddenly something becomes accepted and other people start doing it as a regular thing”

7.8 Conceptual Framework: Affecting a Positive Balance in Food System Change

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 5 illustrates the complexity of food system policy and environmental change in Waterloo Region. The framework was constructed as a theoretical conceptualization based on forty-seven multi-sectoral perspectives on the process of food system policy making and food system change. The framework illustrates key concepts, overarching themes, sub-themes and associations and as shown through the smaller circles and squares below each of the identified themes, it captures those factors which supported, and those which hindered food system change in this case study.

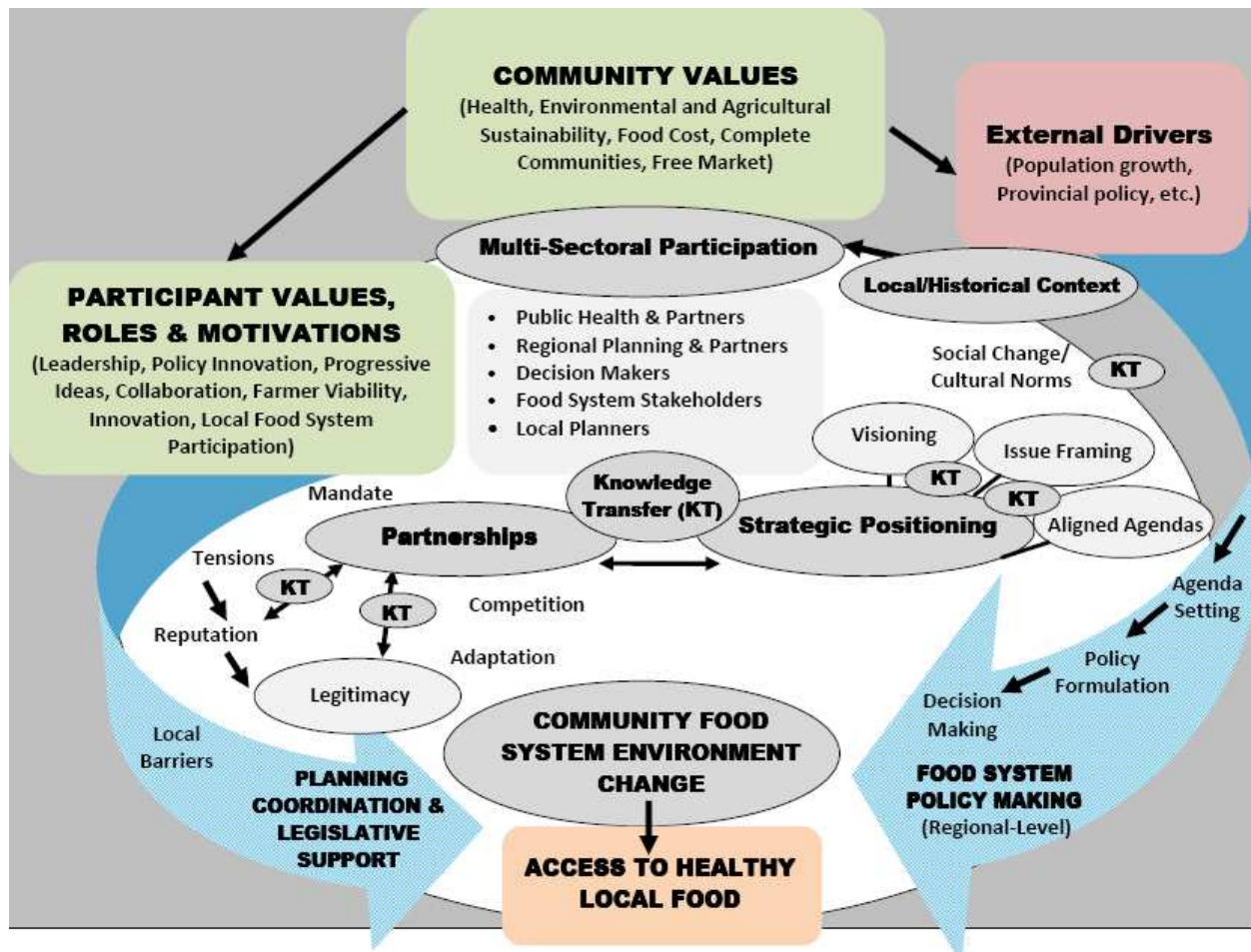


Figure 5: Concept Map of the Region of Waterloo's Food Policy and Planning Environment: Overarching Themes, Sub-Themes, Connections and Factors Affecting Food System Change

As illustrated in Figure 5, key food system participants and actors in this study were driven by a number of factors among which included: farmer viability (regional food system stakeholders); an emphasis on environmental and policy changes to improve community health (PH); population growth (regional decision makers and RP); and a change in the direction of the Provincial Policy Statement (RP). 'Strategic positioning' is at the centre of the framework as an important overarching theme, and goal of each of the other underlying themes and sub-themes. More specifically, it is positioned between key policy actors and the physical, social and policy changes that are needed to improve access to healthy, local food. It's positioning on the conceptual map is a reminder of the significance of the strategic approaches necessary to influence and challenge dominant ideas, values, and cultural norms related to food access. The

concept of ‘social change’ is central to the Region of Waterloo’s policy and planning environment and the crux of food system change. Values are positioned on each side of the policy actors and stakeholders as a way to illustrate their potential to support or hinder change.

In summary, the four questions discussed above guided the presentation of the overarching themes and sub-themes and were used as a way to increase the transferability of the findings beyond Waterloo Region. While Waterloo Region was the first regional municipality to include food system ideas and a ‘vision’ for the regional food system in an official plan, other jurisdictions and policy actors may be keen to consider the applicability of these findings to their experience of food system change. It is likely that other regional municipalities are facing similar changes in their social and physical environments in light of new roles, motivations, actors, partnerships and opportunities to affect food system change. This chapter revealed evidence of significant public and private investment in opportunities to grow the regional food system environment. Chapter 8 concludes with a final discussion of the potential impact of change and the significance of this research beyond Waterloo Region.

CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine the policy and planning environment in Waterloo Region as a case study for regional food system policy making and food systems change. Chapter 5 examined the development of a collaborative partnership through which public health (PH) and planning professionals established supportive food system planning policies to facilitate access to healthy food. Chapter 6 explored the current barriers affecting healthy retail access at the local level and identified gaps in regional food system coordination and legislative planning support. These findings pointed to an important disconnect between the Region's vision for the regional food system and the current planning realities at the municipal level, signaling the need for greater consideration of the potential for change within the community. In Chapter 7, the roles and motivations of new and existing regional food system actors and participants were examined. The findings identified the significance of PH's food system groundwork and capacity building efforts to support changes in the social and physical environments and opportunities to grow the regional food system. Overarching themes and sub-themes were illustrated with relevant case study examples and answered a series of questions related to food system participation. Specifically, 'legitimate' participation, motivations and patterns of food system activity, the value of partnerships, and the political significance of agenda alignment, visioning and issue framing as effective policy and environmental change approaches were discussed.

8.1 Towards a New Framework for Understanding Policy and Environmental Change at the Regional Level: Evaluating the Adequacy of a Socio-Ecological Framework and Food Systems Approach

A socio-ecological (SE) framework (Stokols, 1992) was discussed in the introduction to this thesis as a way of understanding the multiple factors and influences that shape individuals' dietary behaviours (Story et al., 2008). This study examined the role of food system planning policies and practices as important macro-environmental influences of the physical environment, including healthy retail access and distribution opportunities at the local level. PH's capacity building and awareness raising activities, and RP's visioning exercise were shown as important

efforts to influence values, attitudes, beliefs and food norms within the Region's social-cultural environment.

The research was exploratory in nature and therefore cannot be used to show conclusively that food system policy and planning considerations alone lead to improvements in healthy retail access or changes in consumers' eating behaviours. However, the results suggest that when food system groundwork and awareness raising activities precede regional policy and planning decisions, there is greater political interest, public support, and potential for cross-sectoral partnerships to advance a number of regional priorities. Access to healthy food was discussed as an important PH objective along with other multi-sectoral interests including farmer viability, environmental and agricultural land protection, and the establishment of complete communities. Thus, while a SE framework was useful for understanding how upstream factors shape the environments within which individuals make food-related decisions, a food *systems* approach (or view of the problem) provided a complementary lens to examine the various points of intersection that influence stakeholders' motivation to engage in meaningful policy and environmental change. In addition, a food systems approach served as a guide to understanding the connections between participants within a local policy and planning context and provided a more complete view of the various sectors associated with food production and consumption-related activity.

These findings are consistent with earlier research on the environmental determinants of healthy eating (Raine, 2005; Story et al., 2008) but offer more in-depth insight into the decision making and motivational factors that shape policies and other environmental influences of eating behaviour within a regional food system planning context. Specifically, the findings shed light on the various points of intersection that can be used to promote multi-sectoral action to improve healthy retail opportunities and facilitate access to healthy, local food. Chapter 6 presented the concept of a community food system environment (CFSE) as a way to encapsulate food-related policy and planning considerations (public sector) with the full range of private sector food system activity in a locally- defined political or geographical area. Thus, while others have suggested 'food access' and 'food accessibility' as important areas of intervention to improve the community food environment (Story et al., 2008), this research found that the greater the degree

of collaborative multi-sectoral action toward policies and practices to accommodate local food production, processing, distribution and retailing activities, the healthier the community ‘food system’ becomes with respect to increased access to healthy, local food. More importantly, it was shown that healthy public policies, and other supportive physical and social environment changes to improve the CFSE could be achieved by finding ways (i.e., points of intersection) to attract the interest and investment of multi-sectoral stakeholders to address regional food system issues. Social and environmental goals, including increasing access to healthy food, reducing the impact of long-distance food travel, promoting farmer viability and protecting agricultural land from sprawl were important motivators for public and private support for a healthy community ‘food system’ environment. Thus, in light of these findings, a new framework was needed to explain overarching themes and features of multi-sectoral collaboration and partnerships among regional actors with regard to food policy and environmental changes in Waterloo Region. Therefore, the purpose of the following chapter is threefold and includes a discussion of the implications and relevance of the findings to policy, practice and research by: (1) summarizing the effects of collaborative multi-sectoral policy efforts to address identified regional community concerns; (2) recommending relevant practice considerations for PH and planning professionals to positively affect food system change; and (3) presenting a new theoretical framework of policy and environmental change for future research. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a brief overview of the limitations of this study and considerations for future research.

8.2 Implications for Policy: The Effects of Collaborative Multi-Sectoral Policy Action

Briefly, two main effects of collaborative multi-sectoral food system policy action within Waterloo Region were identified as evidence of ‘what works’ with respect to the development of health-promoting policies. The effects are broad, system-wide influences that span various levels of government and highlight opportunities where leaders, policy advocates and local champions in other jurisdictions may have the greatest potential to affect food system change through policy. The effects include: ‘ripple effects’ and ‘cascade effects’ and are briefly described with case study examples from Waterloo Region. The effects are included here to illustrate the value of this research in contributing to an improved understanding of the broad,

cross-sectoral approaches and possibilities for incorporating health considerations within other sectoral policies.

8.2.1 ‘Ripple Effects’: The Influence of Regional Multi-Sectoral Action on Provincial Planning and Public Health Policies

The ‘ripple effects’ of collaborative, multi-sectoral action were evident from two critical examples from this thesis in which regional staff were able to subsequently influence provincial policy within health and planning sectors. In each of these policy examples, common features included testing out new policy ideas at the regional level, determining ‘what works’ and transferring insight and knowledge to the Province. With respect to provincial land use planning considerations, regional and municipal planners worked collaboratively to establish mutually-agreeable food policies (i.e., Section 3F) that could be implemented at the local level to improve food access. Based on early success and critical insight into ‘what works’ within a regional planning context, a planner worked with members of the FSRT to advocate for the inclusion of food policy considerations in the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS).

A similar example of a ‘ripple effect’ was PH’s ability to influence the inclusion of food access and food policy considerations in the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). Specifically, prior to the release of the OPHS in 2008, staff spent two years reviewing and updating the standards to reflect the types of multi-sectoral activities and considerations that had been relevant to their regional food systems work. A senior PH official stated that the Department “purposefully had a fair amount of staff participating on the Provincial Development Teams to update the standards”. Subsequent changes to the public health standards illustrate the value of drawing relevant insight from work with internal and external community partners to inform policy changes at the provincial level. By influencing higher levels of government, regional policy actors can increase not only their own department’s mandate for food systems work but also the capacity and legitimacy of others within the Province. Therefore, the ripple effects of one department’s early and progressive multi-sectoral policy actions can result in greater system-wide policy opportunities and environmental changes in other jurisdictions and levels of government. With respect to the implications for policy, this was an important finding in this research in that conventional wisdom suggests that policy is driven down from higher levels of

government. Yet, as illustrated by these examples, innovative multi-sectoral policy activity (e.g. the inclusion of food policies in the ROP) at a regional level can be used to inform planning considerations and health policy changes at the provincial level.

8.2.2 ‘Cascade Effects’: The Influence of Multi-Sectoral Action on Regional and Local Food Policy Initiatives

In the same way that provincial policy changes were identified as an important outcome of multi-sectoral action, this research also included evidence of the positive impact of collaborative community partnerships in increasing healthy retail policy opportunities. Specifically, ‘cascade effects’ of the Region’s adoption of food policies in the ROP led to early consideration of a number of subsequent regional food policy initiatives to improve healthy, retail access. Three examples were described by participants and included: a regional food procurement policy; a ROP Phase 2 Policy Plan; and organizational purchasing policies in the conventional food retail sector. Although not described in great detail previously, the value in presenting these examples here is to illustrate how multi-sectoral action can also lead to supportive policy changes in both public and private sectors through public-private initiatives.

8.2.2.1 A Local Food Procurement Policy and a Phase 2 Policy Plan for the Region

In light of the ROP’s policy direction to support the regional food system, and PH’s extensive network with local food producers, staff were given approval to begin working on a regional food procurement policy for schools and workplaces. At the same time, the development of supportive regional infrastructure, including a permanent interface between the urban area and the rural countryside where appropriate accessory and secondary uses to allow more local produce to be grown and sold directly from farms in the immediate vicinity, was being considered as a Phase 2 Plan among senior-level regional planners as a way to support and complement other regional food policy and land use planning initiatives. This brief insight into the Region’s policy direction offers a glimpse into the kinds of community food system policy activities that can be achieved through coordinated and collaborative planning action between regional and local departments, and local food producers and distributors. Although in early stages of discussion, these types of regional policy initiatives highlight areas where public-private partnerships and supportive government policies can address not only healthy food access

but also a number of other community concerns, including farmer viability, agricultural land protection, long distance food transportation, and environmental sustainability.

8.2.2.2 Expanded Conventional Food Retailing Opportunities

A second example of a cascade effect highlights how supportive government policy and planning decisions can increase the capacity for conventional food retailers to make a positive contribution to health, the local economy and the environment through opportunities to purchase and supply healthy, local food. This example showcases a conventional retailer's decision to source local food after municipal approval of a local wholesale produce auction. A supportive public policy and planning decision combined with private sector action to build the auction resulted in a number of expanded opportunities for local food distribution in the Region. The conventional retailer took advantage of the auction as an opportunity to support local farmers, created a successful business strategy which included local purchasing policy changes, and used this as a model to inform purchasing policies in retail food stores in other communities. Thus, supportive policy and planning actions in one area can lead to system-wide policy changes in other areas as shown through the approval of the auction and subsequent organizational policy changes in the retail sector. This was an important finding in this research with implications for policy development in that while public sector actors have a tendency to question the authenticity of the conventional food industry's interest in local food activity, there are opportunities to engage in public-private partnerships that can achieve both social and economic goals simultaneously. By advocating for supportive community policy and planning decisions to support more opportunities for local food production and wholesale distribution and by choosing to source local food first, the conventional retail sector can become an important participant in local food system policy and environmental change.

In summary, 'ripple effects' and 'cascade effects' were used to illustrate the value of this research in highlighting areas where multi-sectoral action can contribute to positive changes in provincial, regional and organizational policies to improve healthy food access and other community benefits. The implications of the findings to policy making are that multi-sectoral actions are needed to address food policy issues (including food access, farmer viability, environmental and agricultural protection) and can be achieved when there is a win-win

opportunity for those involved. At provincial and federal levels in Canada, there is ongoing discussion on how health can be integrated into cross-sectoral policies (CPHA, 2011), and how food system issues can begin to be addressed and coordinated between multiple stakeholders (PFPP, 2011; CAPI, 2009; CAPI, 2011). Findings from this research can be used to inform leaders, policy advocates and champions at other levels of government. This is discussed further through the ‘GENERATE’ Change model presented below which was developed to guide multi-sectoral collaboration and policy and environmental change at various levels of government and across policy issues. The following section examines the implications of the research to practice and explores areas where public health and planning professionals in other jurisdictions and levels of government may have the greatest ability to affect change.

8.3 Implications for Practice: Creating Healthy Public Policies and Healthy Community Environments

To increase the transferability and applicability of the case study findings to community and government actors in other jurisdictions, this section discusses relevant practice-based considerations for public health and planning professionals working to affect food system change outside of Waterloo Region. Public health and planning professionals may find relevant and practical application in the identification of the following: the key facilitators and barriers of food system planning policy making at the individual-, organizational-, and system-level (Chapter 5); the current policies and practices affecting the location, promotion and establishment of healthy retail food outlets at the local level (Chapter 6); and the roles and motivations of key regional food system stakeholders and policy actors in Waterloo Region in creating opportunities for food system change (Chapter 7). While these findings have been presented earlier, this section highlights areas where public health and planning professionals may have the greatest potential to affect policy change and improve the community food environment by engaging in multi-sectoral dialogue and action at the regional level. Specifically, a GENERATE Change Model was developed to guide practical considerations for policy and environmental change and includes the following basic 8-step approach:

- Step 1. “G” “Ground-the-work” or “groundwork” (policy and environmental change initiation)
- Step 2. “E” Engage multi-sectoral stakeholders in policy discussions and form early partnerships
- Step 3. “N” Negotiate positions and partnerships (establish legitimacy)
- Step 4. “E” Exchange knowledge (ideas and policy options)
- Step 5. “R” Recognize points of intersection for policy and environmental change options
- Step 6. “A” Align agendas, establish a common issue frame and set a vision for change
- Step 7. “T” Transfer expert insight to decision makers
- Step 8. “E” Evaluate policy and environmental change

Drawing on examples from this research, the following sections discuss how public health and planning professionals can become engaged in and *generate* meaningful policy and physical and social environmental change in their respective areas of practice through consideration and application of these steps. The text box bullet points draw attention to those skills, characteristics and actions of PH and planning professionals in Waterloo Region and may be relevant to those working in other jurisdictions.

8.3.1 Practical Steps for Public Health and Planning Actors to GENERATE Policy and Environmental Change

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ policy innovation ➤ expert leadership ➤ progressive ideas ➤ ‘thinking outside the box’ |
|---|

Step 1. Ground the work (Groundwork). A reputation for policy innovation, expert leadership, and progressive ideas, including the ability to ‘think outside the box’ in the absence of an

appropriate mandate, were found to be important skills and features among public health and planning professionals and facilitators of food systems policy change in Waterloo Region. The development of policy skills and other leadership characteristics was a critical component of policy groundwork and may be an important preliminary step for professionals in other jurisdictions to initiate the process of policy and environment change. As shown through the role of PH in this case study, relevant groundwork can also include developing a reputation for progressive ideas by actively investing time and resources in exploring new policy areas; gaining international recognition for innovative policy solutions; raising awareness of alternative policy options, and creating capacity for change through early internal networking and external

partnerships with the community. A critical aspect of this stage is to build a foundation in the community for policy and environmental change.

Step 2: Engage multi-sectoral stakeholders in policy discussions and form early partnerships.

Through various forms of knowledge transfer within the ‘groundwork’ initiation stage, a second step for public health and planning professionals is to engage other multi-sectoral actors in addressing shared policy concerns. The inclusion of a wide range of government and non-government stakeholders in early stages of policy and environmental change permits the sharing of multiple perspectives; creates an opportunity to negotiate positions and partnerships; and facilitates the exchange of ideas and policy options that can help to achieve a number of cross-sectoral priorities. Waterloo Region’s Food System Roundtable (FSRT) was discussed as a vehicle for concerned food system stakeholders to register their concerns with the Region and was established by PH as a way to generate multi-sectoral input into potential food system policy and environmental change solutions. The creation of ‘food policy councils’ (FPC) as a way to engage and inform a broad range of stakeholders has been shown as an important emerging approach to developing sustainable food systems (Schiff, 2008). In Waterloo Region, the recruitment of a planner to the FSRT was an intentional way for PH/FSRT to inform, and reciprocally, be informed by a regional policy and planning expert with mutual food system interests. PH and planning professionals in other jurisdictions can look for similar opportunities to engage in dialogue, bridge common interests, and share relevant professional perspectives at an individual- or organizational-level through participation in a FPC.

Step 3: Negotiate positions and partnerships. Multi-sectoral engagement is closely tied to a third step in the GENERATE Change Model which is the negotiation of positions and partnerships as a way to increase one’s legitimacy and/or ability to participate effectively in the process of change. At this stage within a regional organization, government actors may choose to strengthen an existing relationship by creating organizational capacity; reducing department silos and increasing opportunities to transfer knowledge and ideas internally. A joint effort to hire and recruit a professional planner liaison to work with PH staff was an effective approach to policy and environmental change in Waterloo Region. In the US, other types of new positions are being

developed, such as a Food System Planning Policy Director (Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, nd), and illustrate how progressive community planning departments outside of Waterloo Region have also begun negotiating new roles and responsibilities in addressing local food system issues. Inter-departmental secondments and standing working groups may likewise be appropriate approaches to negotiating new positions and partnerships to support legitimate action toward policy and environmental change.

Personal tensions, overlapping mandates, and competition for public recognition between food system advocacy groups were identified as an unanticipated outcome of PH's external partnership with Foodlink. Other unanticipated barriers to food system change were the tensions and price wars resulting from PH's Neighbourhood Market Initiative. These findings suggest that in the absence of negotiation, and despite good intentions to improve food system issues, there may be negative impacts in other parts, or sectors, within the local food system. Increasingly, this type of systems-thinking is being considered and integrated into approaches to improve public health (Leischow, Best, Trochim, Clark, Gallagher, Marcus et al., 2008) and the agri-food sector (Best, 2007). For example, greater urban access to healthy, local food to support low-income and food-insecure consumers may have a negative impact on farmer viability if food prices are too low or if growers are not fairly compensated. Thus, while PH and planning professionals can work to promote fair multi-sectoral food system initiatives, wider community dialogue, negotiation, and regional coordination is necessary to ensure that certain community goals, or parts of the system, are not promoted at the expense of others.

Steps 4 and 5: Exchange knowledge (ideas and policy options) and recognize points of intersection for policy and environmental change. An important fourth step in the GENERATE Change Model is the exchange of knowledge (e.g., relevant insight from the community, research and practice-based ideas and policy options). This step is an important opportunity to recognize and connect the relevant points of intersection among multi-sectoral stakeholders. While knowledge exchange is an ongoing process across each of the steps in the proposed model, the agreement and realization of ways to achieve policy coordination across sectors and regional departments is an important pre-cursor to multi-sectoral action in Step 6. Similarly, Steps 4 and 5 offer a way for public health and planning professionals to help assess the

acceptability of various proposed policy options. Critical findings from this research showed that the regional food system is an important policy area, or point of intersection, where public and private-sector actors can align interests to address a number of mutual community concerns including: environmental and agricultural protection; healthy communities; urban intensification; farmer viability; and public health. Examples of collaborative public-private initiatives described in this chapter also point to important economic considerations as a way to attract the interest and support of private sector actors.

- **local champions**
- **capacity building**
- **awareness raising**
- **new government roles, motivations & opportunities**

Step 6: Align agendas, establish a common issue frame and set a vision for change. A critical senior-level food

system champion in PH opportunistically aligned the Department's 'food systems' and 'healthy communities'

agendas with other regional priorities and attracted the support and policy attention of RP. Joint efforts to raise awareness and build capacity for organizational and community-level changes have been discussed previously and were important ways in which PH and RP worked to align their community interests. Key facilitators of food system policy and environmental change shown from this research were the use of 'strategic positioning' and the drive, vision, persistence of leaders and local champions. Based on this case study, it is clear that for public health and planning professionals in other jurisdictions, significant progress toward supportive healthy policies can be achieved when policy actors are politically astute and engage in ongoing monitoring of the decision making environment. This reinforces the importance of responding quickly to a policy window, seizing opportunities to raise political and public awareness of the policy issues and working collaborative to shift values and cultural norms through aligned agendas, a common issue frame and a vision for social change.

The ability to adopt non-traditional roles was also found to be an important facilitating factor in policy and environmental change. For PH and planning professionals in other jurisdictions, similar changes may be needed to broaden the scope of traditional areas of practice, explore unconventional partnerships and redefine the current status quo with respect to responding to and addressing unresolved policy and environmental concerns.

- **regional coordination**
- **multi-sectoral action**
- **public-private partnerships**
- **government support**
- **planning flexibility**

Step 7: Transfer expert insight to decision makers. Experts in public health and planning can help to define new roles for regional decision makers by challenging the current status quo with respect to food governance, engaging local

and regional Councillors in food system dialogue and advocating for greater public sector interest and investment in food-related activity. The adoption of food policies in the ROP is evidence that through incremental changes, PH and planning professionals can affect important shifts in government’s motivation and recognition of the multiple points of intersection within a food systems agenda.

Gaps in regional coordination were identified as important barriers to food system change. PH and planning experts can address coordination concerns by working internally with other regional or local government departments and decision makers to raise awareness of the impact of policy and planning decisions on health and by advocating for reform. This is consistent with the Ottawa Charter’s early recommendations (Health and Welfare Canada, 1986) and other more recent approaches including Health Impact Assessments (HIA) (Cole & Fielding, 2007) and ‘Health in All Policies’ (HAiP) (Puska & Ståhl, 2010). PH and planning professionals can also work outside government with the private sector through public-private partnerships and other initiatives to better understand industry perspectives and achieve a win-win scenario to improve health and local business interests. A small, yet growing field of food system research captures early food industry perspectives on food system sustainability (Guptill & Wilkins, 2002; Wasserman, 2009) and may offer relevant insight to public health and planning professionals working toward food system change. Foodlink Waterloo Region’s collaboration with PH to promote local economic development and farmer viability through the popular BLBF! map also offers relevant insight into the importance of strong, early connections to the local agricultural and business communities as a way to establish trust and support subsequent multi-sectoral food system initiatives. In regions where township mayors and other elected officials have ties to the agricultural community and/or strong rural-orientations, political sensitivities may help to secure the necessary government interest and investment in local food system initiatives.

Step 8: Evaluate policy and environmental change. Lastly, with respect to the anticipation of physical environment changes in support of regional food system activity, PH and planning professionals can also begin an early assessment of the type, number and location of various ‘alternative’ retail food outlets (ARFOs) in their communities. Tracking this type of data could be used as an evaluation measure of the impact of supportive policy and planning changes in the availability and accessibility of healthy, local food in the community food environment. This was suggested by Wegener & Hanning (2010a) in light of identified research gaps concerning the contribution of ‘alternative’ retail outlets to a healthy community food environment and based on earlier research measuring the nutrition environment in and around retail stores (Glanz, Sallis, Saelens & Frank, 2007). Since their early work in this area, Glanz et al., (2005, 2007) have been actively promoting the measurement of various aspects of the community food environment resulting in a strong academic and public health research response in Canada (Minaker, Raine & Cash, 2009; Naylor, Bridgewater, Purcell, Ostry & Vander Wekken, 2010; Hemphill, Raine, Spence & Smoyer-Tomic, 2008) and the US (McKinnon, Reedy, Handy & Brown Rodgers, 2009; Glanz, 2009; Lytle, 2009; Nelson & Story, 2009; Kipke, Iverson, Moore, Booker, Ruelas, Peters, et al., 2007; Reedy, Krebs-Smith & Bosire, 2010; Saelens, Glanz, Sallis & Frank, 2007; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2010). This study collected descriptive data on various types and forms of ARFOs that are emerging in the regional community. Many new forms of ARFOs were identified that, through the support of public health and planning professionals and members of the FSRT, had sought recent planning permission, licensing or zoning amendments to serve as healthy retail and distribution outlets. Although an exact count and precise location of these was beyond the scope of this research, this research offers rich qualitative insight into the community-capacity building efforts needed to establish healthy retail outlets within the community food system environment as a feature that has been overlooked by earlier, largely quantitative, studies of food environments. Alternatively, others have recommended that planning professionals use a community food assessment as an initial step to determine the food-related needs of a community (Pothukuchi, 2004). Whether used as an initial assessment tool, or for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, the quantitative or qualitative data collected from this type of process can be integrated back into earlier steps in the GENERATE Change Model to improve and support further policy and environmental changes.

The GENERATE Change Model is consistent with the ideas and direction of other professional groups. Specifically, some groups have begun to develop community-oriented tools to identify points of intersection for food system change. Whole Measures for Community Food Systems (Whole Measures CFS) is one example, recently developed by a Working Group of the American Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), for organizations and communities to use when considering and evaluating the broader impact of food system activities and initiatives (Community Food Security Coalition, 2011). Whole Measures CFS is being used to evaluate food system activity, plan subsequent food system action and direction, and promote dialogue among community stakeholders concerning organizational and community food system change. Whole Measures CFS may serve as a complement to the GENERATE Change Model's Step 3 as a way to help negotiate positions, partnerships and intended outcomes of multi-sectoral participation in food system policy and environmental change activities.

In summary, this section provided insight into areas where health and planning professionals may have the greatest potential to affect food system change based on findings from Waterloo Region. Although not exhaustive, this work complements other research that has provided a much more detailed focus on how to integrate food system issues into professional practice (Wilkins, Lapp, Tagtow and Roberts, 2010; American Dietetic Association, 2007). The findings from this research lead to the development of the GENERATE Change Model as a guide for public health and planning professionals to create healthy public policies and healthy community environments in their respective areas of practice. The practical 8-step process emerged from an examination of 'what worked' with respect to food system policy making and food system environmental change in Waterloo Region and can be used in other jurisdictions as a way to engage multi-sectoral stakeholders in a collaborative process of policy and environmental change. The steps include: (1) initiating change through '*groundwork*'; (2) *engaging* multi-sectoral stakeholders; (3) *negotiating* positions and partnerships (establishing legitimacy); (4) *exchanging* knowledge; (5) *recognizing* points of intersection; (6) *aligning* agendas, establishing a common issue frame, and setting a vision for change; (7) *transferring* expert knowledge to decision makers; and (8) *evaluating* policy and environmental change. The steps are sufficiently general to apply to other policy areas, other jurisdictions and other levels of government however

further research may be needed to assess the true value of the model's transferability and applicability.

8.4 Implications for Research: Towards a New Framework for Understanding 'Coordinated' and 'Collaborative' Multi-Sectoral Action to GENERATE Policy and Environmental Changes to Improve Food Access and Other Community Priorities

The intent of using constructivist GT methods was to pay attention to participants' language and the meanings on which key words and terms rest. "Food access" had different meanings to participants based on their role and position in the regional food system. More research is needed to understand how these meanings change at various points in time, and under different circumstances. Similar public health terms such as 'community food security' and 'food deserts' can also pose a challenge to collaborative, multi-sectoral efforts to affect policy and environmental change. This has important implications for research in that further investigation into the subtle nuances in multi-sectoral stakeholders' understanding of key terms and concepts may reveal the potential for greater agreement and alignment of interests on certain policy issues. More research is needed to help professional and community groups establish a common, more universal language to support collaborative, multi-sectoral action.

The focus of this research on access to healthy, local food within the regional community food environment responds to a call for more ecological investigation into the influences of fruit and vegetable consumption (Richard, Gauvin & Raine, 2011). Figure 6 presents a theoretical framework for research that incorporates a new view of coordinated and collaborative multi-sectoral action to address food access and other community priorities. The framework is based on findings from Waterloo Region and incorporates the GENERATE Change Model discussed above. It integrates the key overarching themes and sub-themes from this research and identifies areas where PH and planning professionals can work to create multi-sectoral partnerships to affect policy, and physical and social environmental change. Based on the socio-ecological model of environmental influences of individuals' access to healthy, local food, this framework depicts a series of concentric circles to reflect levels of influence on healthy retail food access at the community-level. . The framework is limited to the community- and policy-level influences of food access and does not consider the interpersonal and organizational processes that are

relevant influences in dietary behaviour. Here, the focus was the way regional government and community actors can organize to positively shape social, physical and macro-level environments to improve individuals' access to healthy retail, and other regional priorities. A limitation of this framework is that it is based on a shared construction of participants' lived experience in Waterloo Region and the PI's interpretation of that experience within the food system policy making context. This can be tested through future research.

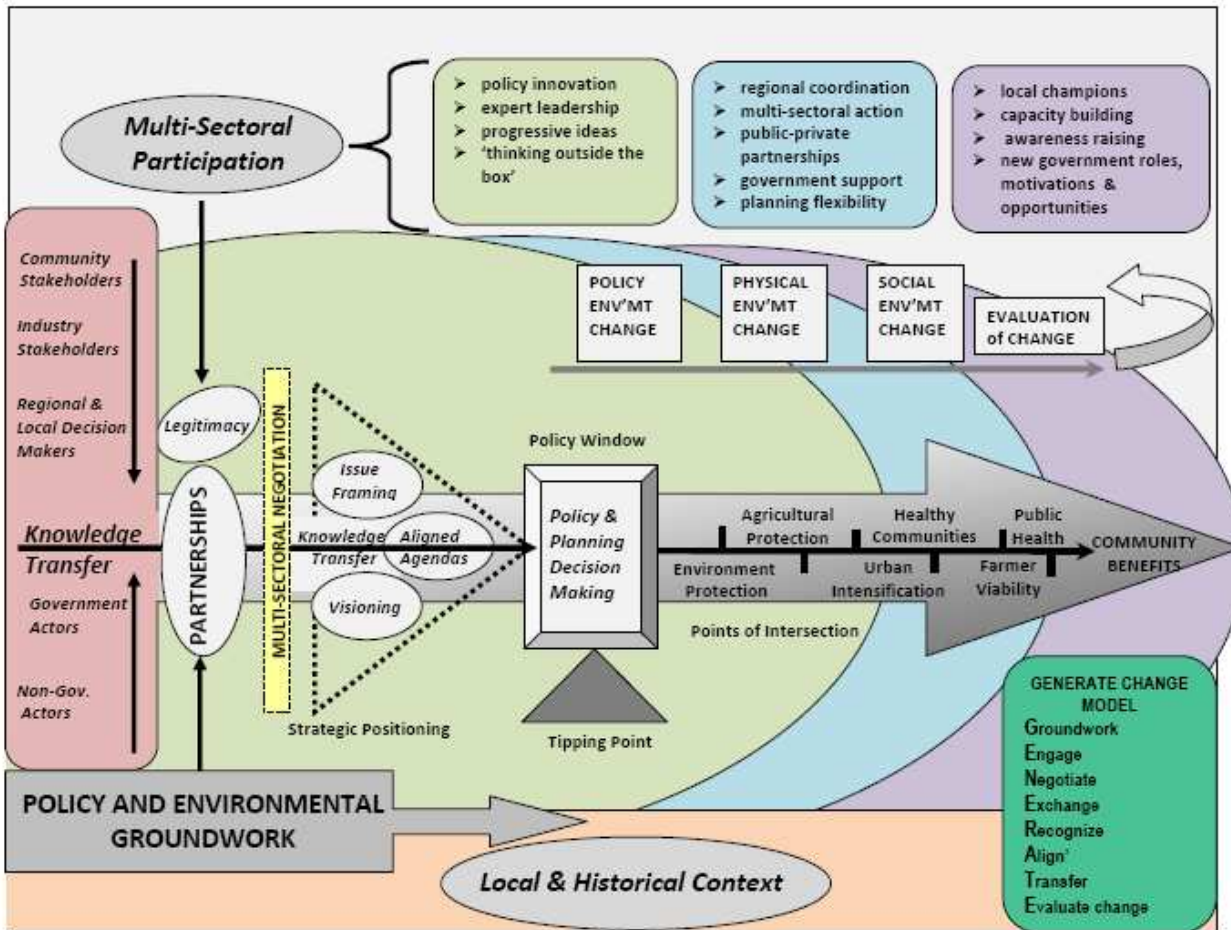


Figure 6: A Theoretical Framework to Guide Multi-Sectoral Collaboration and GENERATE Policy and Environmental Change at the Regional Level

The food system planning conceptual framework presented in Figure 6 offers a theoretical foundation for further scholarly research by reducing the complexity of food system activity in Waterloo Region into key themes that can be explored in other settings, contexts, and regional jurisdictions. Overarching themes and subthemes, including: legitimacy, partnerships,

participation, knowledge transfer and strategic positioning (i.e., agenda alignment, visioning and issue framing), although significant findings in Waterloo Region, will need to be evaluated for their transferability and applicability in other jurisdictions.

8.4.1 Future Research

In Waterloo Region, municipalities are moving forward with implementation plans to support the ROP's long-range vision for a strong and diverse regional food system. Further assessment will be needed to evaluate changes in the number, type and location of retail outlets at the local level as a way to provide evidence for the impact of the Region's supportive food system planning and policy direction. It is anticipated that local level planning flexibility and other supportive government decisions to allow the establishment and expansion of new forms of 'alternative' healthy retail in urban and rural areas will create positive future changes in the CFSE and increase resident's access to healthy, local food. Further research will be needed to assess whether these environmental changes lead to improvements in individuals' dietary behaviours.

Whole Measures CFS can be used to evaluate progress toward the creation of a vibrant and sustainable food system and a healthy CFSE. Specifically, the tool can be used to bring government actors and interested food system participants in Waterloo Region together to plan and evaluate food system planning outcomes from a number of multi-sectoral perspectives. Using findings from the current case study, an example of the application of *Whole Measures CFS* provides an overview of the tool's fields, value-based practices and planning and evaluation rubric is shown in Appendix I.

The tool promotes broad, multi-sectoral consideration of the impact of food system activity and encourages collaborative community partnerships. In Waterloo Region, critical strategic partnerships were developed to advance a number of government and community agendas. To evaluate progress using *Whole Measures CFS*, a Regional Food System Action Plan (AP) could be developed to outline key mandates, responsibilities and roles of food system networking groups and stakeholders and to document direction for future activity. The Region's planning liaison (a hired professional planner working in PH), elected members of the FSRT or a community-university research alliance (CURA) could share responsibility for the AP if regional

funds are limited. The AP would serve as a knowledge dissemination tool to inform the activities of other jurisdictions and contribute to the body of food system planning knowledge for research and practice. While similar to PH's 'Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region', the AP would likely be more specific in scope and informed by a wider representation of the regional community.

8.5 Study Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of this research was the establishment of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC informed early stages of the project, offered direction on the recruitment of participants, and will be used to ensure that relevant findings contribute to ongoing food system planning activity in the Region. However, future research is needed to expand the current study's assessment of the food system policy making process to include policy evaluation. While current members represent academia (including health, sustainable agriculture and food policy disciplines), government (regional planning and public health), and the not-for-profit sector, the Committee could be expanded to include representatives from the private sector for a *whole* impact measure of the Region's food system initiatives.

It was recognized in advance that this study has several limitations. The research took advantage of a timely, natural experiment in Waterloo Region. Multi-sectoral participant interviews were conducted following Council's approval of the ROP but *prior* to the implementation of any subsequent food-related activity at the local level. Thus, while the results offer rich, in-depth insight into regional policy making, roles and motivations of key food system actors, and key barriers and facilitators of food systems change, a key limitation of the study was that it captured a snapshot of the Region at only one point in time. Thus, the nature of the findings serve only as a useful starting point, or baseline measure, for further policy and environmental evaluation research. Specifically, more research is needed at the municipal level to assess planners' interpretation of Section 3F's food system policies and to capture changes in local food system activity. Despite the need for further research, this study was the first of its kind to consider regional food system planning from a variety of multi-sectoral perspectives and offered a unique approach to the assessment of the CFSE.

The convenience sample was a potential limitation of this study. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling based on recommendations from the PAC and through a personal contact of the principal investigator (PI) in the PH Department. All study participants who were recruited agreed to participate in the study. However, PH staff were encouraged to participate by senior-level management which may have influenced the responses, direction, and content of the research interviews. Similarly, due to PH's active role in establishing both FL and the FSRT, and in light of close relationships in the food system networking community, most of the regional food system participants in this sample had some connection to PH. Additional efforts to recruit study participants with no experience with FL, the FSRT or PH could reveal new insights into regional food system planning activity and potentially lead to the identification of different needs and interests. Although the PI was known to several participants prior to the study, this was not considered a limitation in that it contributed to the sharing of more detailed information, exposed personal biases and positions, and provided rich insight into the sub-politics and tensions between stakeholders that may not have otherwise been obtained without an established level of rapport and trust.

A key strength of this study was the inclusion of all (but one) members of Regional Council (n=15) and senior- and management-level staff in the Region's PH and RP Departments. Councillors' participation in this research was critical and helped to overcome a previously noted limitation in that decision makers had access to a variety of inputs and resident perspectives independent of PH. Their participation (and genuine interest!) contributed to a significant level of detail, depth, and insight from regional decision makers and professional experts into regional food system planning in general, and the Region's strategic policy direction and political motivations in particular. Each of their perspectives was carefully considered, and reflective of a deep commitment to leadership and excellence. Senior-level staff experts were also very candid about 'big picture' realities and future opportunities and shed light on important contextual factors that helped in the analysis of the findings. A key limitation of the semi-structured interviews was that they resulted in lengthy discourses on complex issues and detailed participant explanations for food system planning processes. In an effort to remain "true" to the voices of participants, and to allow overarching themes to emerge from the data, the PI spent a

significant amount of time at various stages of grounded theory analysis and may have erred in the presentation of the findings by including too many direct quotes.

8.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the research served to answer an important and timely question concerning '*What works, and what doesn't?*' with respect to regional food system policy, planning and access to food. At the time of this study, many government and non-government groups were engaged in work on various platforms and positions for a food strategy for Canada (PFPP, 2011; CAPI, 2011; NDP, nd; LP, nd). Although little progress has been made nationally, this research may offer insight for food policy considerations at provincial and federal levels. From a planning perspective, the findings signal the need for important provincial consideration for a revised policy framework to support food system planning action at regional and local levels. This can help to achieve regional and local planning goals to protect agricultural land, reduce gas emissions associated with long-distance food transport, improve local economic development and support farmer viability through a strong and diverse regional food system. Similarly, from a public health perspective, supportive community action can help drive change and promote positive improvements in community food system environments. With committed government support and regional coordination, various local food system initiatives could be promoted to increase access to healthy, local food and contribute to important improvements in population dietary health over time.

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APPENDIX A

An Ecological Framework Depicting the Multiple Influences on What People Eat (Story et al., 2008)

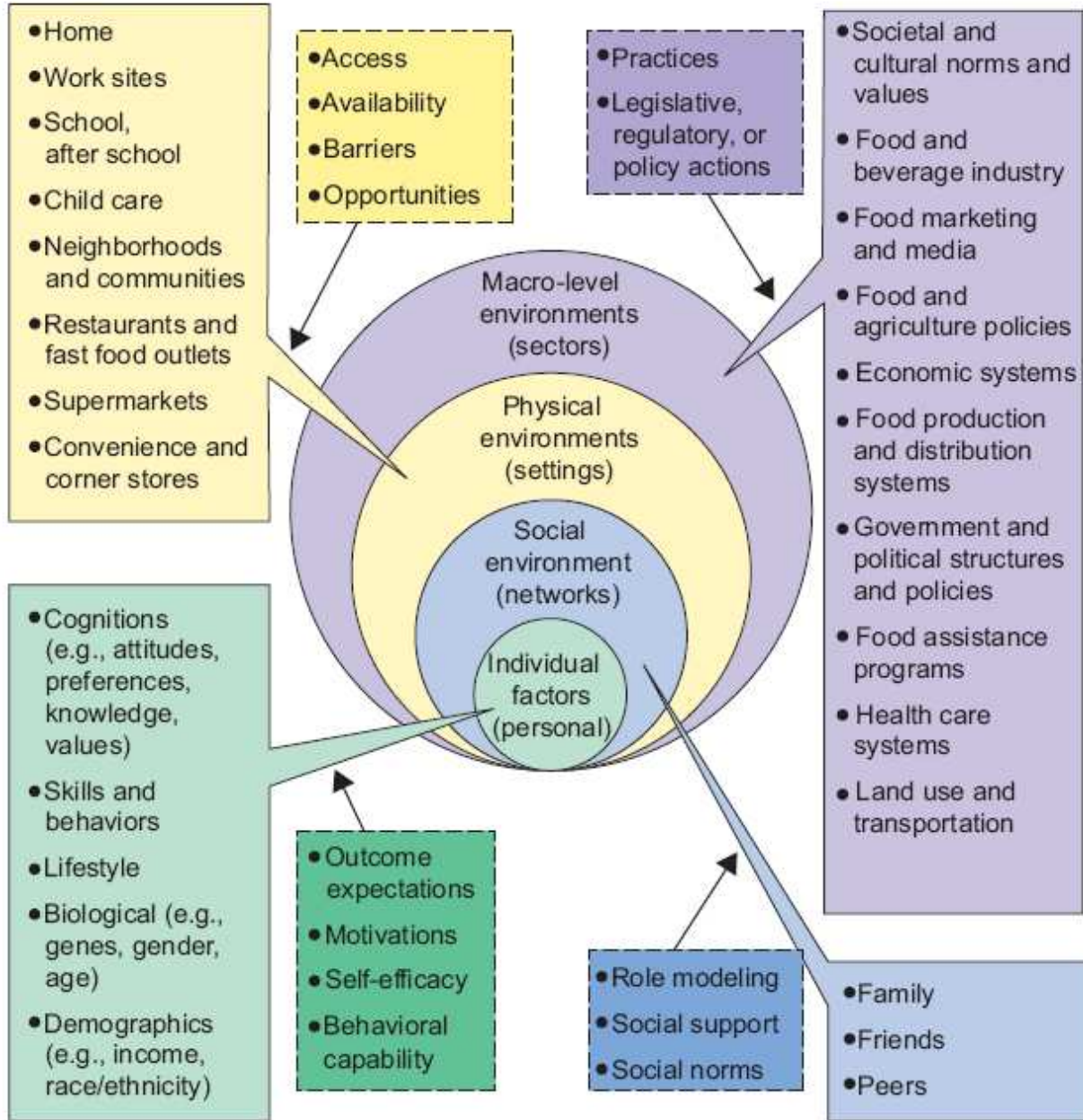


Figure 1
An ecological framework depicting the multiple influences on what people eat.

APPENDIX B

Concepts and Measures of “Alternative” Retail Food Outlets: Considerations for Facilitating Access to Healthy, Local Food. (*Journal of Hunger & Environmental Nutrition*, 5, 158-173)

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Concepts and Measures of “Alternative” Retail Food Outlets: Considerations for Facilitating Access to Healthy, Local Food

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Over the last decade, there has been a notable increase in the number of “alternative” ways of obtaining food in cities and communities. Alongside “mainstream” food stores like supermarkets and grocery stores, new “less conventional” retail outlets are emerging. To capture these food outlets as part of the built community nutrition environment, it is important to expand current concepts and measures to include alternative retail food outlets (ARFO), such as farmers’ markets, farm stores, produce stands, and farm linkage outlets in schools. Concepts, measures, and methodologies used to assess retail food stores and nutrition environments are reviewed, followed by a discussion of their relevance and applicability to select forms of ARFOs in communities.

KEYWORDS food system planning, farmers’ markets, alternative food networks, food environment, assessment, community food security, policy, community nutrition, food distribution, physical environments

INTRODUCTION

“Alternative” Retail Food Outlets

Over the last decade, there has been a notable increase in the number of “alternative” ways of obtaining food in cities and communities. Alongside “mainstream” food stores like supermarkets and grocery stores, new “less

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APPENDIX C

Regional Official Plan (ROP) Section 3F (www.region.waterloo.on.ca)

3.F Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods

The regional food system consists of the chain of activities related to the production, processing, distribution, consumption and eventual disposal of food. A strong and diverse regional food system provides many benefits to the community. It facilitates peoples' access to locally grown and other healthy foods, which contributes to healthier eating choices and the achievement of broader public health objectives. It also encourages a range of food destinations within easy walking distance of where people live and work. Such a system helps shorten the distance that food travels and that people travel to buy food, thereby reducing the demand on transportation *infrastructure* and the growth in vehicle emissions. As well, a strong regional food system supports local farmers and contributes to the vitality and economic strength of rural communities and Waterloo Region as a whole. For these reasons, this Plan seeks to strengthen and diversify the regional food system.

- 3.F.1 The Region will support the development of a strong regional food system through the policies in this Plan that:
- (a) establish a Countryside Line to protect the countryside for long-term agricultural use;
 - (b) permit a full range of *agricultural uses, farm-related uses and secondary uses* to support the economic viability of local farms;
 - (c) provide for a mix of land uses, including food destinations, within close proximity of each other to facilitate residents' access to locally grown and other healthy food products; and
 - (d) provide a range of *human services* including *affordable housing, subsidized daycare, employment and income supports* that seek to ensure all residents have adequate incomes to be able to afford to buy locally grown and other healthy food products.
- 3.F.2 Area Municipalities will establish policies in their official plans to permit *temporary farmers' markets*, wherever appropriate, in existing and newly planned neighbourhoods, particularly in areas where access to locally grown food and other healthy food products may currently be limited.
- 3.F.3 Area Municipalities will establish policies in their official plans that encourage community gardens and rooftop gardens.
- 3.F.4 The Region will support community gardens, wherever feasible, by granting access to Regional lands, and by providing rain barrels, composting bins, compost, wood mulch or other forms of in-kind support.
- 3.F.5 The Region will collaborate with stakeholders to continue to implement initiatives supporting the development of a strong regional food system.
- 3.F.6 The Region supports food system planning as a means of improving the regional food system.

APPENDIX D

Annotated Bibliography of Public Health Reports and Studies Related to Waterloo Region's Food System (www.chd.region.waterloo.on.ca)

Note: All reports and studies listed are available from Region of Waterloo Public Health's website. (www.region.waterloo.on.ca/ph - click on "Resources", then "Health Status & Research Studies" then "Food")



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH

[The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Waterloo Region 2008](#)

Author: Pat Vanderkooy

Published: November 2008

Conducted by Public Health departments in Ontario since 1998, the Nutritious Food Basket is a food costing protocol that measures the basic cost of healthy eating. This report summarizes the data collected in May 2008 by Region of Waterloo Public at nine different grocery stores throughout the Region.

[The Cost of Eating Well: The Health Impact of Food Insecurity](#)

Author: Grace Bermingham

Published: November 2008

This paper examines food insecurity at the household and individual level largely resulting from poverty. It outlines the extent and depth of food insecurity in Waterloo Region and outlines the far reaching health consequences of food insecurity. This report is part of a series of reports that looks at how individual, environmental, social, and economic factors impact our health in Waterloo Region.

[Neighbourhood Markets Initiative – Evaluation Report](#)

Author: Judy Maan Miedema

Published: February 2008

This report describes the findings of a process evaluation of the two neighbourhood markets that operated in Waterloo Region for 14 weeks during the summer of 2007. The process evaluation has four objectives:

- To document the process of setting up and running the markets
- To determine if they were meeting the produce needs of shoppers
- To determine if they created sustainable opportunities for partners
- To begin to determine if they had improved access to fresh fruits and vegetables and resulted in the increased consumption of fresh produce

A Healthy Community Food System Plan for Waterloo Region

Authors: Judy Maan Miedema & Katherine Pigott

Published: April 2007

This report is the follow-up to the interim report “Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region” published in November 2005. This report presents findings from a key informant consultation process, presents the community food system plan that the consultation process developed, and informs further Public Health action related to food system themes by setting out three recommendations for further action.

A Study of Redundant Trade in Waterloo Region

Author: Judy Maan Miedema

Published: February 2006

Redundant trade is the simultaneous exporting and importing of the same product to and from the same region, regardless of the season. This study looks at the extent to which imported foods are available for sale during peak availability of local products. A comparison is then made between the imported products and those produced locally in terms of price, availability and quality. Finally, the report looks at a range of strategies that would support import substitution – the replacement of imports with locally produced foods.

Region of Waterloo Food Flow Analysis Study

Authors: Harry Cummings & Associates Inc., (for Region of Waterloo Public Health)

Published: November 2005

This study tracks the flow of food into and out of the Region of Waterloo. It looks at the percentage of selected foods consumed in Waterloo Region that have been grown, raised or processed here.

Urban Agriculture Report

Author: Bethany Masereeuw

Published: November 2005

This report explores the benefits of community gardens, rooftop gardens (and green roofs), and backyard gardens as found in a literature review and summary. It also describes the wider health benefits related to urban agriculture and its potential to offset many of the negative effects of population growth and increased density. An inventory of urban agriculture activity in Waterloo Region is also provided.

Food Miles: Environmental Implications of Food Imports to Waterloo Region

Author: Marc Xuereb

Published: November 2005

The concept of “food miles” describes the distance that food travels from the location where it is grown or raised to the location where it is consumed. This report calculates the average distances travelled by imports to Waterloo Region of selected food items as well as greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with their transport. The GHG emissions for each of 58 food items chosen

were compared to the expected GHG emissions for the same food items if they had been grown, raised or produced in Waterloo Region.

Toward a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region (Interim Report)

Authors: Marc Xuereb & Ellen Desjardins

Published: November 2005

This interim report integrates the findings of earlier studies produced or commissioned by Region of Waterloo Public Health relating to local agriculture, rural health, food availability, buying practices, environmental issues and dietary intake of the population. Connections are made between a community food system approach and the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. It further describes the state of the local food system as of November 2005 and documents the impacts it is having on public health. The report also looks at trends for the future, highlighting challenges and opportunities presented by population growth and demographic change. Finally, it provides objectives and preliminary strategies to guide further local food systems planning in Waterloo Region.

Promoting Local Farms in Waterloo Region: An Evaluation of the Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map

Author: Marc Xuereb

Published: March 2005

The Buy Local! Buy Fresh! Map is a consumer guide to food products grown or raised on farms in Waterloo Region. It began as a joint venture between Region of Waterloo Public Health and Foodlink Waterloo Region in 2002. An initial evaluation was conducted in 2002 through a survey of participating farmers as well as a survey of consumers who used the Map. Given the substantial increase in the number of farms on the 2004 Map and ongoing interest in the Map's impact, Region of Waterloo Public Health undertook another evaluation of the Map in 2004. This report presents the findings from this 2004 evaluation.

A Glance at Access to Food

Author: Region of Waterloo Public Health

Published: September 2004

This report presents a preliminary discussion of the affordability and availability from a geo-spatial perspective of food in Waterloo Region as key factors in enabling people to eat a healthy diet. The report includes a map of the location of grocery stores and other food retail outlets in urban areas in Waterloo Region.

A Fresh Approach to Food: Local Food Buying in Waterloo Region

Author: Marc Xuereb

Published: February 2004

This report presents the findings from six questions that were asked as part of the 2003 Kitchener-Waterloo Metropolitan Area Survey dealing with consumer attitudes and practices related to buying local food.

How the Food System Contributes to the Quality of Air We Breathe: A Literature Review

Authors: Kim Lamers-Bellio & Christina Fuller

Published: March 2003; Revised September 2004

This review outlines the environmental impact of food production, processing and distribution on air quality in a Canadian context. Linkages between specific types of food system gas emissions and air quality are examined. How livestock factor into the creation of agriculturally induced greenhouse gas emissions, as well as other agricultural gas emissions are debated.

Growing Food and Economy: Economic Impact Study of the Agriculture and Food-Related Sectors in Waterloo Region

Authors: Harry Cummings and Associates Inc.

Published: October 2003

This study looks at the role played by the agri-food industry in the economy of Waterloo Region. To gauge the relative importance of food and agriculture in Waterloo Region's economy particular attention is paid to sales, employment and when possible value added data, for the three sectors of interest - primary, secondary and tertiary. The Study helped to better understand the nature and economic significance, in terms of dollars and jobs, of the local agricultural economy and presents eight recommendations to ensure the local agricultural economy continues to thrive.

Optimal Nutrition Environment for Waterloo Region, 2006-2046

Authors: Ellen Desjardins and Rod MacRae

Published: May 2005

This study argues that a regional food supply can effect the "nutrition environment" of a local population, in that the food produced, distributed and sold within a region can determine in great part how a region eats. It suggests necessary changes to the food consumption patterns of Waterloo Region residents to create an "optimal nutrition environment." This "optimal nutritional environment" would meet the recommendation stated in the *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* and *Canada's Guidelines to Healthy Eating* respectively. It then asks whether the current production of vegetables, fruits, legumes and whole grains compare with the amount needed for this Optimal Nutrition Environment and looks at the opportunities for Waterloo Region agriculture if it were readjust its production to create this "optimal nutrition environment" in 2006, 2026, and 2046 respectively.

APPENDIX E

Study Question Guides 1A and 1B

A. QUESTIONS FOR REGIONAL DECISION MAKERS (1A)

Would you mind if I recorded our discussion?

1. Thinking back to when your Council was considering the first draft of the ROP, did Council have an overall plan or agenda at that time?

- Priority of the ROP relative to other issues on policy agenda; were there other issues related to food, health, agriculture, economic development, rural communities, environmental sustainability, etc. on the agenda? Were there other key public health/health promotion issues/ongoing concerns on the agenda at the time?
- If yes, how did Section 3F of the ROP fit with that agenda?

2. Do you recall any issues raised concerning the ROP's proposed commitment to support the regional food system? (that is, through the policies outlined in Section 3F)

- Who raised the issue(s)?

2b. What reasons (arguments), if any, were given – *for or against* – any of the proposed actions or policies outlined in the ROP concerning the regional food system?

- Local/regional concerns? (regional/municipal tensions)
- Who was making this argument?

3. When Council was considering the adoption of the ROP, what were the major issues (if any), that the Councillors discussed concerning Section 3F?

4. What information and/or issues affected the Council's position on the inclusion of Section 3F in the ROP?

- *Organizations, interest groups, political or public demand*
- *Other governmental priorities*
- *Economic issues*
- *Change in view re. nature of the problem*
- *Published literature (mass media, scientific studies) i.e., studies related to role of local government in promoting health/protecting public health*
- *Public health/dietary evidence of improved health outcomes*

5. Did your position on the inclusion of Section 3F (or any of its subsections) differ from that of Council's? If yes, how and why?

6a. What were the different views on the issue that were presented to Council by advocates for or against supporting the regional food system (through planning actions and policies in the ROP)?

- Which if any of these views did you find persuasive, and why?

- Which if any did you not find persuasive, and why?

7a. Over the course of the ROP development (or Council's discussions regarding its adoption), did any important events occur that affected how Council saw the problem [insert problem]? (Other problems: the need to strengthen or support the local food/agriculture economy; the need to reduce carbon emissions associated with food transport? Support for local agriculture?)

7b. Were there any important events that affected how Council saw possible solutions to the problem (i.e., food access, rural economic development, environmental sustainability)?

- *At what point in the process did these events occur?*
- *How did these events affect the process of adopting the ROP?*

8. As a Councillor, what is your current opinion of the Region's role in food system planning and local food policy?

9. Thinking about Section 3F of the ROP in particular, were there any groups, organizations or individuals that were important or influential in your decision concerning this section?

10. How did they inform your thinking about your decision to:

- support or not support subsections with Section 3F (that is, specific policies and actions that would facilitate access to locally grown and other healthy foods)
- *Organizations, groups or individuals that had the greatest influence on how you felt about the specific policies and actions in Section 3F?*
- *Were they for or against the inclusion of Section 3F? What were their arguments?*

11. What did these organizations, groups or individuals DO to make their opinions known to yourself and the other Councillors?

- In your opinion, what did they do that was effective?
- What did they do that was ineffective?

12. Did Council communicate or share information with other municipalities or levels of government (federal or provincial), directly or indirectly, regarding Section 3F (or other food-related sections) in the adoption of the ROP (or in the ROP consideration process)?

- If yes, why?
- What impact did this ultimately have on Council's decision(s) about the adoption of the ROP and/or the inclusion of Section 3F?

Probes:

- *When in the process did this communication/sharing occur?*
- *How did this occur?*
- *Councillors or staff from another municipality speaking to Council?*

- *Federal or provincial assistance?*

13. Are there characteristics about or things happening in the Region that made it easier or harder to have Section 3F included (and adopted as part of the ROP)?

- Were there any regional initiatives going on that impacted the planning and development process?
- Probe for historical influences or tidbits – only if relevant

14. Were there people, that is, specific individuals, in the Region (or elsewhere) that made it easier or harder to get a food system planning section/access to locally grown and other healthy foods section and/or food-related language in the ROP?

15. Were there any organizations, groups or individuals not involved in the process that you expected would be?

- If yes, who were they? Why do you think they were not involved?

16. Are there other people involved in the development (i.e., language inclusion) and/or discussions of Section 3F within the context of the ROP's adoption whom you think I should interview?

17. With respect to the next steps of policy adoption and implementation within the 7 area municipalities, can you foresee any barriers (or challenges) that could affect the goal to strengthen the regional food system?

- If yes, what opportunities or other relevant factors could help to overcome these?

B: QUESTIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS (1B)

Section A: ROP Policy Development Process/Historical Context

I am interested in the regional planning practices and policies around access to locally grown and other healthy foods in the Region of Waterloo. In speaking about the Regional Official Plan's food-related section(s), I am referring to the policies and implementation programs (i.e., actions) outlined in Section 3F. The first set of questions is aimed at understanding the development process of Section 3F. As you answer these questions, keep in mind that I am interested in your involvement in the process (i.e., your contribution, if any, to the development, idea conception, consultation process, drafts, stakeholder engagement, or relevant food system-related work in the Region, etc).

Initiation

1. Do you recall when (or how) the idea of an ‘Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods’ section for the ROP was first raised?

(OR when did you first hear about this section of the ROP?)

2. Do you recall who raised the idea first? (i.e., who got the ball rolling on the need to have this section in the ROP)
3. What reasons were given for needing (or not needing) to include this (type of) section in the ROP?

Organization & Role of the Individual

4. What was your role in (OR Did you contribute to) the development of Section 3F? (i.e., what did you do, was it related to your job, what was your job title at the time?)
5. What was the role of your organization in the development of Section 3F? (i.e., what, if anything, did your organization do?)
6. When was your organization involved in the development of Section 3F? (i.e., “at what points in time”).

Strategies (How it happened, and which groups played a role)

7. What did your organization do that worked well for it (i.e., helped them advance a desired outcome or maintain their position?)
8. What did your organization do that did not work well for it?
9. From your perspective, what key drivers or factors do you think lead to, or contributed to, the development of the specific set of policies and implementation programs (actions) outlined in Section 3F?

Resources & Constraints (Real and Perceived)

10. What resources did you or your organization use to help with its activities related to this process?
11. Was there anything that you or your organization saw as a barrier (or constraint) to its activities related to Section 3F? (or the ROP in general)

Networking/Working with Other Groups

*involves sharing or getting information, or interacting with other people

12. Regarding the development of Section 3F, how important was it for you or your organization to network in the Region? Why?

13. How important was it for you (or your organization) to network with others outside of the Region of Waterloo?

Community Environment

14. Are there characteristics about or things happening in the Region that made it easier or harder to have Section 3F included (and adopted as part of the ROP)?

15. Were there people, that is, specific individuals, in the Region (or elsewhere) that made it easier or harder to get a food system planning section/access to locally grown and other healthy foods section and/or food-related language in the ROP?

Section B: Factors Related to Policy Adoption

In June 2009, Regional Council adopted the final draft of the ROP. In trying to better understand the outcome of the ROP adoption process, that is, 'how we got what we got' with respect to the final version of policies and actions outlined in Section 3F, the following questions ask you to consider and describe relevant factors that may have contributed to the final draft of Section 3F.

1. Considering the language, overall goal and specific policies and implementation programs, how does the final draft of Section 3F relate to the mandate or purpose of your organization?

(***What does the final draft of the ROP actually mean?)

2. How does the final version compare to earlier versions (or drafts) of Section 3F?

3. What factors helped or facilitated the decision to adopt the specific policies and implementation programs (subsection 3.F.1- 3.F.6).

(That is, why were these 6+ actions the ones we ended up with in the ROP?)

4. What factors hindered, or contributed negatively to the decision to adopt the 6+ specific policies and actions?

i.e., impeded further progress, prevented the inclusion of stronger language or policy action; etc.)

5. Considering the general goal and the specific policies and implementation programs outlined in Section 3F, in your opinion, what opportunities, if any, do these present going forward?

Section C: Factors Related to Policy Implementation

As the ROP moves forward with approval at the provincial level, Area Municipalities will need to work out the specific details of policy implementation. The next few questions concern the development and implementation of land use plans at the municipal level stemming from the adoption of the Regional Official Plan. In light of the fact that the ROP has only recently been approved, area plans may be in early stages of development and implementation. Thus, I am interested in your perspective and/or insight into any current or foreseeable barriers or challenges relating to the implementation of Municipal actions relating to FMs and community and rooftop gardens.

1. Is there anything, if any, that you see as a potential barrier or challenge regarding the implementation or follow through of the policies and actions in Section 3F? (in general or for specific subsections)
2. Are there any resources, if any, that you or your organization, have available as support for the implementation, or follow through of actions in Section 3F? (in general or for specific subsections)
3. Are you aware of any examples of current or past efforts to improve local food or healthy food access that will be affected, either positively or negatively, by the actions and policies in Section 3F of the ROP?
4. Are you aware of any examples where past or current efforts to improve local food or healthy food access have been met with zoning or other regulatory barriers?

Names of Others to Interview

5. Are there other people, who are (or were) involved in the development of Section 3F, or have a vested interest in the food system planning for the Region of Waterloo, that I should talk to?
6. Were there Regional Councilors that strongly oppose or strongly support food system planning (or its relevant concerns) that I should talk to?

APPENDIX F

Study Information and Consent Letter



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STUDIES AND GERONTOLOGY, FACULTY OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES
University of Waterloo, 200 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1
519-888-4567 | Fax: 519-746-2510

Dear [Participant]

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral research in the Department of Health Studies and Gerontology at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Rhona Hanning. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The purpose of this study is to assess the current policy and planning environment in the Region of Waterloo by obtaining multi-sectoral perspectives regarding the development and implementation of the Regional Official Plan's 'Access to Locally Grown and Other Healthy Foods' section (outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3F). This study will focus on identifying the perspectives of regional and municipal decision makers, and key experts and individuals involved in public health, planning, community development, agriculture and other relevant areas. Therefore, I would like to include you as one of the key informants to be involved in my study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 0.5 – 1 hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Audio-recordings from this study will be retained for 2 years in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's office and then confidentially destroyed. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. Electronic data (i.e., typed transcript files, personal notes) with no personal identifiers will be kept indefinitely. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (519) 821-4479 or by email at jwegener@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Rhona Hanning at 519-888-4567 ext. 35685 or email (rhanning@uwaterloo.ca). I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at 519-888-4567 Ext. 36005 or ssykes@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to those residing and/or working in Waterloo Region, other jurisdictions that will learn from the Region's examples of food system planning and healthy public policy, and to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Sincerely,

Jessica Wegener, MSc, RD
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Health Studies and Gerontology
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Jessica Wegener and Rhona Hanning of the Department of Health Studies and Gerontology at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567 ext. 36005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

Regional Official Plan Timeline ([www.http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca](http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca))

Regional Milestones	Provincial Milestones
<p>Summer 2003</p> <p>The Regional Growth Management Strategy was finalized by Regional Council after two years of preparation and stakeholder consultation</p>	
	<p>Summer 2004</p> <p>The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal released a discussion paper called Places to Grow: Better Choices Brighter Future. It proposed ways to regenerate communities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe in three key ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where and how we should grow 2. The critical infrastructure needed to support that growth 3. The valuable lands and resources we need to protect <p>More than 1,600 people attended eight public meetings held across the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the Ministry received approximately 500 written submissions</p>
<p>Fall 2004</p> <p>The Region of Waterloo commenced the new Regional Official Plan process by engaging stakeholders and the public through community consultation (newsletters, workshops, open forums and the launch of this website</p>	<p>Fall 2004</p> <p>The Provincial government introduced legislation, the proposed Places to Grow Act 2004 (Bill 136), that would ensure the development of growth plans for specific areas in the Province of Ontario.</p>
	<p>Winter 2005</p> <p>The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal released a draft Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to get further input.</p>
<p>Spring 2005</p> <p>A public meeting was held on May 17 th in Council Chambers at Regional Headquarters to receive comments on the direction of the new ROP. Minutes from this meeting can be found by clicking here</p>	<p>Spring 2005</p> <p>The Provincial Policy Statement, 2005 came into effect, providing policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development.</p>

<p>Fall 2005</p> <p>A response document, New Regional Official Plan 2031: A Summary of Preliminary Stakeholder Consultation & Proposed Communication Strategy, was presented to the Regional Planning and Works Committee. The purpose of this document was to clarify the new ROP development process, provide answers to previously asked questions, and to introduce several methods for the public to become more involved in the ROP planning process.</p> <p>A series of student and public workshops were held to discuss the new ROP and its key messages.</p> <p>Volume One of the new ROP newsletter was published</p>	
<p>Winter 2006</p> <p>Volume Two of the new ROP newsletter was published.</p> <p>Phase 1 of the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment (RTEA) began, involving the evaluation and selection of a preferred transportation system strategy (rapid transit versus other transportation alternatives).</p>	
<p>Spring 2006</p> <p>Volume Three of the new ROP newsletter was published.</p> <p>Phase 2 of the RTEA began, which involved the evaluation of alternative technologies and route designs, and the identification of a preferred transit system.</p> <p>Regional Staff held a series of workshops on the topic of agricultural policies: Farm Viability - Moving Beyond Preservation; and Good Neighbourhoods - Minimizing Urban/Rural Conflicts</p>	<p>Spring 2006</p> <p>The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's Places to Grow Act, 2005 received Royal Assent. The Act provides a legal framework for the government to designate any geographic area of the province as a growth plan area and to develop a growth plan in consultation with local officials and stakeholders. The Ministry then released its final Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.</p>
	<p>Fall 2006</p> <p>The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's Bill 51: An Act to amend the Planning Act and the Conservation Land Act and to make related amendments to other Acts received Royal Assent. Included in this Act is a requirement that municipalities have up-to-date Official Plans to help them make better decisions for their communities.</p>
<p>Spring 2007</p> <p>Regional staff continued policy research and maintained</p>	

<p>communication regarding the process with Area Municipalities, agencies, and interested stakeholders. Drafting the new ROP commenced.</p> <p>Volume Four of the new ROP newsletter was published</p>	
	<p>Summer 2007</p> <p>The Ministry of the Environment's Clean Water Act, 2006 received Royal Assent. This Act requires communities to protect their municipal drinking water supplies through collaborative, locally driven, science based protection policies and regulations.</p>
<p>Spring 2008</p> <p>With a completed internal working draft of the new ROP, a Municipal Working Group was created consisting of representatives from each of the Area Municipalities and the Grand River Conservation Authority. The working group met twice a week from March to June to provide comments and help shape the first public draft of the ROP. This working draft was also reviewed by several advisory committees and Regional departments</p>	
<p>Fall 2008</p> <p>The First Draft of the new ROP was released for public review and consultation.</p> <p>The public consultation process to date has included eight Public Open Houses, presentations to most Area Municipal Councils/Committees, and meetings with Regional Advisory Committees and various stakeholder groups.</p> <p>Volume Five of the new ROP newsletter was published.</p>	
<p>Winter 2009</p> <p>Two Public Meetings were held at the end of January to receive participants' comments on the draft ROP.</p> <p>The deadline for the submission of comments on the draft ROP was January 31st, 2009.</p>	
<p>Spring 2009</p> <p>Regional Staff assembled the comments received during the public consultation process and released a Response</p>	

<p>Document in April.</p> <p>The Second Draft of the new ROP was released for public review and consultation in April.</p> <p>A Statutory Public Meeting was held on May 12 before Planning and Works Committee as required by the Planning Act.</p>	
<p>Summer 2009</p> <p>Regional Staff prepared the Final Draft of the new ROP which was adopted by Regional Council on June 16.</p> <p>Following the adoption of the new ROP, the Region issued a Notice of Adoption on June 23, 2009 and forwarded the ROP together with the supporting documentation to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.</p>	<p>Summer 2009</p> <p>The Regional Official Plan must be brought into conformity with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe by June 16, 2009.</p>
<p>Fall 2009</p> <p>Protected Countryside</p> <p>In adopting the new ROP, Regional Council passed the following motion with respect to the Protected Countryside:</p> <p>"THAT the Regional Municipality of Waterloo adopt, but request the Province to defer, approval of the Protected Countryside, described in Policy 6.B and shown on Map 7, and all references thereto in order to provide additional information and consultation with the community, including all affected property owners, of the implications of implementing this designation."</p> <p>In keeping with Council's direction, Regional staff will be hosting a series of four public open houses in September to consult with the community. The dates, times and locations of the public open houses will be posted on this website.</p> <p>Staff Report Regarding Possible Modifications</p> <p>Regional staff will prepare a report for Regional Council's consideration in the fall regarding recommended modifications to the adopted ROP. The report will subsequently be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.</p>	
	<p>Winter 2010</p> <p>Following the receipt of the new ROP in June, the</p>

	<p>Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has 180 days to approve, approve as modified or refuse to approve the ROP in whole or in part through the issuance of a Notice of Decision. As part of this process, Regional Council will have the opportunity to recommend changes to the policies and mapping in the ROP that may be identified subsequent to its approval.</p> <p>Once the 180-day review period is completed on January 4th, 2010, any person or a public body that made an oral submission at the ROP Public Meeting, or made a written submission to Regional Council before its decision to adopt the ROP on June 16, 2009, may then appeal the Ministry's decision to the Ontario Municipal Board within a 20-day appeal period. If there is no appeal, the ROP comes into effect on the day after the appeal period expires.</p> <p>If you wish to be notified of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's decision in respect of the proposed new ROP, you must make a written request to the Ministry at the following address:</p>
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APPENDIX H
Summary of Decision Makers' Perspectives on Trends in Planning, Agriculture, Health and the Environment

Description/Details of Event/Trend Raised by Councillors	Level of Initiation	Stated Outcome (perceived or actual)
1. Planning Changes or Trends		
Provincial policy direction shift toward complete communities and commercial nodes (movement away from suburbs);	Provincial	<p>“the ROP review, of course, was the mandatory review that we had to undertake...the Growth Management Strategy was a real benchmarking piece, although in itself, it didn't have any legal standing. It was a real comprehensive road map for growth and the various policies and guidelines of things in there had to get rolled into the Official Plan”</p> <p>“the Province says you have to review your Official Plan in a very meaningful way every 5 years now.”</p> <p>“We had to go along with Places to Grow, we didn't have a choice.”</p> <p>“Now all of a sudden people are talking about complete communities, whereas 10 years ago, nobody did.” (local impact)</p>
The Region's Growth Management Strategy* (including light rapid transit discussions; environmentally sensitive landscapes (ESL); the countryside line, a focus on intensification and urban density (intense urban form versus urban sprawl); Mixed use on farms	Regional	<p>“A previous Regional Official Plan was used as a template for the Places to Grow Act because long before people were talking about urbanization and controlling suburban sprawl, we had already put it into our Official Plan...we've always kind of been at the forefront of some of these planning initiatives.”</p> <p>“We did the countryside line in the context of Smart Growth and recognizing that there comes a point where you need to put a line in the sand. And at that point, nothing goes beyond that and you protect that.”</p> <p>“the Planning Department is very conscious of that urban-rural [tension] and our senior planner really had an emphasis for rural and for the farmers”</p> <p>“it was something quite big that the Region brought in to their planning document about ESLs and identifying areas...it does just kind of put another layer on the land, that they are sensitive and identified.</p> <p>“I think people were more suspicious about the ESLs than they were about the Official Plan”</p> <p>“there's a large area coming [being developed], they'll be thousands of people and that's why there will be a grocery store there, because we've made sure that there is one.”</p> <p>“Here in the Region of Waterloo, we're a prosperous community. We're expected to have 200,000 more people in the next 25</p>

		<p>years, there's going to be a lot of pressure to expand in the agricultural areas, and right now our Official Plan says 'No, we're not going to do that, we're going to use the land that is identified in the Official Plan and once that is used up, we're going up! We're not going out! Now, other places in Canada would be wise to look at that as well but I don't think, with respect, they're nearly as far ahead of the curve as we are.</p> <p>"we're creating more of a sense of community"</p> <p>"we fought long and hard with the Region to allow mixed use on farms, you know, we finally got it. But it didn't always exist."</p>
<p>2. Agricultural Changes or Trends (& Economic and Trade Changes)</p>		
<p>US Farm Bill</p>	<p>Global</p>	<p>"We have to compete against the US Farm Bill which is incredibly rich and the federal government here admits that they cannot afford to compete with that. And so the farmers are left on their own."</p>
<p>Global recession</p>		<p>"a lot of our decisions that we made in the past year and continue to make are made in the context of a recession-bound economy"</p>
<p>Trade concerns</p>		<p>"I think there's a purpose there to be able to be self-sufficient and to a certain extent, the global economy really is working against that but when it comes to food, it seems like it's something that you want to have a certain control on, you know, to feed the masses."</p>
<p>Hog and cattle crisis</p>	<p>Global/ National</p>	<p>Farmer viability threatened; "the Mennonite community, for the first time, are starting to hurt badly because of the hogs and beef" (Old Order Mennonite viability threatened (local impact))</p> <p>"Because farmers today, in the beef and hog sector as an example, are in more dire straits as they have been ever in the history of the world...Hog farmers are just shutting down left, right and centre because they can't survive."</p>
<p>Establishment of an Agricultural Advisory Committee within Woolwich to support farmer viability; flexible zoning for the</p> <p>Establishment of the Elmira (Woolwich) Produce Auction;</p> <p>"North Dumfries Township has always been known for dairy – big farms, good farm land but really pertaining to animals...I'm seeing a change to now growing food for</p>	<p>Regional/ Municipal</p>	<p>"the Committee looks at it [proposed zoning amendments] and tries to make recommendations to Council or to Planning, to update the zoning bylaws"</p> <p>"they [Old Order Mennonite farmers] needed something else to keep viable";</p> <p>"[Local producers] is not only raising beef cattle for the meat industry, but they've built a separate on-site farmers' market building because not only do they sell their own product, they're selling product from other local farmers."</p> <p>"And that's where I think that this locally grown food will help that"</p> <p>"I think the idea of [Planning] continuing those strong policies with our Growth Management Strategy, which actually put a stronger policy framework for saving farmland in place, was really seen as a backing up, or a continuation of what we've done in the past"</p>

people”		<p>“there are a lot of farming practices today that are being driven by economics, one of them is corn on corn production which will eventually deplete the soil...there will be an exponential decrease in yield unless organics go back into the soil...the Old Order Mennonite farmers understand that.”</p> <p>“we do still have farmers that are making their living off the farm but a lot less than what it used to be...in fact, a lot of these are like hobby farms. And we’d like to see it transition back into being able to make a living on the farm”</p>
3. Environmental Changes or Trends		
<p>climate change; carbon emissions associated with long distance travel, i.e., food miles</p>	Global/national	<p>“the time has come, recognizing that there is a distinct possibility that we won’t get food from 2000 miles [away] in the future”</p> <p>“certainly there’s more concern about the environment”</p> <p>“it’s an environmental issue when it comes to have to truck food around the world”</p>
<p>Local water contamination issues</p> <p>Decline in regional resources (also urban-rural relationship issue)</p> <p>A history of regional leadership through strong farm land and environmental protection policies</p>	Regional	<p>“we’ve had water contaminant...so we’ve really focused on the environment”</p> <p>“another area was water...keeping our water clean and making sure we have enough drinking water”</p> <p>“The Township people are truly concerned about the water that is taken from the townships for the cities...they periodically come to Council and talk about how much water they’re losing...it’s been on the surface for quite some time.”</p> <p>“One of the unique issues is the fact that we draw the largest part of our water from rural areas. We are, in Canada, the largest community relying on ground water...and it comes from the rural townships. So urban centres are getting, I’d say, 50% or more of their water from the rural areas. So there’s a respect that needs to take place... We need to get along with each other for that kind of relationship.</p> <p>“[the Region] had the first regional or county plan in Ontario. It really had very strong farm land and environmental protection policies...so it [Section 3F] built upon a feeling that was here, crystallizes it through the Plan and it’s been reinforced in every plan since.”</p>
4. A new ROP focus (Regional)		
<p>A noted difference in regional direction: “it’s different from the Official Plan that we’ve done before.”; “a little softer”; “we set a country line this time, I think this was a big step”; “unusual in that all the departments were involved”;</p> <p>“it’s much more higher-level, this is</p>	Regional/Municipal	<p>“Because we put in stuff that we’d never had, they [Area Municipal planners] did object to the things that they hadn’t had before, saying that we [the Region] should not be looking at their zoning, and fixing their zoning”</p> <p>“And Councillors supported it [the new ROP focus]”</p> <p>“we made for more of an effort to make it much more of a quality of life issue”</p> <p>“spelling out the end of urbanization”</p>

<p>very different, there was nothing like this in the last Plan”; “really new and exciting... there are a lot of sections that are brand new that you’d normally never see because it was just roads and zoning”; “we put in stuff that we’d never had”; “I think Councilors recognize it as a clear departure, breaking new ground, that this is innovative, and is required, and needed”; “this particular Official Plan review was probably more extensive, more significant than other reviews that we’ve done”.</p>		<p>“there won’t be the development moving along like it used to because the Official Plan is really quite different now. It’s all internal rebuilding and new building going on, rather than pushing out”</p> <p>“I think we’re fairly proud of a variety of elements in the Official Plan that deal with non-traditional kinds of planning matters that we’ve seen fit to put in to the Official Plan.”</p>
<p>5. A Rural Farm Tour for Councilors</p>		
<p>“the tour that we took was likely instituted by staff, but I’m not exactly sure”</p> <p>“Foodlink organized it and it was open to all members of Council, including local councils, but I’m not sure on that...there were people there from the Federation of Agriculture, OMAFRA, a few other agencies...we had lunch afterwards at [local country market store]”</p>	<p>Regional/ Municipal</p>	<p>“I would think that was all background information for us when we were doing this [reviewing the ROP]”</p> <p>“I think the intention was to promote local agriculture and to allow that interaction to take place between some of the people involved full-time in the agricultural business and local policy-makers. And you know, a couple of things that [the Federation of Agriculture representative] talked to me about on the bus...we’re now correcting”</p> <p>“we took a tour...we saw what they grew, how they marketed...we saw the wholesale auction”</p>
<p>6. Changes in Community Awareness, Public Health Trends and Activities</p>		
<p>Movement away from suburbs</p> <p>Urban Agriculture; Food Localism</p> <p>Walkable communities/Transit-oriented communities</p>	<p>Municipal</p>	<p>“there’s just been a general movement to say that suburbs aren’t working, maybe not as much here, but certainly in other areas...And Public Health, I think this really came from them through discussions with people who have obesity- they’re not getting enough exercise and not eating properly.”</p> <p>“People came to talk about community gardens, which hadn’t been there before”</p> <p>“The previous CEO of the Region always wanted to have light rapid transit...he was like ‘We really need to get away from</p>

Awareness of change: loss of independent, small retailers

the car culture!.”

“As we urbanize, there were supermarkets in downtown Kitchener originally. They were smaller, and there were grocery stores... and then over time, they just vanished... they moved to the big Box type.

A growing number of provincial, regional and local food initiatives

“I was very supportive. I had got to see the pilots of the markets, and I’m very supportive of any kind of market for fresh food.”

“You know the access to local food, we did that through helping to fund the neighbourhood markets...so that section [3f] is an attempt to sort of bring a group of those things [together] in setting a more strategic direction around the whole concept of having a very strong regional food system.”

“we’ve done a lot of work on food supply through the Public Health Department and so Council is obviously aware of that sort of work...and so the Buy Local, Buy Fresh! thing, the gardens, all that was done through there.”

“Council has been advised and has been involved in the promotion of locally grown food and other aspects as detailed in that section of the Official Plan for a number of years. So the Region embarked on a number of different programs to promote these types of endeavors including local area farmers’ markets, buying from the local food co-operative and also encouraging consumers at these local markets to purchase locally-grown food...so the fact that Public Health has made forays in this area and had started Foodlink and had educated Council on this during the past five years, that laid the groundwork for easy decision to be made from Council’s perspective around including it in the ROP.”

“Public Health’s involvement in a variety of food issues, and Foodlink being partially sponsored by the Region, and a variety of initiatives that the Region is supporting, you know, farm gate maps, all that kind of stuff, it did make it fairly easy – we were already in the business to a certain extent of supporting local agriculture and farm markets and so on.”

APPENDIX I
Whole Measures Community Food Systems (Example)

A Modified Example of an Application of *Whole Measures for Community Food System* in Waterloo Region

Field of Practice “fields”	Value-based Practices “practices”	Sample Objective	Evidence of Impact/Example of Waterloo Region Initiative	(Hypothetical) Impact Rating (-3 to +10)*
Justice and Fairness	Ensures that public institutions and local businesses support a just community food system	Sustains stores in every community that sell healthy, high quality, affordable foods.	Sustains food destinations and ARFOs in every regional neighbourhood that sell healthy, high quality, locally-grown foods. E.g., Public Health’s Neighbourhood Market Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some negative concerns about competition and tension with existing produce vendors (-3) • Urban consumers in low-income areas and food deserts have access to high quality affordable foods (+5)
Strong Communities	Contributes to healthy neighbourhoods	Ensures space for food production and distribution that is safe, enjoyable and accessible to a diverse community.	Ensures space for food production and distribution that is safe, enjoyable and accessible to a diverse community including neighbourhood local food buying groups (residential/commercial food retail); appropriate zoning for wholesale produce auctions, and land for community gardens. E.g., Neighbourhood Local Food Buying Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not currently permitted in residential neighbourhoods (no impact, 0) • Permitted in faith-based institutions in community areas (during the week only) (+1 - +3)

Field of Practice “fields”	Value-based Practices “practices”	Sample Objective	Evidence of Impact/Example of Waterloo Region Initiative	(Hypothetical) Impact Rating (-3 to +10)*
Vibrant Farms	Supports local, sustainable family farms to thrive and be economically viable	Develops policies that encourage success in small- and mid-scale farming ventures.	<p>Develops land use planning policies that are sufficiently flexible to encourage success in small- and mid-scale farming ventures.</p> <p>E.g., Elmira Produce Auction Cooperative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale Old Order Mennonite farmers pool their produce together at the auction and helps the community to remain viable in farming (+5) • Some concern that this form of distribution should complement other price discovery mechanisms due to low bids on produce (-3)
Healthy People	Provides healthy food for all	Utilizes a broad range of public investments and tools (such as land use planning) to increase access to healthy food.	<p>Utilizes land use planning practices and policies to support community gardens in neighbourhoods, including the provision of water, mulch, wood chips and land.</p> <p>E.g., Regional and Neighbourhood Community Gardens</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Kitchener has a start up grant for community gardens (+10) • Other municipalities are less coordinated and resources are difficult to obtain (no impact, 0) • The ROP includes directives regarding regional promotion and support for community gardens; impact not yet possible to determine (+1 for regional direction)

Field of Practice “fields”	Value-based Practices “practices”	Sample Objective	Evidence of Impact/Example of Waterloo Region Initiative	(Hypothetical) Impact Rating (-3 to +10)*
Sustainable Ecosystems	Promotes agricultural and food distribution practices that mitigate climate change	Reduces reliance on fossil fuels and utilizes renewable energy sources in food production and distribution.	Provides flexible land use planning considerations to support Old Order Mennonite farming practices which build the carbon sequestering properties of healthy soil. E.g., Expanded opportunities for country markets and roadside stands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g., permitted use of agricultural/commercial zoning designation (+3) in Woolwich and North Dumfries Consumers can access local food and minimize reliance on foods that have travelled long distances (+3)
	Creates local jobs and builds long-term economic vitality within the food system	Invests, encourages, and promotes community-based enterprise development.	Invests, encourages, and promotes community-based enterprise development that supports the Region of Waterloo’s vision of a strong and diverse regional food system. E.g. Local procurement policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional producers, processors, distributors are supported through mechanisms to supply the Region’s public institutions with local food (+3)
OVERALL IMPACT SCORE				N/A with this example

*There are five ratings in the rubric that correspond to a scale from -3 to +10. Minus 3 represents a negative impact, while +10 corresponds to the highest positive impact. The rating for the “highest impact” is intentionally set at 10, and the next lower rating, (strong) at 5, to show that the highest impact should be perceived as having attained roughly twice as much positive outcome, and should reflect the highest aspiration for a project or intervention.