



340 Gerrard Street exterior – artist's rendering



**community food centres**  
CANADA good food is just the beginning

# TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES THROUGH THE POWER OF FOOD

The Campaign for 340 Gerrard

2023-09

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**“  
When everyone  
has access to  
good food, we  
have a more  
inclusive and  
just society.”**

**Nick Saul**  
CEO, Community Food Centres Canada

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# Belonging is the first step

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## **Junie is no stranger to struggle.**

When her daughter was born 12 weeks premature, she and her husband Brad were living far from their family in Manitoba. Trying to care for a tiny infant and also manage Junie's dialysis for kidney failure, the couple struggled, and Brad was forced to leave his job to help out.

"We lost everything," Junie remembers. "It was depressing. Not having food causes so much stress. We had arguments. Should we borrow money? Where will we get food?"

When the family moved back to Winnipeg, things began to turn around. At the NorWest Community Food Centre, Junie learned to manage her special diet while waiting for a kidney transplant. She participated in mental health training that helped her cope with her own anxiety and depression and support her family better.

She also signed up for a Community Action Training program to become a peer advocate—a role she relishes because she truly understands what others are going through. She's particularly glad to support fellow community members in negotiating a complicated system. "It makes me feel good to help. Without the Community Food Centre, I think a lot of people would be in bad shape."

**Junie says the Community Food Centre makes everyone feel like they belong, that they're welcome. Instead of receiving an anonymous handout, community members are supported by their peers, and it's a big first step in getting people the help they need.**





## Nearly five million people in Canada can't afford healthy food and they face shame and stigma when they seek support.

And the challenges for those who experience food insecurity go way beyond hunger. Food insecurity also makes people sick, breaks down relationships, makes it harder to get stable work and to fully participate in society.

Welcoming community food programs where people can access healthy, delicious food with dignity can make a huge difference—both in terms of immediate needs and over the long term.

**But while it sounds counterintuitive, food insecurity is not actually about food. Its roots lie in poverty.**

That's why we can't solve this problem with food programs alone.



340 Gerrard Street Kitchen – artist's rendering

It's only by bringing people together to take charge of their communities, lifting one another up, and mobilizing around national policy solutions that address the causes of food insecurity that we will see real and lasting change.

**Community Food Centres Canada's new home at 340 Gerrard Street in Toronto will be the innovative test kitchen for this transformation.**

It will be a place to access nutritious meals, nurture skills on the stovetop and in the garden, cultivate ideas and activate community.

It will also be an ideas lab for new programs at Community Food Centres across the country and a training ground for our partners from coast to coast to coast.

**"Change happens because you fight for it. 340 Gerrard will enable us to set our sights higher and disrupt traditional ideas about poverty and food insecurity. If we can rethink food, we can rethink the world along more equitable lines."**

- Nick Saul, CEO



## No time to waste

Food insecurity was a serious issue before COVID-19, and it's even more urgent now. Currently, 1 in 7 Canadians struggles to put food on their table.

The pandemic has laid bare the inequities people face as they work to feed their families, afford a safe place to live, and find employment that sustains them. Recovery efforts must be rooted in equity, and they must begin now.

For people living in low-income communities, food is a key entry point for accessing other services and resources. At Community Food Centres nationwide we create thoughtfully designed, dignified spaces that meet people where they're at, and also provide a springboard for making long-term changes in their lives and communities.

**The pandemic has created an opportunity to shape our world along more equitable lines. The time is now to reimagine and rebuild our society with a focus on compassion and caring, equity and justice.**

### Food insecurity affects:

**17%**

of newcomers

**48%**

of First Nations

**29%**

of Black Canadians



## Building the future we want to see

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The heart of Community Food Centres Canada's work is the belief that communities thrive when everyone has access to fresh, healthy food. We also believe that when you treat people with respect, and when you value their skills and choices, you help make lasting change possible.

Working with over 350 organizations in more than 150 communities, we have built a thriving movement of like-minded people and groups, a force for positive change on a national scale.



The home for this movement will be a new Community Food Centre in Toronto where people will come together to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food.

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340 Gerrard will support the diverse Regent Park, St. James Town, and Moss Park communities, where residents face disproportionate barriers to health and well-being. It will serve as a local resource for newcomer families, seniors, children, as well as people experiencing homelessness.

On any given day, hundreds of community members will find their way to 340 Gerrard to visit the affordable produce market, bake a pizza in the wood-fired oven, attend a senior's nutrition program or join a social justice club.

Where once there was a rundown parking lot, there will be a thriving discovery garden. A neglected turn-of-the-century mattress factory will be converted into an essential resource for healthy food, belonging, and advocacy.

**Not only will community members access high-quality food in a dignified space, but they will also find connection and support to take action on issues that affect their lives.**



340 Gerrard will be a vibrant forum for sharing new ideas. Our partners from Dartmouth and Iqaluit to Calgary and Kamloops will learn from one another, and we'll build knowledge and leadership capacity in the community food sector.

With an onsite Community Food Centre, we'll conduct hands-on research that we can use to address the systemic causes of food insecurity everywhere.





**“The pandemic has highlighted more than anything how unfairly people have been impacted. The ones who are most affected are those that are poor, racialized, living in areas with fewer resources.”**

**Ana Lopes**

CFCC Board Member and Donor

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Entrepreneur and social innovator Ana Lopes believes that everyone has the right to good, healthy food—not just those who can afford it.

Food insecurity, Lopes says, is a matter of justice.

“It’s appalling that in North America where there is so much food, we have so many people who are food insecure,” she says.

“That’s why at CFCC we’re also in the policy business.”

We want to affect systemic change through government policy and make food accessible to everyone.

**340 Gerrard will house a new Policy and Research Centre, expanding our capacity to examine the systemic issues that underpin poverty and food insecurity. By bringing expertise, data collection and advocacy training under one roof, we will harness our collective voices to advocate for change.**



A person wearing a grey hoodie is seen from the side, looking out over a city street. They are standing behind a chain-link fence. The background shows a wide, empty street with white lane markings, and buildings in the distance under a cloudy sky. The overall mood is contemplative and somewhat somber.

**The root of the problem**



When he was The Depot's executive director, Daniel Rotman saw the struggles of Montreal's Notre-Dame-de-Grâce neighbourhood up close. For many community members, low-wage jobs, precarious or inconsistent employment and inadequate social assistance rates make it almost impossible to keep up with the rising costs of housing, transportation, and food.

Not only that, Daniel explains, "Poverty is really isolating. And research has shown that social isolation is worse for health outcomes than smoking."

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## "Food is a connector.

When we work with low-income populations, food is the entry point for other services and resources. It's how we can bring people from diverse backgrounds together to build community and positive change."

### **Daniel Rotman**

Former Executive Director of The Depot Community Food Centre, Montreal

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In response to this need, The Depot has become an essential local resource where people can access nutritious food, learn how to grow and prepare it, and eat together in community.

Daniel sees the key to The Depot's success as bringing people together in a space that honours their strengths and encourages advocacy.

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**80%** say food insecurity takes a toll on their physical or mental health

**64%** say it erodes relationships with family and friends

**46%** say it limits their ability to celebrate their culture

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A woman wearing a blue surgical mask and a camouflage bandana is preparing food in a kitchen. She is wearing a white sweater and a black apron with the text 'able food centre' on it. She is standing at a stainless steel counter, adding ingredients to several clear plastic containers filled with food. In the background, another person is visible, also working at the counter. The scene is brightly lit, and the overall atmosphere is one of active food preparation.

# Ending food insecurity

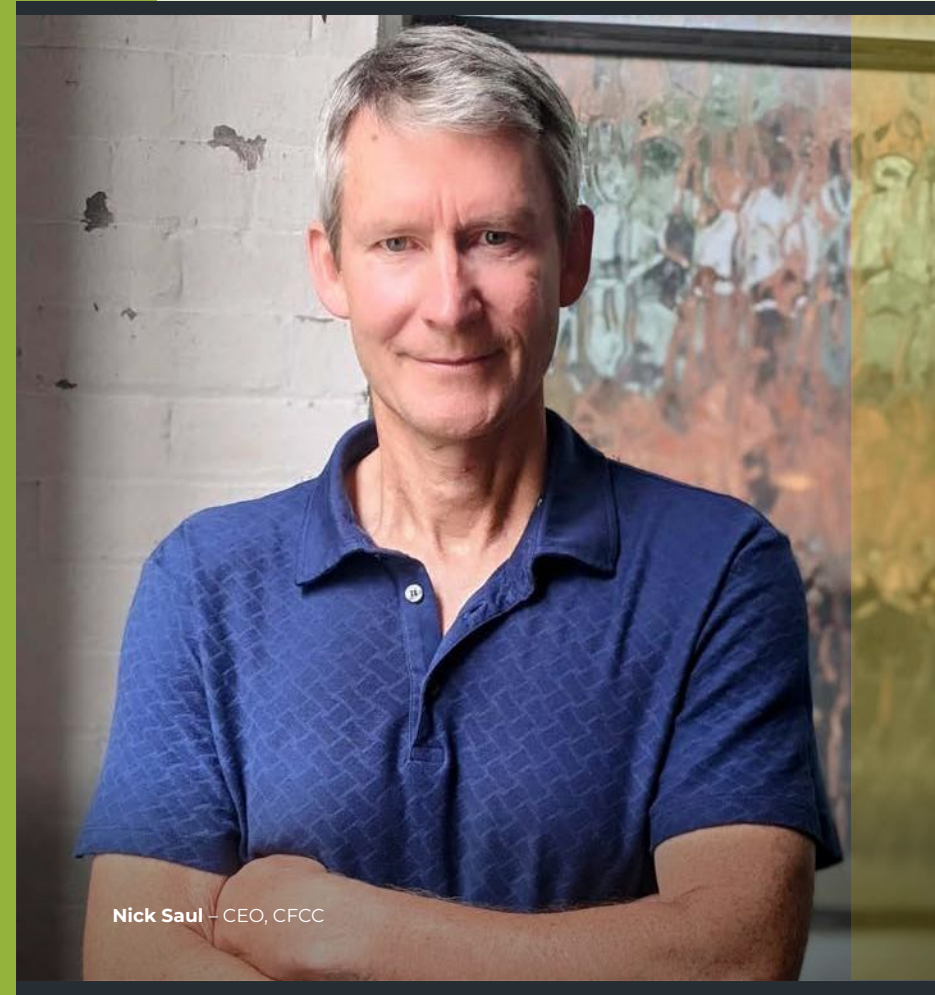
**When CFCC CEO Nick Saul talks about how to end food insecurity, he'll say that food is *not* the solution. But he will say that it is a great way to bring people together. It provides opportunities to share culture and values, to celebrate and find connection.**

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Sharing a meal is also a powerful way to open up broader conversations about justice, equity and the growing divide between rich and poor.

The new space at 340 Gerrard will be a place where such conversations and connections can happen, a place for convening, for community and for belonging.

We believe that by creating a place where people are met with respect, where they're not just receiving support but also helping friends and neighbours, we are also building hope for the future.



**Nick Saul** – CEO, CFCC



**“What I admire most about CFCC is their laser-sharp focus on policy solutions. They integrate food and health into the mission of what they do for their community and for the larger policy issues around poverty and food insecurity in Canada.”**

**Catherine Mah** - Canada Research Chair in Promoting Healthy Populations and Associate Professor in Health Administration at Dalhousie University

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**Professor Catherine Mah has been working on food and nutrition policy issues for over a decade. In her research and writing, the same question comes up often: “What vast potential are we not achieving as a nation because we allow so many members of our society to be food insecure?”**

Catherine sees 340 Gerrard as an important next step in the Community Food Centre movement. “It is very easy on one level to say, ‘We’re building a space.’

But what is harder—and more rewarding—is building a place: making it meaningful, creating social bonds, and empowering people. This is an opportunity to reconstruct what a place for food should be in a community and show that off in an ideal way.”

That ideal is a beautiful, inclusive place with gardens and kitchens, meal and education programs and support for everyone from families and children to seniors. A place that recognizes the skills and dignity of participants. A place where we can challenge the traditional notion of food charity, replace it with solidarity, and nurture change from the grassroots to the board room.

“I don’t know of any other organization able to do this work both nationally and at the grassroots level. That’s what makes CFCC special.”



**Catherine Mah** – Dalhousie University



# “CFCC is uniquely positioned to bring many voices together to make long-term change.”

**Joannah Lawson**  
CFCC Donor

Joannah Lawson, a nutritionist, and her husband Brian, CFCC's former Board Chair, are interested in big ideas.

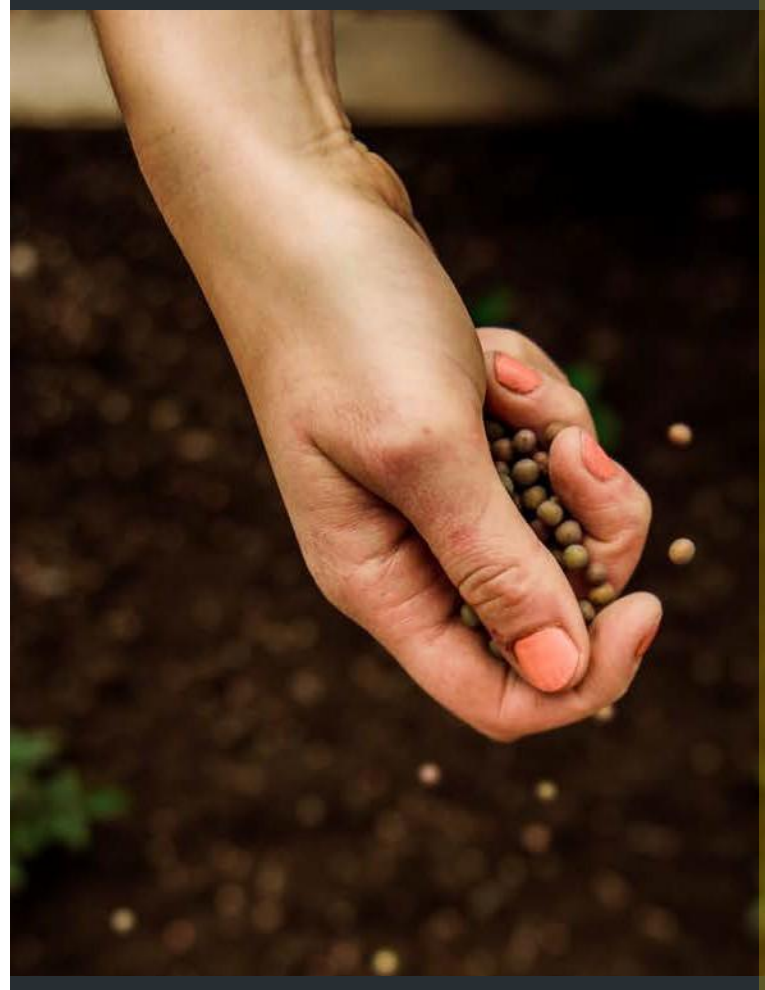
They see CFCC's mission to examine the root causes of poverty and food insecurity as addressing one of the most important issues of our time.

They also believe that CFCC is in a unique position to make a difference.

As donors, Joannah and Brian are making investments that will lead to systemic change, including supporting long-term strategies that aim to alleviate poverty and work toward income equality.

Long-term change is the solution to food insecurity.

**340 Gerrard gives it a home.**

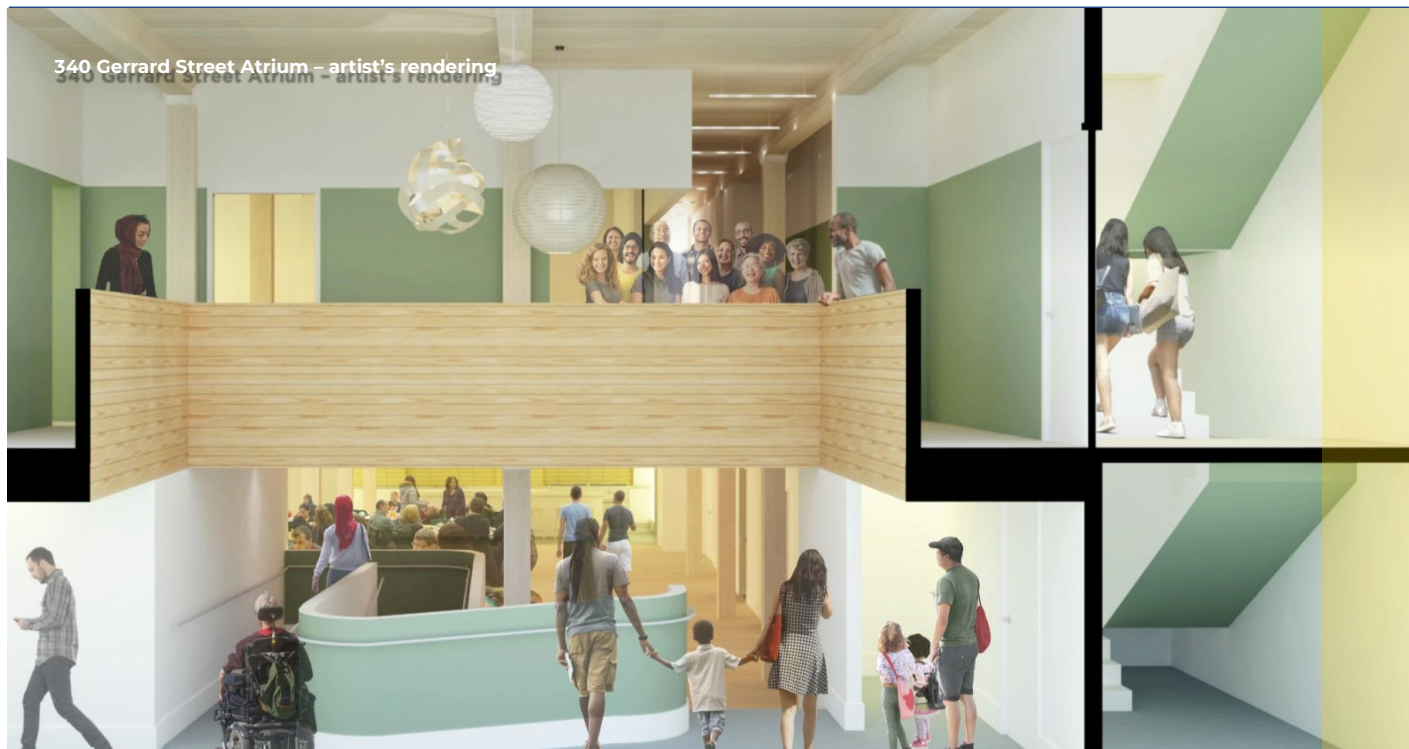




**Changing the status quo**

**From the beginning, our movement has been funded by philanthropy that aims to disrupt the status quo.**

**The \$23 million campaign for 340 Gerrard represents an opportunity for even greater transformational change.**

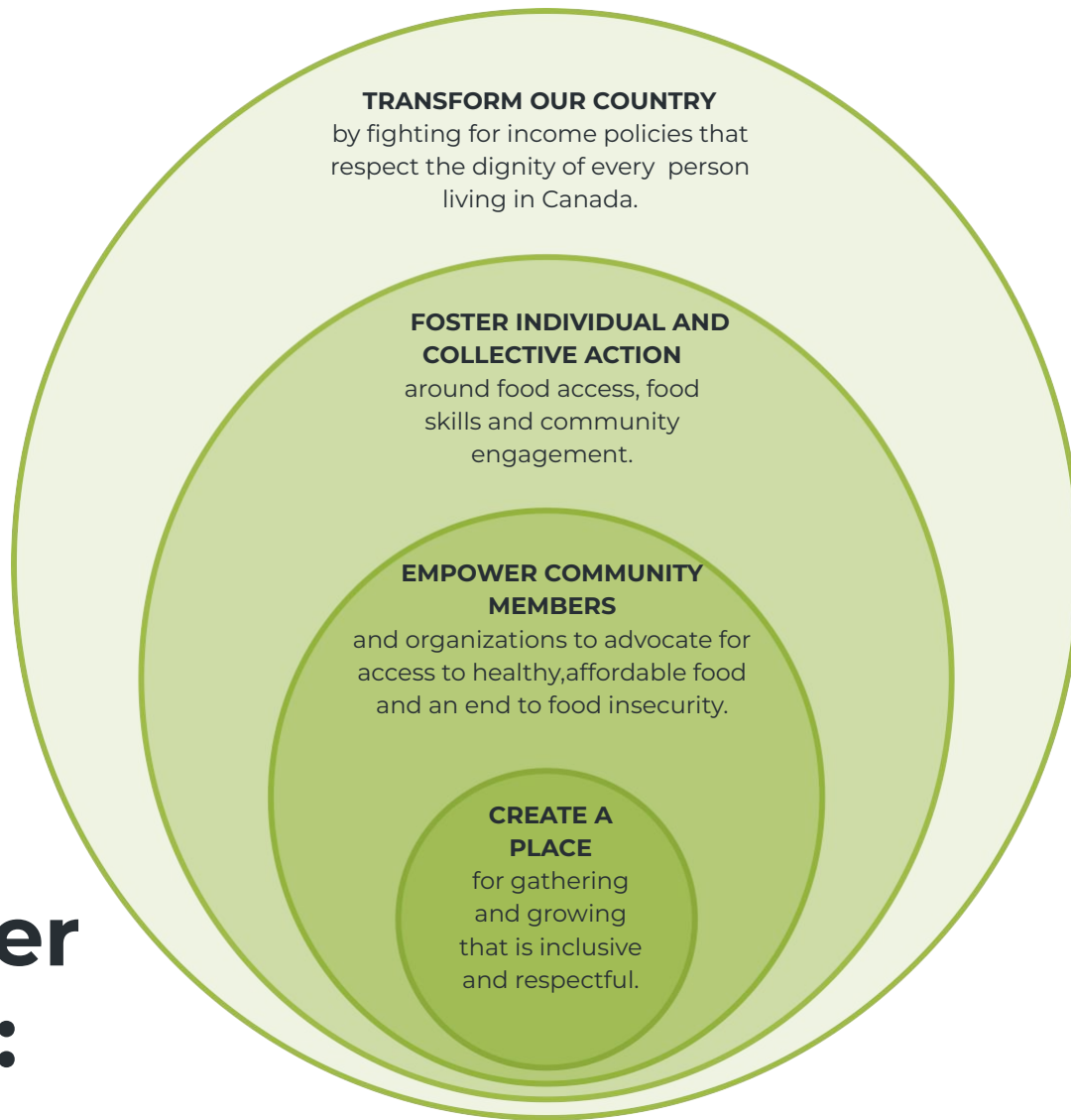


**CAMPAIGN GOAL**

**\$23 million**



**Together  
we can:**





# 340 Gerrard

At 340 Gerrard, community members will share a meal or attend a nutrition workshop, visit the affordable market, dig in the garden or maybe join a social justice club. Not only will they access high-quality food in this thoughtfully designed space, but they will also find community and be supported to take action on issues that affect their lives.

**Let's create a home where good food, belonging and, advocacy grow strong, connected communities.**





# Learning Commons

A vibrant, productive Learning Commons welcomes visitors to 340 Gerrard. Here, community members will pick up affordable fruit and veggies at the market, learn about growing their own, or bake a pizza in the wood-fired oven. After-school programs for children and activities for seniors will support community needs and provide a green respite from city living.





# Welcome Centre

The expansive light-filled Welcome Centre sets the tone for everything we do at 340 Gerrard. With a view into the bustling first-floor kitchen, as well as up to the second-floor programming space, the two-storey space is open to all visitors, designed with respect and engagement at its heart.



## Teaching Kitchen & Large Program Room

Fully accessible and designed without physical or visual barriers, 340 Gerrard is equipped for multiple uses. Up on the bright second floor, kids and adults will enjoy the intimacy of our teaching kitchen outfitted for smaller groups. There they'll learn with our trained chefs and program leaders, as well as one another, taking home skills and food to their families.





# Central Kitchen

The delicious aroma of good food brings life to this open-concept kitchen with a huge island and restaurant-quality equipment. There, community members will enjoy an inclusive place to gather and learn to prepare delicious, healthy food. The flexible cafe-style seating will allow for everything from small gatherings to large community meals.



**When you focus on giving someone a really good meal that's cooked with a lot of love and intention, people feel that care.**

When you feel included, you might be more inclined to bring your kids, you might get involved in a campaign to increase social assistance rates, or learn what herbs you can grow on your windowsill. You might learn that you are an outstanding cook.

***These are the real things that add up to a place of caring full of empathy, respect and dignity.***

..... **Nick Saul** - CEO, Community Food Centres Canada .....



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