



# LOCAL FOOD ACTION PLAN

CITY OF COLUMBUS & FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO

## POLICY & PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

DRAFT 2.26.16



# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

In 2014, Columbus City Councilmember Priscilla Tyson and Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady partnered to launch the Columbus – Franklin County Local Food Action Plan, a community effort to create a stronger, more sustainable local food system. Local Matters, a non-profit organization was engaged by the City to ensure robust community participation and feedback in the process. A Working Committee, consisting of 24 community partners with expertise in varying sectors of the local food system have been engaged to help guide this work.

The first phase of the planning process consisted of an extensive review of the current conditions of the local food system. A copy of the Current Conditions and Vision Report is available here: <https://www.columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Local-Food-Plan/What-s-Happening-Now/>

The following report represents the second phase of the planning process. It describes policy and program recommendations that will create a strong and resilient food system for our community.

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# PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

## VISION

A fair and sustainable food system that benefits our economy, our environment, and all people.

## GOALS

- I. Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies
- II. Improve access to nutritious, affordable food, and education about healthy food
- III. Increase the role of food in economic development
- IV. Prevent food-related waste

## REACHING OUR VISION & GOALS

This report provides detailed information about actions identified as promising strategies for our community to achieve the vision and goals of the Columbus-Franklin County Local Food Action Plan. Each action includes a description, how the action responds to the current conditions and why the action supports the vision and goal(s). Methods of implementation, potential partners and relevant models are also provided. Actions noted by an asterisk (\*) were informed by the neighborhood community planning processes conducted during the Current Conditions phase. Materials generated from those planning processes are available at <https://www.columbus.gov/publichealth/programs/Local-Food-Plan/Plan-Research/>

The recommended actions do not anticipate unforeseen future opportunities or changing conditions of the local food system. Actions and policies not specifically recommended in this report should still be considered on the basis of their support of the vision.

# METHOD

## INCORPORATING WORKING COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

### **PRE-WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING #2**

The Local Food Action Plan Project Team compiled potential policy and program actions related to the food system by reviewing local food, health, and planning publications and plans available throughout the nation, state, region and city. Potential actions also came from community meetings held in seven neighborhoods throughout the City of Columbus and Franklin County. This resulted in over 800 potential actions. The Project Team removed duplicate and non-specific actions for a list of 146 potential actions.

### **WORKING COMMITTEE MEETING #2**

The Project Team organized the 146 potential actions into 6 categories for presentation to the Working Committee (WC). Using a multi-voting process and group discussion, WC members identified actions that should be researched further for possible inclusion in the plan as well as actions that did not warrant further consideration. Members of the WC were instructed to review the actions for directionality and that specific details of the actions would be refined at a later time. WC members also provided new actions for the Project Team to consider for research and inclusion in the policy and program recommendations.

### **FOLLOW-UP PHONE CALLS & SURVEY**

Representatives from the Project Team contacted WC members to solicit feedback on the actions they did not review at the in-person meeting. Project Team representatives also collected additional new actions to consider for research. The Project Team developed and distributed an online survey to WC members to solicit their feedback on new actions suggested at the WC meeting and through the follow-up calls.

### **PROJECT TEAM RESEARCH**

The Project Team identified actions that generated the most interest from WC members during the meeting, follow-up phone calls, and survey. These actions were researched and analyzed in light of specific WC member feedback, the current conditions and related policies or programs either existing or anticipated. The Project Team also considered relevant actions not specifically identified by the WC.

## METHOD (cont.)

### **POLICY & PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Project Team conducted extensive research on each of the actions identified as important through this process. A summary of the research findings for each of these actions is provided here.

# GOAL I [Coordination]

*Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies*



## TOPIC AREAS

1. Administration
2. Partnerships and Consolidated Resources

### 1. Administration

#### **(a) Establish a centralized local food “office” to coordinate food system initiatives throughout the City of Columbus and Franklin County. (059/363)**

The Weinland Park Food Campus, Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), and the Parsons Avenue Merchants Association (PAMA) Food Incubator Feasibility Study represent just a few of the many well planned local food efforts in our community. However, the current conditions assessment, stakeholder interviews and working committee members cite a lack of singular coordination, communication, and collaboration in the current system as a barrier to our local communities realizing the full potential of their local food efforts. Responsibilities of a centralized local food office would include implementation of the Local Food Action Plan, facilitating effective communication, coordinating funding efforts, leveraging resources and preventing redundancy to enhance the reach of existing and future local food system initiatives.

The “office” could also act as a liaison between the community and agencies providing technical assistance for food businesses to navigate permitting processes and maintain online and print resources to support food businesses. The City of Columbus and Franklin County should consider other local food office models such as Baltimore’s intergovernmental collaboration “Food Policy Initiative”, New York City’s “Office

of the Food Policy Coordinator”, Seattle’s “Office of Sustainability and Environment” or Boston’s “Office of Food Initiatives” for best practices and implementation, particularly for innovative approaches to city-county partnerships.

The foundational components necessary to create a local food “office” are in place and include the project team, the Healthy Food Access Program Manager position at Columbus Public Health and the Franklin County Local Food Council. The City and County’s Celebrate One organizational structure is one possible model to consider for the local food “office”. To implement the Local Food Action Plan, the “office” will need dedicated financial resources, staff, and the authority to carry out the recommendations.

A local food “office” can also help connect consumers to local food. Consumer surveys in the current conditions phase indicate that consumers want to buy local food. A wide variety of local, regional and national platforms exist to help consumers find local food. These include mapping efforts, databases, websites and resources that can help consumers locate purchase locations. The local food “office” can coordinate existing food system data and collect new data to help local buyers find local food. Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), OSU Extension and the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) are already engaged in this work and could help guide local efforts.

The local food “office” could also support collaboration between community-based emergency food service providers to share resources, coordinate services and adapt to the changing needs of the community. In interviews and meetings, stakeholders have consistently indicated the importance of emergency food services in the local food system. By preventing hunger, increasing access to healthy food and as a partner in preventing food waste, an efficient and connected emergency food system has been identified as an important component in our current local food system.

The current conditions report indicates that the City of Columbus and Franklin County have many resources to distribute emergency foods including food pantries, community meal sites, and summer feeding programs. HandsOn Central Ohio schedules food pantry appointments for over 100 food pantries in the City of Columbus and Franklin County. Mid-Ohio Foodbank provides a common source of food procurement, education, and expertise for community-based emergency food providers. Additionally, some emergency food and hunger relief services are part of coordinated systems such as Lutheran Social Services. However, many are individual efforts of community service and faith-based organizations and operate independently or with informal alliances with other community food providers.

The Waterbury Emergency Food Resource Committee is a potential model for an emergency food resource collaborative that could be led by the Local Food Office. Mid-Ohio Foodbank and HandsOn Central Ohio maintain extensive community data about areas of need and availability of resources that could guide efficiency and flexibility in the current system and support coordination and cooperation among community providers.

**(b) Establish an Agricultural Land Trust (010)**

A strong and resilient local food system requires arable land for growing food. Decreasing availability and affordability of local farmland coupled with the expense and challenges of repurposing urban land

for food production has created a need to institute comprehensive preservation tactics to ensure the future of farming and arable land in Franklin County. Farmland preservation and a strong urban-rural connection to our neighboring counties will be important elements to build local food production capacity.

An Agricultural Land Trust can connect producers with available farmland, identify land suitable for future agricultural uses and oversee tax abatements and other methods to increase the financial viability of keeping farmland under production. An Agricultural Land Trust can also increase awareness about land preservation and its benefits to conservation and the local food system.

Locally, the Trust would be operated by a public agency or a non-profit conservation organization supported by public agency funding and grants. The Trust should establish a board of trustees and maintain a website on conservation and agricultural easement programs available to the public. The City of Columbus, Franklin County, Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District, ODA, The Farm Bureau, Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts and local non-profit conservation groups could be the initial partners involved in establishing an Agricultural Land Trust in Franklin County. The Licking Land Trust and Appalachia Ohio Alliance are regional models of Agricultural Land Trusts. Local partners should engage with these organizations to incorporate best practices and collaborate with existing trusts to develop the rural-urban connection needed to support increased local food production.

**2. Partnerships**

**(a) Create a food processing collaborative (500)**

A local food processing collaborative can help overcome the reported barriers of reliability, consistency, quantity, seasonality and storage that currently stand between local producers and commercial and institutional buyers. Many local commercial and institutional buyers report an interest in purchasing local



food but they lack the capacity to cost-effectively incorporate these foods into their menus. For example, a large school district food service operation lacks the equipment and personnel needed to buy raw potatoes from a local grower and make mashed potatoes. Instead they must purchase prepared mashed potatoes to heat and serve. Additionally, peak harvest times may not coincide with when the products are most needed by commercial and institutional buyers. Local processors and distributors, who can produce the products needed to serve commercial and institutional buyers, also indicate an interest in sourcing from local producers, particularly at peak harvest times. However, the need for consistent quality and guaranteed quantities make it difficult for food businesses, particularly larger ones, to work with local producers. Increasing processing and distribution avenues for local producers will increase the market for local food and add value, making local food production more profitable for growers.

The upfront costs and financial risks of value added food processing for local foods, pose barriers to small businesses and start-ups and established processors and distributors alike. A food processing collaborative can lessen those barriers by sharing resources, funding and technical assistance. The City of Columbus and Franklin County in partnership with MORPC, The Commissary and Economic and Community Development Institute (ECDI) can support the development and growth of value added food processing and distribution for local foods. Partners can leverage shared funding, secure necessary resources and promote local food processing and distribution services to local food businesses and trade organizations. The partnership will operate as an organized, well-advertised and established source of support for food processing business expansions or start-ups in the City of Columbus and Franklin County.

**(b) Create a farmers market collaborative for the City of Columbus and Franklin County (429/776/2016)**

There is a demand and need to increase access to local and healthy food,

particularly in underserved communities. Local producers, particularly small to mid-sized specialty crop producers, primarily use farmers markets to sell their produce and prefer this method. Currently, there are 13 farmers markets in Franklin County that accept electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards, with 8 of these participating in the Veggie SNAPS program. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) acceptance at farmers markets increases access to healthy and local produce for residents and increased farmers market opportunities strengthens the market for small and mid-sized producers who prefer this method for selling their product.

The Ohio Farmer's Market Management Network describes itself as a cooperative that enables market managers and vendors to determine common needs and find ways for small and large markets to become more successful and cost-effective. Bringing this type of collaborative approach to our local Farmer's Markets network would increase consumer accessibility and the supply and demand of local food in the City of Columbus and Franklin County. The collaboration would provide technical assistance to farmers markets to help them procure and use EBT payment equipment, determine the need and location for new markets, strategically plan for new farmer's markets with an emphasis on increasing access in underserved communities, and support the expansion of Veggie SNAPS. Other responsibilities would include securing funding for farmers markets, providing business plan services for vendors and mediating relationships between local producers, consumers and farm market managers.

The Franklin County Local Food Council, or the local food "office" could form and direct the Network with technical assistance and funding from the City of Columbus and Franklin County. OSU Extension, the Ohio Farmer's Market Management Network, Franklin County Farm Bureau and Ohio Proud would be key partners in this effort. Funding could be sought from USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program.



## GOAL II [Access/Education]

*Improve access to nutritious, affordable food, and education about healthy food*



### TOPIC AREAS

1. Affordability
2. Bringing people to food
3. Bringing food to people
4. Community education
5. Institutional education and resources

### 1. Affordability

#### **(a) Expand SNAP/WIC acceptance to support Veggie SNAPS expansion\* (775)**

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are federally funded programs that provide financial assistance for low-income individuals and families to purchase food. The minimum requirements for the type and variety of foods that retail locations must stock to participate in SNAP and/or WIC also establish a baseline for healthy food availability. These standards have been used as the basis for store permitting processes in Minneapolis, MN to increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities. Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are the mechanism by which eligible participants redeem their benefits to purchase food. Increasing the number of retail locations that can accept EBT including farmers markets, mobile markets and other small retailers increases access to healthy food, particularly for food insecure individuals, families and communities.

Expanding SNAP/WIC acceptance throughout Franklin County will also establish the infrastructure necessary to allow expansion of the Veggie SNAPS program which enables SNAP users to double their dollars (up to \$10 per market visit) to purchase local fruits and

vegetables. Franklin County, the City of Columbus, and Wholesome Wave currently provide funding and personnel to support Veggie SNAPS as well as funding to help eligible farmers markets access EBT systems. The newly created Local Farmers Market Collaborative could provide support and technical assistance. Franklin County, the City of Columbus and United Way of Central Ohio can support farmers and mobile market managers as well as corner stores participating in the “Fresh Foods Here” initiative to increase SNAP/WIC payment acceptance and coordinate expansion of Veggie SNAPS to other retail locations. Like Minneapolis, the City of Columbus and Franklin County could require new markets or corner stores and expansions that depend upon public agency review and approval, such as building and zoning permits, to meet the standards required for SNAP/WIC participation. Public agencies could also establish incentives such as tax breaks, waived permit fees, accelerated permit review or special advertising or identification for those retail food establishments that accept SNAP/WIC payments.

## 2. Bringing people to food

### (a) Improve transit routes and transit options to healthy food sources\* (177)

Food mapping and the neighborhood conversations conducted during the current conditions phase illustrate that many of our communities lack access to healthy food options requiring them to travel greater distances to purchase the food they want and need to consume a healthy diet. Individuals and families of lower socioeconomic status and older adults also experience lower car ownership and increased reliance on public transportation. While communities want new grocery stores, farmers markets or other food retail development in their neighborhoods, improved public transit allows for communities and individuals to have greater freedom of choice and broader access to a range of resources, including healthy food options.

Franklin County and the City of Columbus can engage Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) to identify existing disconnects between residential areas and food retail to strategize improved service to increase connections. Healthy food accessibility should be a key factor in all future public transportation plans. These agencies can support infrastructure enhancements (e.g. covered bus stops, bike lanes, lighting, sidewalks) along strategic routes between residential areas, particularly low access and low income, and healthy food purchasing locations and identify best practice strategies such as grocery and cold food storage on buses. In coordination with the Local Food Office, public transit agencies can advertise food purchasing locations on route maps and make these resources accessible physically or online.

## 3. Bringing food to people

### (a) Increase and support mobile markets (699)

Mobile markets serve to increase access to and education about local and healthy food in underserved communities with low overhead and operational flexibility. A mobile market, in the form of a trailer or

refrigerated truck, would provide healthy, fresh, and local food at an affordable price and accept a variety of payment forms (e.g. cash, credit, debit, WIC, SNAP, vouchers) and participate in a double-up program like Veggie SNAPS. Mobile markets may also provide nutrition education and cooking demonstrations showing how to prepare healthy meals using the produce sold.

The City of Columbus and Franklin County can collaborate with existing farmers markets (or the newly formed Farmers Market Collaborative), local urban farms, civic agriculture, neighborhood associations, and nonprofits to determine the location and feasibility of pilot programs in key communities. The collaboration will consider previous mobile market efforts like the Veggie Van program provided by Local Matters in Northland and the Westside of Columbus from 2009-2012.

Models in other communities, coupled with local experiences suggest that a successful and sustainable mobile market requires a community location that maximizes participation, has a firm understanding of local consumer demand and an understanding of logistics, staffing, distribution, equipment, and that maximizes consumer purchasing power through SNAP and nutrition incentives. With rural producers selling at existing farmers markets and through CSAs, mobile markets could leverage produce from urban farms and neighborhood civic agriculture to increase financial viability of this model. In coordination with mobile market distribution, urban farms could establish and coordinate mobile CSAs that provide home delivery for homebound elderly and physically disabled residents. Other home delivery models, like the Cambridge Food For Free Home Delivery program which delivers groceries to low-income residents who cannot access food pantries due to illness or disability, should also be explored.

## MOBILE MARKET

The Arcadia Mobile Market is a nonprofit farm-stand-on-wheels which travels on a regular schedule to low income neighborhoods in the Washington D.C. area. Arcadia is a nonprofit based in Alexandria, Virginia, created through a partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Arcadia manages four program areas that address specific needs of the community that collectively engage consumers, farmers, schools, and institution.

The pilot program for the Arcadia Mobile Market began in 2012 with eight stops a week during peak season, running from May 2nd-October 31st. Products included fruit, eggs, milk, and meats, all sustainably produced from partner farms within 80 miles of the Washington D.C. area. Arcadia limited product offerings to those locally and sustainably-produced, picking up at these farms, relieving farmers of distribution expenses, and allowing these savings to be passed along to the customers.

Operating out of a retrofitted school bus and box truck, the market serves low food access areas both through making educational visits to elementary and middle schools and operating a “community hub” food market. By increasing product variety based directly upon customer demand, the market effectively increased sales volume. Compared to a traditional grocery shopping experience, the market is personal, featuring a compact setting where repeat customers often cross paths week after week. Many mobile market customers use EBT card points to make their purchases, and through the bonus bucks program, the value of their points is doubled. Grants going towards the cost of the market’s produce and protein offerings further help to ease the cost burden on customers, enabling them to more effectively make it through to their next paycheck. To ensure residents’ accessibility and awareness, the season schedule with market locations on Google Maps is available on Arcadia’s mobile market website.

In 2014, Arcadia Mobile Market sales and revenue increased markedly from the previous two years following the purchase of their second vehicle, an Isuzu box truck. The new vehicle had considerably better sales per hour and gross sales in its pilot phase than the school bus, despite over 40% fewer market hours and stop locations not being listed in many local farmers market directories due to the late start of the season.

### **(b) Support training programs for small store owners on sourcing perishable food (669)**

There are existing small to mid-sized retailers (i.e. convenience stores) near residential areas that do not currently carry healthy and fresh food. In communities with low access to healthy food purchasing locations, these stores can fill the gap by expanding their food inventory. Training store owners on sourcing and handling perishable food in combination with incentives has been shown to support these businesses in increasing healthy and fresh food access for nearby communities. Increasing the sourcing of fruits and vegetables provides the opportunity to source locally, bringing in local producers and distributors for supply.

Currently, training is available through the “Fresh Foods Here Healthy Corner Store” initiative in specific neighborhoods. Franklin County and the City of Columbus will continue to work with the United Way of Central Ohio to identify technical assistance needs, provide training on SNAP/WIC vendor applications, and increase funding to additional stores in underserved communities. Public agencies can also help spread awareness of the program to small store owners, interested communities, local producers, and farmers markets.

## FRESH FOOD SOURCES

**Fresh Foods Here** (FFH) is a comprehensive approach by the United Way of Central Ohio, working alongside community partners, to improve access to healthy and affordable retail food by increasing the number of healthy corner stores. The approach involves store redesign, inventory and supply chain enhancements, and community engagement.

In 2010, five Central Ohio organizations collaborated to develop and implement strategies for addressing the lack of healthy food access. In an attempt to identify certain sites and partners within Central Ohio, teams of Public Health students from The Ohio State University surveyed 52 corner and convenience stores in five low-income neighborhoods. Based on the survey results and as the focus of recent city and community revitalization efforts, members determined that the neighborhood of Franklinton would be a good location to initiate the Fresh Foods Here program; a neighborhood with 51% of households living in poverty.

FFH recruited three corner stores in Franklinton and among the results documented were increases in foot traffic along with increased availability of healthy foods and healthy food purchases. Two of the three pilot stores remain engaged in the program. An expansion phase of FFH began in 2013 to include the Hilltop neighborhood, another West Columbus neighborhood classified as a “food desert” by the USDA. In early 2015, FFH chose the historic Near East Side neighborhood to establish more corner store partnerships which will lead to more healthy food being stocked, marketed and sold.

Five key indicators, including store improvements, patronage, healthful food availability, healthful food purchases and resident knowledge and intent, guide the FFH initiative. These are grouped between three objectives which include: increasing the availability of healthy and affordable food in corner stores, encouraging healthy food consumption, and increasing consumer knowledge of healthy diets. Components of the key indicators include: utilizing internal and external store improvements, supply chain and inventory enhancements and community education and engagement programs to drive store patronage, and supporting healthful food consumption and resident knowledge of healthy food.

Partnering organizations include food banks, libraries, faith-based organizations and community members, whose collaboration will continue to play a critical role going forward to incorporate future corner stores into the FFH network. To ensure more participants, FFH has made fiscal sustainability a priority. Currently funded through grants, FFH members will need to garner both financial and non-financial resources to expand the existing model, while setting aside resources for individual store operations.

**South Side Roots**, a community initiative of Mid-Ohio Foodbank and co-located in the Reeb Avenue Center, represents a different small retail approach to increasing access to healthy foods. South Side Roots Market, open 8am-7pm Monday through Friday, offers fresh produce and grocery items at an affordable price to increase access to quality food for area residents.

South Side Roots Cafe offers low cost meals with a varied payment structure. Customers can pay the full suggested price for their meal, pay the full suggested price for their meal and “pay it forward” for a neighbor to enjoy a meal, or give time in service if unable to pay the full suggested price. The Cafe is open Monday through Friday from 11am-3pm for lunch.

The Kitchen provides meals and snacks for students at the adjoined South Side Learning & Development Center and Boys & Girls Club of Columbus. South Side Roots also serves a weekly Community Meal through the Kitchen every Tuesday evening from 5:30pm to 7:30pm in the Cafe dining room.

**(c) Support public and institutional purchase agreements of local and healthy food (134)**

Increased purchasing of local and healthy food by schools, senior care facilities and institutions will increase access for consumers and strengthen the market for local food, supporting local producers, processors and distributors. Commercial and institutional buyers face challenges consistently purchasing and providing local produce options at large scales. There are limited local processors available to process at a large enough scale to effectively bridge small and mid-sized producers to large institutional purchasers. This action will also cultivate the demand required to support the food processing collaborative described in Goal 1, Action 500.

The Local Food Office, Franklin County

Local Food Council, and OSU Extension's Farm to School can facilitate collaborations between local producers, processors, and distributors to institutional and commercial buyers (e.g. Columbus City Schools, OSU, Columbus State Community College) to identify feasible solutions and benchmarks for commercial and institutional buyers to begin incorporating local and healthy food into menus. Planning menus that can be locally sourced, introducing local and healthy food into meals by starting once a week or once a month and establishing a specific baseline goal for a percentage of food to be sourced locally are approaches that have been utilized in some communities as a way to gradually increase demand and then supply of local food. This collaborative process can be used to develop resources and technical assistance models that will provide a set of metrics to help assess and report the local purchasing activities and goals of commercial and

## **FOOD PURCHASING POLICY**

The Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) was created by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC) in 2012 to empower food service institutions to improve the regional food system through the implementation of meaningful purchasing standards. Five value categories were identified in which these purchasing standards would have an impact including: (1) local economies, (2) environmental sustainability, (3) valued workforce, (4) animal welfare, and (5) nutrition. Institutions participating in the GFPP must meet "Good Food Purchasing Guidelines" and choose their organization's level of commitment towards Good Food goals through a tiered, points-based scoring system; it is at this point that they are awarded one to five stars based on their total score.

The GFPP came about after a Task Force was established in 2009 by LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, challenged to develop a Good Food policy agenda for Los Angeles to make food affordable, fair and sustainable. Within a year of the Task Force's establishment following roundtable discussions and listening sessions involving over 200 members, a Good Food for All Agenda (GFFA) was released, and the LAFPC was created in response to one of the report's recommendations. Task Force leaders identified the procurement phase of the food system as integral to achieving GFFA recommendations, and therefore, moved ahead to develop a model template for "good food" purchasing. They created a drafted policy, which was worked on by various stakeholders, leading to tensions between support for fair labor practices and support for small local farmers. Following further dialogue between groups, a new draft was created by early 2012 and sent to the working group for review, when a key revision was made to include nutrition in the content of the document as opposed to the appendix. Then, prior to the adoption of the GFPP resolution in July 2012, the LA Unified School District expressed a desire to utilize the GFPP for the purchasing practices of local schools and a major food service; within a few weeks following adoption, the major food service distributor signed the GFPP pledge on behalf of two large corporate LA cafeterias. While the impacts of the policy remain to be seen, the University of Wisconsin is in the process of conducting an evaluation of the Los Angeles "Good Food" region.

institutional buyers, and develop an institutional purchasing policy that the City of Columbus and Franklin County can adopt. The Farm to School Census provides a potential model for establishing and reporting these metrics. Based on the work of this group of stakeholders, the Local Food Office can establish a social marketing campaign to support local food purchases expanding to households (see action 456).

**(d) Increase and support civic agriculture\* (651/2014)**

Civic agriculture is defined by the Greater Columbus Growing Coalition as agricultural efforts that increase the health, social, and economic well-being of the community. Civic agriculture in Columbus and Franklin County provides multiple benefits to communities including nutrition and food system education, fresh and healthy produce, job creation, training, entrepreneurship and community engagement. Many neighborhood associations and communities in Columbus and Franklin County currently use the land bank system to establish and operate civic agriculture. The City of Columbus, Franklin County, the Greater Columbus Growing Coalition and the Franklin Park Conservatory currently oversee annual grant funding and free resources for communities interested in civic agriculture.

The Local Food Office can work with institutional partners (OSU Extension, Franklin Park Conservatory, Mid-Ohio Foodbank Urban Farms of Central Ohio, public and private funders), civic agriculture organizations (Greater Columbus Growing Coalition, Columbus Growing Collective, Columbus Agrarian Society, etc.) and neighborhood associations to establish reasonable uniform measures and standardized reporting procedures to better describe the positive effects of civic agriculture in our community. Partners and Public agencies, including the City of Columbus and Franklin County could coordinate with local civic agriculture experts and advocates to identify opportunities to leverage existing resources (volunteers, tools, donated plants, soil, etc.) to extend

their impact and reach. This collaboration should also explore innovative funding strategies for new and existing gardens to plan for the long term support and expansion of civic agriculture across our community. The USDA, Community Development Block Grant programs and nonprofit organizations such as the National Gardening Association (NGA) “Youth Garden Grant” all offer funding that can be sought to support civic agriculture in our community.

## 4. Community education

**(a) Provide nutrition education and healthy food purchasing incentives at grocery stores\* (682)**

Feedback from the community has called for more on-site education, nutrition counseling, and shopping strategies in grocery stores to increase the potential impact on consumers as they can make coinciding or immediate purchasing decisions. Program evaluations suggest that this strategy, in coordination with purchasing incentives, is effective for promoting increased fruit and vegetable purchases and label reading skills.

The Local Food Office, in concert with organizations such as the Franklin County Local Food Council, Local Matters, Fresh Foods Here, Molina Healthcare, and Kroger, should collaborate to expand existing programming and develop new programming that supports education and affordability for consumers in purchasing healthy and local food at grocery stores.



## GROCERY STORE EDUCATION

Cooking Matters at the Store is a nationwide program intended to help participants learn the skills of how to purchase healthy and affordable food during a free grocery store tour. Share Our Strength, a national nonprofit, supports the program through their No Kid Hungry Campaign. The program has two curricula with Cooking Matters at the Store for Adults and Cooking Matters at the Store for WIC. During a two-hour tour, participants are exposed to four key healthy and cost effective food behaviors including reading food labels, comparing unit prices, identifying whole grains, and purchasing produce in three different ways. Participants end the tour with a \$10 dollar challenge in which they utilize the skills learned during the tour to make a healthy meal based on MyPlate guidelines for under \$10. If participants complete the challenge they are provided with a \$10 dollar gift card to purchase their planned healthy meal. In addition, participants are provided with a reusable shopping bag and booklet of recipes and shopping tips.

A review of the nationwide program in 2013 by the Altarum Institute indicated 89% of families reported saving money on groceries five weeks after taking a store tour. Seventy six percent of families also reported buying more fruits and vegetables after taking the tour while the key skill of food label reading more than double to 83% of participants. Cooking Matters additionally reported that 85% of WIC graduates feel as if they are able to identify WIC food at the grocery store while 88% are very or completely confident in their ability to make the most out of their fruit and vegetable vouchers.

In Central Ohio, Cooking Matters at the Store has partnered with Kroger and Local Matters to provide guided educational grocery store tours at multiple locations across the area. This project has leveraged onsite healthcare professionals in the store pharmacy and specifically targeted stores serving communities with higher rates of diet-related chronic diseases. This education and nutrition counseling at the point of purchase supports consumers in purchasing healthy and local food. Shopping strategies and financial incentives help improve affordability for consumers.

### **(b) Increase and support centers with community food education and access programs and resources (e.g. kitchen programs, civic agriculture, health fairs)\* (391/789)**

There is currently a demand for local food from consumers and a need for increased access to healthy and fresh food. However, there are still indications that consumers remain unaware of opportunities to purchase local produce. Consumers also are unaware of the seasonal availability of local produce, its impact on the local economy, and its value to local communities. Kitchen programs, such as cooking demonstrations and hands-on cooking, support increased consumer awareness of local and healthy food by highlighting it and cooking with it. Increased awareness and consumption will expand the market for local food and potentially curb the risk of diet-related chronic diseases, particularly in

communities with low access to healthy food and food education resources.

Aside from engaging with other community members, community centers provide space for food collection, distribution and learning through kitchens, classes or workshops; opportunities when modified or leveraged, provide increased access or education relating to local and healthy food. Increasing access and awareness will curb the risk of diet-related chronic conditions and grow consumer support for the local food system.

The current conditions assessment as well as stakeholder interviews indicate that there are organizations that have physical kitchens and classrooms and are seeking education providers to provide services. At the same time education and service providers are seeking locations and audiences to provide their services. The Local Food Office together with

## COMMUNITY FOOD CENTER

The City of Toronto’s “The Stop” is a community food center with a 30-year history of helping people meet emergency food needs with dignified, respectful services centered on healthy food. The organization’s multiple programs all work towards this end and include a food bank, drop-in meal program, community kitchens, markets and bake ovens, healthy beginnings and family support, educational programs, and urban agriculture. Specifically, The Stop brings in residents through its Community Action Program under which the Community Advocacy Office exists, comprised of The Bread and Bricks Davenport West Social Justice Group and Community Action Training programs. The Community Advocacy Office is designed to accommodate residents with or without current employment, without access to an adequate source of healthy food. For these members of the community, the Community Advocacy Office offers additional support in the areas of income, housing, legal issues, health care, immigration and refugee settlement services, and clothing and furniture etc.

As a community food center, The Stop has greatly influenced the direction of the surrounding neighborhood, and positively impacted the greater Toronto area. Beginning with the conversion of an unused bocce ball court into a 10,000 square-foot community garden down the street from its current location, The Stop managed to establish one of Toronto’s first community gardens fifteen years ago. Today, that garden continues to produce 2,000 lbs. of healthy, organic produce for The Stop’s programs.

The Stop’s kitchen is a center of activity and an essential component of the food center’s offerings. It functions to support the food bank which serves warm meals nine times a week for around 200 people, with 85 percent of the kitchen’s food items originating from local farms. To accommodate these individuals, The Stop relies on the assistance of 300 volunteers, of which approximately 60 percent are clients who generously give of their time. Cooking classes specifically for neighbors, many of whom are younger ages and of ethnic backgrounds, occur in the kitchen six times per week.

Funding for the Stop originates from a wide variety of sources including, but not limited to: corporations, foundations, organizations, faith groups, government and special events. Of these sources, foundations account for 30% of income and events comprise 20%. Expenditures are broken down by program costs (70%), donated food (16%), and fundraising and communications (15%). Through the popular “What’s on the Table” fundraising gala alone, The Stop has raised \$2.5 million to support its work, and just in 2015, this gala raised \$328,000 for The Stop’s programs.

area hospitals (e.g. Mt. Carmel, OSU, Ohio Health, Nationwide Children’s), Local Matters, Mid-Ohio Foodbank, existing neighborhood community centers, neighborhood associations, civic agriculture, grocery stores, and OSU Extension could identify existing resources and educational programs in the community, connect service locations to service providers and identify gaps where additional demonstration kitchens, food collection/distribution points and educational programs should be developed. The City of Columbus and Franklin County can leverage existing opportunities with Columbus State Community College’s Hospitality

Management programs and the Columbus Culinary Institute to create “farm to table” programs and host neighborhood kitchen programs in communities with low access to affordable and healthy food. Other partners could include Franklin Park Conservatory and The Commissary to provide classes on-site or at community centers.

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## 5. Institutional education and resources

### (a) Increase nutrition and food system education into public school curricula\* (652)

Children in communities with low access to healthy food are at greater risk for diet-related chronic conditions such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes. Integrating nutrition and an understanding of the local food system throughout the school curriculum can decrease this risk. From providing healthy food in cafeterias to teaching children how to grow vegetables, increased nutrition and food

system education raises a new generation of individuals aware of and supporting the local food system. New national standards outlined in the “Every Student Succeeds Act” recognize the importance of health and nutrition in school curriculums, which will pave the way for local conversations.

The City of Columbus and Franklin County will collaborate with Columbus City Schools to assess the feasibility of nutrition and food system education in the K-12 curriculum. The collaborative process should include a robust analysis of current budget items associated with food and nutrition curriculum and identify additional funding and technical support needs. Partners could include OSU Extension Farm to School, Local Matters,

### SCHOOL NUTRITION

TALES PS - 244, also known as the Active Learning Elementary School (TALES), is a Pre-K to 3 school in Queens, New York that utilizes an innovative approach to learning with the mission of fostering academic excellence within a safe and caring learning environment. Core values of TALES relate to: (1) Respect, (2) Leadership, (3) Community, (4) Commitment, and (5) Nutrition. The learning environment was created to meet the needs of all students including those with special needs. Teachers collaborate with one another when children are struggling with certain concepts or assignments; in the case of a student struggling to complete a homework assignment outside of class, the primary and after-school teacher will both offer their tutelage to give the student a greater opportunity to fully understand and complete the assignment.

The primary aspect of the schooling experience supporting educational processes at TALES is its emphasis on health and wellness. The nutrition program offered at TALES called “FAN4KIDS” compliments the unique fitness-based, health-oriented curriculum and is designed specifically for students in grades K-3. This program begins at breakfast, where plant-based breakfast and lunch sandwiches are served through a partnership with NY Coalition for Healthy School Fund, a nonprofit that educates the entire school community about nutrition and plant-based foods through the program. Family dinner nights are also offered to families along with healthy eating workshops, morning running clubs for students, recess for at least 20 minutes each day, and teachers being trained in “Move-to-Improve”.

Based on these values and innovative approaches to the health and well-being of all students, the school was recognized by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation as one of the “healthiest schools in the nation” and a recipient of the prestigious Healthy Schools Program Silver National Recognition Award. Founded by the American Heart Association and Clinton Foundation to address growing obesity rates in children, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation has led to healthier, obesity-solving school environments in 31,000 schools across the US over the past 10 years through its Healthy School Program. Initiatives within the Healthy Schools Program focus on the health and well-being of students and teachers alike by conducting an assessment and developing an action plan. Action plan items involve policy-making to make drinking water available and free all day, instituting the USDA’s Smart Snack standards, providing resources and guidance for healthy recipes and options, and developing the physical education program to encourage movement throughout the school day.

and the Franklin County Farm Bureau. Local stakeholders including nonprofits, neighborhood associations and parent teacher organizations should be included to engage neighborhoods and families. Potential grant funding sources include the USDA's Farm to School program and the American Heart Association's Voices for Healthy Kids. Once best practices and a model program have been introduced, the City of Columbus and Franklin County will share this information with other local school districts.

**(b) Increase healthy food education and provide fruit/vegetable prescription programs with counseling and food vouchers at health centers. (698/861)**

Referral-based incentives, like Produce Prescription, have been shown to increase access to fruits and vegetables and change consumption behaviors because patients are influenced by the recommendations of health care professionals. Increasing consumer access to fruits and vegetables further supports the market for local produce. Additionally, assessing the current utilization of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and SNAP-Ed offerings at federally qualified health centers can further support efforts to expand access to nutrition education and enhance utilization of produce prescription programs.

Public agencies such as Columbus Public Health would collaborate with affordable, neighborhood-focused health care centers to identify opportunities to expand healthy food education offered to patients. This should be coupled with an effectively operated, widely adopted fruit and vegetable prescription program to support individuals who lack access to healthy and local food or are most at risk for diet-related chronic conditions.

Important partners include, OSU Extension, Primary One Health and the Ohio Association of Free Clinics to help with assessment and technical support. Public agencies can also collaborate with institutional networks (e.g. OhioHealth, Mount Carmel, OSU Medical Centers, Nationwide Children's Hospital) in

geographic areas with low access to healthy and nutritious food to expand healthy food education programs and resources.

**(c) Increase and support immigrant and refugee community education (205)**

Immigrant and non-English speaking communities frequently experience low access to healthy and affordable food which increases the risk for diet-related chronic conditions. Programs that provide for the specific, culturally-appropriate needs of these communities can improve access to affordable healthy food and education about healthy food.

In conjunction with Columbus Public Health's Minority Health Advisory Committee, the City of Columbus and Franklin County should partner with Local Matters, Community Refugee & Immigration Services, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and area hospitals and institutions to engage immigrant populations and include them in the decision-making process for future food related programs or facilities. There is great opportunity for cultural exchange through food, and an expectation that educators and policy-makers will learn from participants through an open dialogue.

Public agencies should assess the need for civic agriculture, food programming, and community facilities in areas of concentrated immigrant populations for culturally-appropriate classes spoken in the native language and featuring native dishes, gardens that grow native produce, and public resources and materials available in native languages. Where there are no current facilities or programs, public agencies can work with area hospitals (i.e. Mt. Carmel West Healthy Living Center) and institutions to host education and nutrition classes targeted to immigrant communities. Additionally, public agencies should connect communities to culturally relevant civic agriculture, farmers markets and healthy food purchasing locations.

## GOAL III [Economic Development]

*Increase the role of food in economic development.*



### TOPIC AREAS

1. Food business growth
2. Workforce
3. Consumer demand
4. Local food supply

### 1. Food business growth

#### **(a) Provide short-term financial and technical assistance for food business expansions and start-ups (464/463)**

Local specialty crop and meat production, and associated processing, must expand to effectively satisfy commercial and institutional buyers. Production and processing are linked in such a way that one cannot increase without an increase in the other.

To expand sustainably, local producers and processors need a mixture of low-interest loan options coupled with technical assistance, including guidance on crop insurance options. While “long-term” loans remain available to producers, largely from the USDA assistance programs (ranging from 7 to 40 years), “short-term” loans provide increased flexibility and choices for funding.

Public-private partnerships could provide financial and technical assistance targeted to for-profit local food businesses, such as specialty crop producers, both urban and rural, and locally sourced food processors. Such a partnership would include Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and Small Business Administration (SBA) Lenders, such as the Economic and Development Institute (ECDI). Potential funding methods could include annual one-time loans and social impact investment. Public agencies such as OSU Extension could help review

requests for funding and providing technical assistance to recipients. Requests would be reviewed and assessed on the basis of their economic and social impact with consideration given to supporting existing operations and increasing their accessibility to the market.

A key asset to future partnerships and efforts, ECDI Columbus is a nonprofit economic development organization that offers loans and services to small businesses ready or working their way towards financial assistance. ECDI’s Food Fort incubator provides food entrepreneurs access to training, technical assistance and commercial kitchen space currently serving as vital resource to the mobile food industry. The Commissary is a similar local operation providing classes, rentable commercial kitchen space, and storage. Other potential partners include nonprofits and organizations interested in or providing socially responsible and local investment.

#### **(b) Revise zoning codes, land use plans and permitting processes to support agricultural uses and the local food system\* (548/302/757/108/336)**

Existing zoning codes (land use regulations) and permitting processes create barriers to local food production and purchasing. While land use plans set forth future development and land preservation goals, zoning codes achieve

**GREEN BUSINESS AND URBAN AGRICULTURE**

The City of Columbus Green Business and Urban Agriculture Strategic Plan includes two components. The first is a review of City rules, regulations, codes, policies and procedures that impact urban agriculture. The second is a market study and business plan focused on the potential for developing, attracting and growing green businesses and activities within core urban areas with a high volume of vacant parcels. The goal of the of the plan is to help transform the City’s blighted neighborhoods by using sustainably focused activities and business as an engine for economic growth. Coordinated by the City of Columbus Department of Development, the consultant team is comprised of MKSK, MORPC, ACEnet, Development Strategies, Graydon Land Use Strategies and OSU Extension. With a planned launch date of February 17, 2016 the planning process is projected to take approximately nine months. Project deliverables will include: Market Growth Strategies & Business Support Plan; Model Development Concepts (site plans and perspective renderings); Policy Modifications; Stakeholder & Public Meeting Summaries. To insure effective intra-departmental coordination and communication, Columbus Public Health staff that serve on the Local Food Action Plan Project Team will also serve on the Working Committee for the Green Business and Urban Agriculture Strategic Plan. Key personnel from the Department of Development will provide at least once monthly updates on this planning process to the Local Food Action Plan Project Team.

those goals by establishing and enforcing development standards. Revisions may increase availability and access to farmland or vacant land suitable for food production, farmers markets and grocery stores while also supporting or lessening barriers to local food business start-ups or expansions. Zoning and land use plans should consider and support agricultural uses, including civic agriculture, grocery stores, farmers markets and innovative mixed use development that incorporates such uses.

Some of these uses play an important role in bridging the rural-urban divide. Innovative development models such as agricultural parks, which incorporate working farms into public parks and create buffers between rural and urban land may support the local food system but may not always be supported by land use plans or zoning codes. Zoning codes and land use plans require recurring updates to consider new and innovative land uses and development not previously existing.

Franklin County and the residing municipalities should work with their development, planning, building and zoning departments to assess existing codes, land use plans and permitting processes for their compatibility with agricultural uses and support of the local

food system. Referencing existing best practices, ordinances, and codes, they must take a comprehensive approach to avoid contradiction and redundancy. To ensure locally specific, actionable and effective revisions, they must work with community members, local food system stakeholders and non-profit organizations to identify community-specific barriers and potential solutions.

Following code updates, The City of Columbus and Franklin County could advertise them as guides for other local municipalities interested in supporting the local food system through zoning codes and land use plans. Public agencies could communicate these updates through user-friendly guides to local food system stakeholders, such as producers and consumers, to support effective implementation.

**(c) Support streamlined food processing certification with state and local agencies (193)**

Food processing certification and associated regulations are significant barriers for start-up food processor and distributor businesses, particularly small and independent operations. Varying regulations and enforcing agencies create unclear direction for food businesses,

particularly start-ups. Meat processing licenses remain particularly difficult to obtain due to regulations. While rentable inspected commercial kitchen space allows small businesses or startups to process food in compliance with regulations, there is a lack of available and affordable space, and the awareness of those resources.

Public agencies should convene local food processors, distributors and supporting nonprofits and organizations to assess current regulations and identify immediate and long-term solutions. MORPC, The Commissary and OSU Extension's Agricultural Law program should be included in these conversations. The City of Columbus and Franklin County could also advocate for municipal, county and state level revisions to regulations and permitting that streamline certification and support food processors and distributors.

**(d) Transform vacant commercial spaces into neighborhood food hubs, food-based businesses, education sites or green space\* (817)**

Redeveloping vacant commercial and industrial spaces for new food businesses provides jobs, training and education to nearby communities while also attracting investment and contributing to local food supply and demand. As a relatively urban county, vacant or transitioning commercial and industrial land remains near to supportive transportation infrastructure in Franklin County; that infrastructure is an asset facilitating county-wide connection to urban, suburban and rural geographies.

Development plans must consider neighborhood scale and gain community support. Public-private partnerships could provide funding and technical assistance, including sustainable business plans. Possible partners include Columbus 2020, Columbus Department of Development, Franklin County Economic Development and Planning, The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Columbus and the Ohio Department of Development. Partners should enlist neighborhood associations and local non-profits to conduct community conversations and ensure community input and collaboration.

Existing and upcoming plans and initiatives may support those looking to develop vacant commercial and industrial land. The City of Columbus' "Green Business and Urban Agriculture Strategic Plan", launched in 2016, will consider green business development potential in areas of the urban core with a high volume of vacant parcels. "Parcels to Places" will consider temporary and permanent uses for retrofitting vacant parcels in Columbus and Franklin County. It was developed through partnerships between the Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing (OCCH), City of Columbus Land Redevelopment Office, Affordable Housing Trust for Columbus and Franklin County, and the Neighborhood Design Center with additional funding from The Columbus Foundation.

## 2. Workforce

**(a) Create a task-force to study food system wages and support increased purchasing power of food system workers (2020)**

Workers in the local food system, from production to retail, typically do not earn a wage that allows them to purchase the quantity and quality of food required to support a healthy diet for themselves and their family. While food system wage is available qualitatively through stakeholder interviews and individual cases and quantitatively at the national level, there is a need for local and community-wide data to support future programming, funding and policies. Local food businesses, from producers to commercial buyers, and the local food system in general, depend on well-trained and accessible workers for sustainability and growth. Food system workers, like all other employment industries, require food security, housing and health care accessibility to provide a dependable workforce.

A task force, created by the City of Columbus and Franklin County, could study food system wages and the economic impact of workers in all sectors of the food industry including farming, processing, distribution, retail food sales and food service. The study could also include food system workers' housing conditions and

access to health care. In coordination with the study, the task force could consider and make recommendations to the city and county on methods for supporting and advocating for increased purchasing power of food system workers.

**(b) Support food business classes, internships, and hands-on learning experiences (442)**

Producers need labor, business training and marketing support to remain profitable and grow the industry within Franklin County. Professional classes, internships and hands-on learning experiences will support a trained workforce for the local food system and increase business expertise specific to each sector.

Collaboration between local food businesses, joint vocational schools, and institutions could create or expand these opportunities. From urban agriculture to food processing, these opportunities prepare professionally trained and educated workers for the local food system. Elected officials and community stakeholders such as chambers of commerce must consider and advocate for these programs. Potential partners and stakeholders include Franklin County Economic Development and Planning and its “PeopleWorks” program, the City of Columbus, Ohio Means Jobs Columbus-Franklin County, OSU Extension, Columbus State Community College, Franklin University, ECDI Columbus and Columbus 2020.

Culinary programs provide a specific opportunity for institutional and vocational intersection in the local food system. Hocking College, located in Nelsonville, Ohio, provides a prime example where culinary students prepare produce grown by local farms, which is then supplied to local K-12 schools. There are existing institutional programs in Columbus and Franklin County that could be leveraged to support local food businesses.

### 3. Consumer Demand

**(a) Support international food marketplaces\* (845)**

International marketplaces facilitate diversity in food offerings and involvement of immigrant and refugee communities; they leverage food to build community, education, and the place of local food within communities. Increasing local food diversity attracts consumer interest followed by commercial buyers; consumer awareness and demand for local food encourages retail and wholesale local food purchasing. It also bolsters local food’s identity and brand, supporting food tourism efforts and creating a destination for tourists and neighboring communities alike.

USDA grant funding is available to non-profit market operations. Public-private partnerships could provide funding for start-up costs and technical assistance that creates feasible business plans. Community stakeholders and nonprofit organizations working with immigrant and refugee communities must be consulted to ensure potential projects are culturally sensitive and feasible.

**(b) Support a strategic marketing plan for local food\* (529)**

There is an opportunity to leverage the growing demand for fresh, healthy and local produce. Effectively communicating this consumer preference and demand on a larger scale will encourage processors, distributors and commercial buyers, particularly large-scale buyers both wholesale and retail, to purchase more local produce and increase availability to consumers.

The marketing plan could be coordinated through public-private partnerships directed by the Local Food Office, a stakeholder group or committee involving the Franklin County Farm Bureau, Ohio Proud, OSU Extension, Franklin County Local Food Council, Experience Columbus and other public visitors bureaus, local grocers, restaurants and media.



This plan could include regional or local branding, similar to the Ohio Proud brand established by the ODA, but as a branch of the program (i.e. “Central Ohio Proud”). Potential branding must include agreed upon metrics and accountability standards for producers and commercial buyers to help consumers understand branding and incentivize buyers to purchase local. The marketing plan should consider potential linkages with existing public health efforts and local food tourism initiatives by local economic development departments.

**(c) Support grocery store location and expansion, particularly in underserved neighborhoods (593)**

Grocery stores provide jobs, job training, increased economic activity and serve as a vital source of bulk food and produce, offering healthy and local food options and making up a significant part of the market with their large-scale food purchasing power. Grocery stores tend to increase home values, attract other retail uses, commercial investment and serve as community anchors attracting community programming and services (bus passes, banking, food tours and demonstrations). Locating grocery stores within underserved neighborhoods increases consumer access to healthy, nutritious and local food where it is most needed.

Public-private partnerships should support existing efforts including the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), an initiative of the Finance Fund, which issued the “Food for Every Child” report in 2014 showing communities in Ohio most underserved by supermarkets. Partnerships should work with the Finance Fund to leverage resources to support grocery store and healthy food purchasing locations and expansions in Columbus and Franklin County. Potential partners include the United Way of Central Ohio, ECDI Columbus and other local nonprofits.

**(d) Support neighborhood food business centers\* (813)**

Neighborhood food business centers can act as “third places”, creating destinations for those inside and outside

of the community, increasing consumer awareness and potential demand for local food. As a destination, centers provide opportunity for community engagements and economic investment, particularly social impact investment. They also provide opportunities to employ and train food system workers.

USDA grants and public-private partnerships could fund the initial development with institutions, universities and hospitals, providing educational programming, volunteer and internship support. Partnerships could include public economic development offices, ECDI Columbus, The Ohio State University, Columbus 2020 and MORPC. Development proposals should achieve community support, possibly through hiring and training residents. Creating an endowment may be a possible solution to fund operating costs. For-profit operations must create business plans through technical assistance from partnerships and funders to ensure feasibility following initial funding expiration.

## 4. Local Food Supply

**(a) Support local food system cooperatives (437)**

Cooperatives defray upfront costs to new businesses that typically come from purchasing equipment and facilities. Successful operations would aggregate and expand local food supply helping local food businesses scale-up to meet purchaser requirements. Sharing resources could lower the final cost of products making local businesses more competitive in the market. There is a need to increase the number of sustainable local food businesses, particularly producers and processors.

Cooperatives would provide a wide range of services, uses and allow on-site sales. Potential economic drivers include storage and processing operations such as temperature-controlled root cellars, flash freezing, high pressure processing and meat processing. Keys to success include hiring full time staff, securing

## COOPERATIVES

The Cleveland Green City Growers Cooperative (GCGC) is a public-private partnership and third cooperative business to join the Evergreen Cooperatives network. Cleveland-area organizations including the Cleveland Foundation, the Cleveland Clinic, University Hospitals, Case Western Reserve University, and the municipal government formed GCGC to create living-jobs for low-income Cleveland residents at the organization's greenhouse facility- the nation's largest urban food production greenhouse. GCGC's greenhouse operates year-round and produces lettuce heads and herbs distributed to customers within a 150-mile radius of Cleveland, within 24 hours of harvest. Since its first seeds were planted in December 2012 on a 3.5 acre site in the heart of Cleveland, the three football field-sized facility has produced 60,000 heads of lettuce weekly or 3 million heads annually, and 300,000 pounds of herbs annually.

The organization was founded in 2011 after accessing an array of sources. An impediment to GCGC receiving funding was the fact that traditional agricultural funding typically goes to rural efforts. GCGC, therefore, turned to an innovative approach to acquire funding, beginning with the real estate portion of the project. This funding was a combination of \$8 million of HUD Section 108 loans and \$2 million of Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (BEDI) grants directed into the New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) financing (provided by the U.S. Department of the Treasury) by the City of Cleveland. The loan and grants were designed to aid cities with the redevelopment of abandoned and underused industrial and commercial properties. On top of these funds, GCGC received \$450,000 in Economic Development Administration loans through the City of Cleveland, and several other independent investors and foundations.

In a diverse city with about 65 percent of residents being people of color, compared with Ohio's average of 80 percent white, Cleveland's Central neighborhood is in the process of being strengthened by GCGC's local foods, creation of local jobs, and growth of the local wealth supply. GCGC will continue to play an integral role in shaping the future of this economically-distressed urban area of Cleveland with 40 percent of residents living below the poverty level and earning an average median income of \$18,500; 1/3 less than the citywide average. In order to staff the greenhouse's growing and distribution operations, GCGC is on its way to creating over 40 new jobs with living wages and affordable benefits for local and low-income community members.

community support, advertising to large-scale purchasers and creating a business plan that allows the operation to be self-sustaining following initial funding expiration.

One to three years grant funding from the USDA and HUD in coordination with public-private partnerships could establish cooperatives and provide technical assistance. Partners for funding and technical assistance could include Franklin County Economic Development and Planning, Columbus 2020, ECDI Columbus, MORPC and OSU Extension.

**(b) Support food hubs, potentially in combination with a permanent farmers market\* (807)**

Food hubs provide aggregation, storage, light processing, distribution and marketing options for multiple producers to reach adequate supply for commercial and institutional buyers. Value added processing at the food hub increases profitability and lengthens the life cycle of produce. Marketing services provided by food hubs allow producers to focus on production rather than sales. Small and mid-sized farmers need and benefit the most from aggregation, which allows them to satisfy commercial and institutional purchasing scales.

Attaching a food hub to a permanent farmers market affords producers the flexibility to aggregate produce for large-scale distribution while also directly selling to consumers. Ideal locations include

existing farmers markets with infrastructure that allows transportation and storage, typically afforded in vacant commercial or industrial areas, while also located close to existing community gathering spaces and urban areas for increased consumer accessibility.

Public-private partnerships could support food hub start-ups through tax credits, low-interest loans and strategic business planning. Project identity should begin with the neighborhood scale to gain community support and grow towards county and regional capacity while maintaining profitability and sustainability afforded by a robust business plan and a for-profit model. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and the Wallace Center's Food Hub Collaboration provide resources and services to new and growing food hubs.

**(c) Support a neutral “public interest broker” or “value chain facilitator”\* (786/352/456)**

There is a gap between local producers, particularly small and mid-sized producers, and commercial and institutional buyers. Lack of aggregation, inconsistent availability, price, quality and processing of local produce makes it difficult for commercial buyers to purchase locally produced and processed food.

A neutral “public interest broker”, or “value chain facilitator”, connects and mediates relationships between local producers, processors, distributors and commercial buyers. With an understanding of the local food system in central Ohio and a neutral relationship with each sector, the position provides effective and actionable guidance for values-based relationships and transactions.

Globally, municipalities and nation-states use “public interest brokers” typically in developing countries within the agricultural sector, to mediate relationships between producers, distributors, and commercial buyers.

Other broker duties could include developing and advertising purchasing processes as well as assessing current

distribution and supply chains. Public institutions, including universities, hospitals and K-12 schools provide large-scale food purchasing power. Established and clear processes for large-scale local food purchasing will make institutions more willing to form purchase agreements. The broker position can assess and leverage the existing transportation infrastructure and logistics network within Franklin County to better support the local food system.

The position could be created and supported in multiple ways. Public agency partnerships between the City of Columbus and Franklin County could staff the position, similar or in coordination with the local food “office”. Alternatively, other options include contracts with a professional firm or collaborative funding for a non-profit third party entity. Additional partners for technical support could include the ODA, OSU Extension, the Franklin County Farm Bureau and other local economic development departments within Franklin County. The City of Columbus and Franklin County should consider collaboration with other counties and cities in central Ohio. Proposals must include stakeholder conversations with local producers and commercial buyers to ensure local support.

**(d) Support food manufacturing facilities\* (855)**

To re-circulate money spent on food within the local economy, there needs to be the incentive and opportunity to grow, process and purchase local food within Franklin County. Depending on processing capacity, a food manufacturing facility may purchase local produce, increasing market access for local producers. A food manufacturing facility provides jobs, training and education specific to the food industry, becoming a stakeholder and advocate for local food businesses. This type of facility could bolster the identity and brand of local food and attract additional investment and interest in the local food industry.

Public-private partnerships could support start-ups with property acquisition, overhead costs associated with

## FOOD PROCESSING

Classic Foods, located in Portland, Oregon, manufactures and distributes various food items including pastas, spices, sauces and soups, providing wholesale to 500 restaurants in Oregon and Washington. Led by its founder, Jake Greenberg, the company initially operated from a cramped warehouse one mile east of downtown Portland with only a 1,200 square-foot kitchen and 10,000 total square feet. At this facility, truck loading space for pickup and delivery was minimal, inhibiting the company from expanding. Then, in 2012, with relocation into a facility five times the size about 5 miles north that Classic Food began to expand operations.

The company was founded in 1984 by Greenberg, a young chef at the time, marketing a line of premium low-salt soup bases with “superior” flavor and spices. A couple years after founding, a deal was reached for the new company to distribute pasta from a local supplier, leading the Classic Foods to bring production in-house within 5 years. Through a process of upgrading machines to the industry-best (imported from Italy) over the 1990s and early 2000s, the company expanded its operations to a diversity of food items.

Classic Food’s new building was acquired through a deal in which both the company and the selling party reaped benefits, and exemplified a complete and creative repurposing of the warehouse space. This building was constructed in 1932 as an icehouse, then became a brewery after a couple decades, and finally became a paper box manufacturing company. At the time of Classic Foods’ acquisition, the building had been neglected for decades leaving the roof with major leaks, and mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems that dated back to the 1960s or earlier were in poor condition. The box company’s owners had originally listed the building at over twice the sale price just 12 months earlier, but due to their pressing financial predicament where they had fallen behind mortgage payments, they opted to sell to Classic foods at \$1.4 million. Dual benefits came through the box company’s debt being erased to allow its relocation into a smaller facility, while Classic Foods quintupled the size of its kitchen, extended its product line and grew its customer base.

The historic building’s rehabilitation was difficult based on its location in a blighted neighborhood outside of a tax increment finance area, but this effort fed directly into the company’s ethos over the past 25 years. Classic Foods avows business built on high-quality, locally grown, organic ingredients at competitive prices. “We were a sustainable business before sustainability was a common phrase,” says Greenberg. Classic Food’s renovation project of \$5 million incorporates a variety of green building practices, materials, and processes; currently in stages leading up to commission, the building has qualified for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Platinum certification, making it the first manufacturing facility in the state of Oregon to achieve this designation.

facilities and equipment and creation of a sustainable business plan. Potential partners include The City of Columbus, Franklin County Economic Development and Planning, ECDI Columbus and MORPC. Development proposals must be coordinated with efforts to increase aggregation and distribution of local produce to ensure an adequate supply for the scale of the operation.

### **(e) Develop and incorporate guidelines and metrics for healthy food systems into public agency departments (869)**

Creating healthy food system guidelines and metrics and integrating them comprehensively through all departments and public institutions sets an example for their communities and the private sector. Public agencies and institutions provide a significant market for local food purchasing. Through healthy and local food system-supportive policies, agencies and institutions encourage consumer

## MUNICIPAL FOOD POLICIES

Local Law 52 of the City of New York was enacted in 2011. The law developed reporting requirements for the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food in New York City. Reporting occurs annually in the form of a food system metrics report prepared by the Office of Long-term Planning and Sustainability. The food metrics report supports the city's green movement agenda, PlaNYC for its food-related initiatives of promoting walkable distances to access healthy food, facilitating civic agriculture, maintaining the watershed protection program, exploring alternative food waste diversion practices, and conducting a study of the city's food distribution pathways. In addition, the report supports the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator, which works to raise awareness and foster communication with community stakeholders and members about healthy food, food insecurity, and the sustainability of the current food system.

Some initiatives and programs highlighted in the report are watershed agricultural program, community gardens, food manufacturers, grocery stores, farmers markets, the Agency Standards for Meals/Snacks Purchased (nutrition requirements for non-commercial foodservice establishments), Hunts Points facilities (produce, meat and fish markets), the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health initiative (increases food retail in underserved areas), and green carts (healthy mobile vending carts).

demand, local food production, processing, distribution and purchasing.

The City of Columbus and Franklin County could lead local efforts to establish policies and reporting procedures that support the local food system in coordination with or under direction of the local food "office". Initial departments to be targeted include planning, economic development, food purchasing and public health departments with their administration of land use plans, financing policies, purchasing power and permitting requirements. Agencies should identify and leverage existing policies and processes that support the local food system. Accomplishments in Columbus and Franklin County departments could serve as models to other local jurisdictions and public institutions.



## GOAL IV [Food Waste]

*Prevent food-related waste.*



### TOPIC AREAS

1. Incentives
2. Additional support

### 1. Incentives

#### **(a) Support educational campaigns and incentives to encourage food waste reduction (157)**

Survey results and stakeholder interviews indicate a general willingness for food waste reduction practices in each food system sector. For those interested in food waste reduction or diversion, there is limited awareness of available food waste disposal options and the applicable regulations.

The Ohio EPA and Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) lead education campaigns and provide a variety of educational resources. Public agencies can leverage this ongoing work and collaborate with local food system stakeholders to continue to make the materials and information accessible to all sectors. Education, particularly with consumers, will increase demand for disposal options. Increased demand for disposal options will encourage other sectors to implement and fund infrastructure and services for alternative food waste disposal options.

Public-private partnerships could consider creating incentives that build off of existing demand for food waste disposal options and supplement education campaigns. These include offering low-cost or free curbside pickup for food waste, similar to recycling services and applying tipping fees, pending infrastructure enhancements. Potential partners could include the Restaurant and Grocery Association, neighborhood associations, Columbus 2020 and Franklin County Economic Development and Planning.

#### **(b) Provide incentives to businesses for food waste reduction plans (589)**

Commercial food businesses express significant interest in increasing food donations as a means to divert food waste but they perceive existing regulations (e.g. health codes) as barriers. Ensuring regulatory processes encourage food waste diversion methods, such as food donation will help overcome this barrier. Integrating food waste reduction practices and requirements into business licensing and permitting procedures in combination with offering business identification, low-cost or free technical assistance for participating food businesses will encourage them to pursue food waste reduction.

Public agencies in partnership with private and nonprofit stakeholders could collaborate to revise regulations and develop low-cost technical assistance programs. Potential partners include the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, the Restaurant and Grocery Association, Community Plates, Hands on Central Ohio, SWACO, the City of Columbus, and Franklin County.

## 2. Additional support

### **(a) Support zoning and health codes that encourage alternative food waste disposal methods (108)**

Consumers and food businesses indicate a strong interest in food waste reduction practices and disposal alternatives. Regulatory barriers, whether perceived or real, inhibit innovative approaches to food waste handling. Clarifying, effectively communicating, and, when appropriate, revising zoning and health codes will increase food donation and alternative disposal methods such as composting. Code revisions should consider lessening barriers to composting in commercial and industrial areas located far enough from residential areas. Residents interested in composting would benefit from public or private off-site composting areas available publicly or privately in commercial and industrial areas (i.e. drop-off locations).

Public agencies should consider assessing current codes, for necessary revisions to support alternative food waste disposal methods; conversations with local food businesses would support the assessments and revisions. Past public agency efforts that support alternative waste disposal should be referenced during code revisions. Such efforts include the Ohio EPA’s “Urban Agriculture, Composting and Zoning” report issued in June 2012, Chicago’s ordinance on composting passed in 2007 and New York City’s OX30 plan.

Potential partners include the City of Columbus’ Departments of Development, Public Health and Public Service, Franklin County Economic Development and Planning, Franklin County Public Health, SWACO, MORPC and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA).

### **(b) Offer low-cost compost bins to residential areas (135)**

Reducing the amount of food waste generated in households is a significant step towards decreasing the amount of food waste in landfills. Other than infrastructure enhancements that support

pick-up or drop-off locations, composting is the only option for households to divert food waste from landfills. Consumers remain interested in composting but do not always have the means or proper incentive to compost. Offering widely accessible, low-cost compost bins would support more widespread residential composting.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with Columbus, Franklin County and other municipalities, currently provide workshop training and rebates on rain barrels and compost bins. Residents may purchase “closed in” compost bins at local retailers, such as hardware stores, and apply for reimbursement.

The City of Columbus, Franklin County and SWACO could work with Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District to expand workshop and rebate offerings and consider additional methods to increasing residential use of compost bins. Meetings with neighborhood associations, civic agriculture operations and a recurring county-wide social marketing campaign would ensure residents and communities are aware of the workshops and rebates. Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health must be consulted for proper health and environmental impacts.

### **(c) Provide training and guidance for large-scale food waste generators (420)**

Public agencies indicate a strong interest and support for waste recovery exploration and initiatives as seen specifically in the work of MORPC’s Organics Diversion Subcommittee and Columbus’ Green Memo III. Despite local food businesses’ interest in food waste diversion, a lack of waste hauling operations, processing facilities or sorting infrastructure, food businesses must find their own means to divert compostable waste from the waste stream, predominantly in the form of food donation.

Public agencies, including Columbus, Franklin County, and SWACO must consider the county-wide distribution of compostable waste to strategize where to initiate or support training and guidance



for large-scale food waste generators and where to pursue infrastructure enhancements for food waste collection and processing. These agencies should reach out to local food businesses and food system stakeholders already pursuing food waste diversion for support with training and guidance efforts.

Public-private coordinated business training campaigns could be a method to bringing food businesses together to learn about existing local innovations in on-site food waste reduction. Potential partners could include The Ohio State University and Krogers, both currently practice on-site food waste reduction, MORPC, SWACO, Green Spot Columbus and local chambers of commerce.