



LOCAL FOOD ACTION PLAN
CITY OF COLUMBUS & FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO

**2020
ANNUAL
REPORT**

APRIL 2021

Almost 60% of Black households in Columbus are food insecure compared to less than 25% of white households.

The uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the traumatic loss of life in BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities across the nation this year have brought renewed attention to racialized inequities within our local food system. In a June 2020 publication, OSU researchers reported a 34.2% point gap between white household food security (75.6%) and Black household food security (41.6%) in Columbus.¹ While this ZIP code level data was collected in 2014, the prevalence of food insecurity in Black households nationally continues to be more than twice that of white households (USDA ERS). Given the substantial disparate impacts of COVID-19 on BIPOC households, it is almost certain that the food security gap between Black and white households in Columbus and Franklin County not only still exists but expanded in 2020.

These studies remind us that disparities in food access are not new or unique for our community. Issues like these are what inspired Columbus City Council Member Priscilla R. Tyson and Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady to create the Local Food Action Plan, form the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board, hire city and county staff dedicated to food system efforts, and support the grassroots work of the Franklin County Local Food Council. 2020 reminded us that while we celebrate the many local food system successes since the Plan was adopted, more work remains. COVID-19 has shown us just how fragile food security is for so many of our neighbors in the City of Columbus and Franklin County and emphasized the importance of continuing to work together toward our vision of a **“fair and sustainable food system that benefits our economy, our environment and all people”**.



Julialynne Walker delivering mint

Goals

- A: Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies** to create a greater impact through collaboration
- B: Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food and local food** for everyone in our community
- C: Increase the role of food in economic development** to strengthen small businesses and ensure the supply of healthy and locally produced food in our community
- D: Prevent food-related waste** and recover edible food before it is wasted

The Local Food Board and the Local Food Team have sought out innovative solutions to address both the known and unforeseen food system challenges of 2020, including health equity, support for local food businesses, reducing food waste, and hunger relief.

¹ Koh, K., Kaiser, M. L., Sweeney, G., Samadi, K., & Hyder, A. (2020). Explaining Racial Inequality in Food Security in Columbus, Ohio: A Blinder-Oaxaca Decomposition Analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(15), 5488.

2020 At a Glance

Hunger Relief

- Columbus and Franklin County provided \$20 million in grants to 110 human service agencies, including at least 10 food focused organizations.
- Mid-Ohio Food Collective reports serving 28% more residents than in 2019.
- LifeCare Alliance reports that by June, 2020, the Meals-on-Wheels program was delivering 65% more meals than on March 1, 2020.
- Franklin County WIC partnered with seven farmers markets in Franklin County to distribute more than \$80,560 in WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Vouchers to 4,028 pregnant women, infants and children under 5.

Health Equity and Cultural Competency

- The Local Food Board developed and unanimously adopted a Statement on Racism in the Food System and committed to strengthening a focus on equity in implementation.
- The Local Food Systems Strategies Team at Columbus Public Health is now part of the Columbus Public Health Center for Public Health Innovation which was formed to respond to racism as a public health crisis.
- The FarmsSHARE Pilot - Farmers Supporting Health and Racial Equity - purchased more than \$12,000 worth of produce from local farmers that was distributed by six host organizations. More than 60% of participating farmers were Black and more than 80% of the host organizations were Black-led.

Supporting Local Food Business

- Franklin County, in partnership with the Local Food Board, launched the Franklin County Food Business Portal, a free one-stop compilation of online resources and services to help entrepreneurs successfully plan, launch and grow a food business.
- The Columbus-Franklin County COVID-19 Small Business Response and Recovery Fund offered grants, technical assistance and low-interest loans to small businesses, including local food businesses.
- The Franklin County Board of Commissioners enacted a Quick Strike Emergency Program to support workforce development for the recently unemployed and additional loan funds for small businesses, including unemployed food industry workers and small food businesses.
- Ohio Farmers Market Network provided extensive support to local farmers markets, identifying best practices and working with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to develop guidance for markets to operate safely.

Reducing Food Waste

- SWACO was recognized with the 2020 Outstanding Recycling Organization award from the National Recycling Coalition for food waste diversion programs and impacts.
- Save More Than Food launched in September 2020 with support from over 15 partners. Save More Than Food is a public awareness and educational campaign that helps households, schools, workplaces and food businesses reduce their food waste.
- SWACO formed a new partnership with Rev1 Ventures to support startups and innovators in food waste diversion.
- Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health developed and shared educational materials about how to donate food safely to more than 10,000 licensed food businesses.

Promoted Environmentally-Friendly Policies in Our Community

- Added “supporting local food” to the key initiatives and goals of Sustainable Columbus, which focuses on optimizing internal city operations and working with external stakeholders from throughout the community to enhance and promote environmentally friendly policies.

COVID-19 and the Local Food System

The global COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses throughout the food system and created food security challenges for many in our community. While we acknowledge that much work is left to be done, we also celebrate the champions who worked hard all year to feed hungry neighbors and support food businesses in an economic downturn.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of people visiting food banks and food pantries across the country -- and central Ohio has been no exception. In 2020, there were almost 1 million visits to food pantries, soup kitchens and other partner agencies in the 20 county area served by the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, including nearly 50,000 new families. With a robust network of pantries, volunteers and support from the Ohio National Guard, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective has been able to meet increased demand for emergency food, serving 28% more people in 2020 than they did the year before.

Approximately 10 food-focused organizations, including the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, LifeCare Alliance and others, received more than \$2.8 million in CARES Act funds from the City of Columbus and the Franklin County Resilience Initiative to help broaden their reach and respond to the increased need caused by the global pandemic. This support helped programs like LifeCare Alliance's Meals on Wheels manage 1,500 new volunteer applications and deliver 65% more meals in June than they did at the beginning of March, 2020. While Columbus and Franklin County are fortunate to be home to strong hunger relief agencies, the global pandemic also highlighted the limitations of this system. Neighborhood pantries and meal delivery services rely heavily on volunteers to get food into the hands of those who need it, many of whom became ill or were at high risk of severe illness. In addition, providing food that was culturally and/or religiously appropriate for everyone proved difficult. Staples like flour, sugar and rice were in short supply and not consistently available in the emergency food system. Special programs like those that provide Halal meals for Muslim seniors were unable to operate as a result of the pandemic.



Michelle Moskowitz Brown volunteering with Food Rescue US Columbus

Columbus City Schools

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools, Columbus City Schools Food Service continued to provide meals for families who rely on school breakfast and lunch for their children. Starting in March, the District opened 15 locations offering grab and go meals for families to pick up. The USDA, which funds and regulates school meals, modified rules to allow families to pick up multiple meals and without children present, allowing the District to better serve their families. During the spring, the District also partnered with Columbus Recreation and Parks and the Mid-Ohio Food Collective to provide fresh produce to families twice a month at each pick up location and with Children's Hunger Alliance to provide dinners to children. Recognizing the challenges for parents in picking up and storing meals, the District expanded to 44 pick-up locations in September where families could pick up five days' worth of shelf-stable meals that met the USDA school meal nutrition standards. Between March and December of 2020, the District provided nearly 2.5 million meals to the children of Columbus.

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department

The City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department also awarded an additional \$2 million in grants from the CARES Act to 40 local organizations that support Columbus youth and working families, many of which also provide free meal programs. This funding helped Columbus Recreation and Parks provide more than 75,000 meals at 37 sites. Columbus Recreation and Parks also hosted 68 free mobile produce markets with Mid-Ohio Food Collective and distributed 312,000 pounds of fresh produce. The federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 also provided a temporary program called Pandemic-Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT). The State of Ohio issued two rounds of P-EBT which provided additional money for families with children in kindergarten through twelfth grade to buy food due to COVID-19 related school closures. Columbus City Schools operates under the Community Eligibility Provision, so ALL Columbus City Schools students received P-EBT funds. P-EBT was able to be used at farmers markets and was matched through Produce Perks.

Additional Community Hunger Relief Programs

In addition to the COVID-19 response efforts of established hunger relief programs, many community organizations and individuals came together to provide nutritious meals.

- Service!, a nonprofit group of restaurant industry professionals serving unemployed service-industry professionals in Franklin County, distributed over 10,000 meals and approximately \$50,000 in one-time grants to help with essential expenses.
- We Are All in This Together (WAAITT), formed by a group of local businesses including Hot Chicken TakeOver, Jeni's Ice Cream, Homage and Pelotonia, raised more than \$150,000 to support nonprofit organizations providing meals to at-risk members of the community. WAAITT provided 20,000 meals to people who needed them while also supporting restaurants who lost business.
- The World Central Kitchen and the Clinton Foundation supported collaborations in Whitehall and Linden.
- Local Matters provided support through its Veggie Van, garden and education work, and helped provide transportation and meals for Bhutanese Nepali residents, seniors, people with disabilities, and homeless youth.
- Food Rescue US Columbus transported tons of donated food to non-profit organizations to serve to those in need.



Produce on display at Veggie Van market

Additional Support From City & County

The City of Columbus and Franklin County created public funding and technical assistance programs to support struggling small businesses, including food businesses:

- In partnership with Rev1 Ventures, the City of Columbus and Franklin County created the Columbus-Franklin County COVID-19 Small Business Response and Recovery Fund which offers grants, technical assistance and low-interest loans to small businesses, including local food businesses.
- The Franklin County Board of Commissioners enacted a Quick Strike Emergency Program to support both workforce development for the recently unemployed and additional loan funds for small businesses. The Quick Strike Emergency Program offered benefits to recently unemployed workers and small businesses in all industries, including unemployed food industry workers and small food businesses.
- Finance Fund created a COVID-19 Emergency Response Loan program to provide small businesses, including restaurants, with flexible working capital that could be applied to rent, utilities, inventory, wages and other bills that became difficult to meet during the pandemic. Finance Fund was able to launch a second phase of this program to help small businesses, including the particularly hard-hit food industry, move into a recovery phase in December 2020.



“Finance Fund’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Loan allowed me to re-open my doors, bring back employees, and safely offer takeout meals to Linden and Greater Columbus area residents.”

– Courtney Robinson, Owner of Island Vibes

Community Heroes

From preparing sack lunches to picking up meals for neighbors who could not venture out, COVID-19 has also motivated people to help neighbors in need. Roshelle Pate, known as The FOOD Soldier, is a long-time community leader who works tirelessly as a volunteer to connect thousands of people to emergency food resources. Her Facebook group, The FOOD Soldier, reaches more than 13,000 members and her weekly Heart Cart announcements help people find food resources nearby and give members a platform to share with each other.

There are countless other heroes in our community who gave freely of their time, energy and resources during this year of crisis. We celebrate each and every one!



“I used to serve my country, now I serve my Community. Hunger is not an issue of Charity, it is an issue of Justice. We are ‘boots on the ground,’ an army of ‘food fighters’ doing our part to win the war on hunger.”

– Roshelle Pate, the FOOD Soldier

Equity

The 2016 Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Action Plan identified cultural competency and health equity as foundational requirements to achieving the Plan's vision and central to the work of the Local Food Board, the Local Food Team and the Franklin County Local Food Council. On September 10, 2020, the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board, the 12-member board appointed by city and county leadership to lead implementation of the Local Food Action Plan, voted unanimously to adopt a Statement on Racism in the Food System. The Statement, which was developed by Board Members Tony Logan (Chair), Amy McCormick (Vice Chair), Michelle Moskowitz Brown and Charles Nabrit, is intended to be an acknowledgement of racism in the food system and a call to action to continue and expand these efforts in alignment with the declaration of racism as a public health crisis by Franklin County Board of Commissioners, Columbus City Council, and both Boards of Health.

Local Food Board Statement on Racism in the Food System

The Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board stands in solidarity with the Black community and calls for an end to structural racism in the food system. We affirm the declaration from the City of Columbus and Franklin County that racism is a public health crisis affecting all people throughout our community, especially persons of color, and we pledge to continue and expand our work to end racism and health disparities.

Everyone has a right to food. Structural racism prevents Black people from gaining equitable access to resources such as land, grocery stores, fresh and healthy food, food business opportunities, high-quality jobs, transportation, and education. As a result, Black communities experience higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, and diet-related chronic disease. Creating a fair and sustainable food system that benefits our economy, our environment, and all people requires both recognizing and dismantling structural racism and the resulting disparities.

Therefore, we affirm that Black lives matter and we recognize that Black perspectives and leadership must be central to our shared pursuit of a just food system.

We commit to learning how the historical oppression of Black people in our country affects the conditions in our communities today, and to work to upend the inequities that persist.

We commit to continuing the work of fighting structural racism in the food system and lifting up the work of so many in Columbus and Franklin County who are doing the same.

For more information on the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board, the implementation of the Local Food Action Plan, and our ongoing work related to health equity and cultural competency, please visit www.columbus.gov/LFAP and read our 2019 Annual Report.

Accomplishments

With financial support from Columbus City Council and Kroger Zero Hunger|Zero Waste Foundation, the Ohio Farmers Market Network led a pilot program to support local farmers and bring more fresh, local produce to our communities. Called FarmsSHARE - Farmers Supporting Health and Racial Equity - the program was designed to engage Black growers and Black-led community organizations that serve Black residents. The program connected five local producers to six host organizations and over the 10 week program, more than 2,500 pounds and 42 varieties of fresh local produce was purchased and distributed to more than 1,400 residents. Approximately 60% of the participating growers identified as Black, 83% of the host locations were Black led, and approximately 84% of the residents served were Black, indigenous and people of color. Distribution models included free produce giveaways, low cost farm markets/stands and CSA deliveries. The project will continue in 2021, offering a longer season and serving more residents.

“This year has shown us how important it is to have strong hunger relief programs AND to keep working toward a fair and just food system where everyone has enough to eat without the need for emergency food. That’s why I led efforts to provide CARES Act funding to our partners at Mid-Ohio Food Collective, LifeCare Alliance and other community organizations who worked hard to keep our neighbors from going hungry. I also provided funding for grassroots, neighborhood-led food projects like FarmsSHARE that support Black and brown led community organizations providing fresh, local and healthy food to their neighborhoods in new and innovative ways.

Further, I want to acknowledge the support I received from my Council colleagues in passing Resolution 0095X-2020, which I sponsored on June 1, 2020, declaring racism as a public health crisis in the City of Columbus. I am pleased to report that over 3,200 business and community leaders signed on to a letter supporting the resolution. I also want to thank Columbus Public Health Commissioner Dr. Mysheika Roberts for her support in implementing the Local Food Action Plan and declaring racism a public health crisis. In addition, I applaud the Local Food Board for adopting a Statement on Racism in the Food System and look forward to working together to advance anti-racist food system efforts and build a food system that benefits our economy, our environment and all people.”

- Priscilla R. Tyson, Columbus City Council



“I chose to participate because I care about providing healthy vegetables to individuals who are in need. It does not matter what that particular need may be, we know it exists in all forms of life. The healthier we eat the more sustainable our communities/life will be.”

- Pam Mack - owner L Marie Ltd and FarmsSHARE 2020 grower

Columbus Urban Gardening Grant

Urban agriculture projects, such as community gardens, present a unique opportunity to address the food security gap in BIPOC communities while enhancing health and well-being through community resiliency.

2020 marked the first year that Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation, the City of Columbus and Franklin County jointly facilitated the Urban Gardening Grant. Building on more than 17 years of successful funding provided by these organizations individually, the Urban Gardening Grant represents an effort to make it easier for all community gardens to access the funding and resources they need to grow healthy hyper-local food and support the community around them. The unified program simplifies the application process by offering a single application and timeline and consistent evaluation standards carried out by a diverse group of community stakeholders and organizational staff, ensuring the fair and equitable distribution of funding and materials.

In 2020, the Urban Gardening Grant was able to support 100% of the eligible grant applications received. A total of \$76,513 in grants and \$32,495 of Scotts Miracle-Gro product was provided to 72 community gardens located in the City of Columbus and Franklin County. More than 54% of the supported gardens are located in CelebrateOne priority areas where higher unemployment, lower graduation rates, homelessness, lack of access to nutritious food, higher instances of crime, lower access to health coverage, and timely access to prenatal care contribute to high infant mortality rates. Many of these factors also contribute to food insecurity. CelebrateOne priority areas are also communities where urban agriculture can provide fresh, healthy and local food to build community resilience.

Launch Of The Franklin County Food Business Portal

Led by the Local Food Board and a group of community stakeholders, Franklin County launched the Franklin County Food Business Portal (fcfoodbusinessportal.org), a free one-stop compilation of online resources and services to help entrepreneurs successfully plan, launch and grow a food business. The Portal is a direct result of the Local Food Action Plan, which identified flexible financing and technical assistance as important needs for local food businesses. The Local Food Action Plan recognizes how a local food system drives economic development by creating jobs, sustaining small businesses, and facilitating product and supply chain innovations.

New and growing food businesses need an array of resources and services that are often difficult to identify, access and understand. By bringing all of these resources and services together in one place, the Portal ensures easy and equitable access while freeing entrepreneurs to perfect their products and drive economic development. The Portal also provides easy access to resources and services for BIPOC entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, and other under-resourced entrepreneurs who experience marginalization related to historical oppression, some part of their identity or because of their income.

To our knowledge, the Franklin County Food Business Portal is the only business portal specifically developed for food businesses and the Local Food Board is proud to be a local, statewide and national leader in this area. While the Portal was not designed as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it does allow food businesses to identify and access critical assistance during a crisis while providing a centralized, trusted source for important information and opportunities. Looking forward, the Portal could be used as a foundation for a broader business portal aimed at addressing the needs of all small businesses or a specific business sector.

“This year we have seen how critical our local food system is for both economic development and community resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a stress test for local food businesses of all kinds and through the Franklin County Quick Strike Emergency Program and the Columbus-Franklin County COVID-19 Small Business Response and Recovery Fund, we were able to offer grants, technical assistance, and low-interest loans to help businesses adapt to these unprecedented challenges. Under the leadership of Director James Schimmer, Franklin County extended its support for local food businesses with the launch of the Franklin County Food Business Portal, which provides entrepreneurs with the resources they need to plan, launch and grow a food business. Much work remains, but so too does our shared commitment to a fair and sustainable food system for all Franklin County residents.”

- John O’Grady, Franklin County Board of Commissioners



Focusing on Food Waste

Since 2018, the Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO) has facilitated the Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative. With a goal to cut food waste in half by 2030, the Central Ohio Food Waste Action Plan lays out a roadmap of 20 solutions and a strategic framework for local food waste prevention, rescue and recycling.

The Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative's 2020 focus areas and accomplishments include:

- The Save More Than Food Public Awareness and Education Campaign launched in September 2020. This consumer education and awareness campaign aimed at cutting food waste - in homes, schools, restaurants and businesses - provides tools for food waste prevention, rescue and recycling. Visit savemorethanfood.org to learn more.
- In October 2020, SWACO formed a new partnership with Rev1 Ventures that will connect municipalities, food manufacturers, commercial retailers and kitchens in the central Ohio region with entrepreneurial businesses that are focused on food waste prevention, rescue and recycling.
- Beginning in early 2020, 15 Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative members representing public health departments, food rescue organizations, hunger relief agencies, restaurants and other food businesses met in a collaborative effort to promote safe donation of excess prepared food from food businesses. While the group's work was placed on hold due to COVID-19, Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health designed a promotional brochure, posters and in-kitchen signage to help encourage and guide safe food donation.
- SWACO helped five food businesses implement food waste prevention, rescue, and composting as part of a three month Food Waste Champions pilot program. The businesses' experiences and reduction efforts were documented and measured and will be promoted through the Food Waste Initiative in 2021.
- SWACO launched new food waste school resources to provide teachers, students and administrators with a variety of activities and tools for implementing food waste reduction programs and habits both at school and at home.
- SWACO offers Community Waste Reduction grants to support innovative waste reduction and materials diversion programs. In 2020, SWACO approved nearly \$75,000 in funding for grants related to food waste reduction and diversion. Funded projects have included helping implement residential drop-off composting programs in central Ohio neighborhoods, school and workplace composting programs, and more. For more information on SWACO's grants programs, visit www.swaco.org/grants.



"Diverting food waste from the landfill is an important part of our sustainability efforts at OhioHealth, which align with our healing mission and core values. This initiative is being championed by our associates, like Alex Fannin (pictured here)."

- Allegra Wiesle, OhioHealth Sustainability Management

Advancing Our Goals: Progress Snapshots

Community-led projects continue to be an important way for the Local Food Board and Local Food Team to partner with other organizations to support the goals of the Local Food Action Plan. Use the key at the right to learn what goals were supported by our community partners.

Local Food Action Plan Goals:



A: Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies.



B: Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food and local food.



C: Increase the role of food in economic development.



D: Prevent food-related waste.

Local Matters Veggie Van 🍏

Veggie Van is Local Matters' mobile grocer that sells affordable produce, pantry staple items and meal kits. Veggie Van hosts weekly markets in neighborhoods without safe, convenient access to grocery stores and farmers' markets. The program relaunched in May, 2020 after briefly closing to adjust for the COVID-19 environment. Veggie Van, which offers online ordering and no contact pick-up for all customers (including those paying with SNAP), has seen a 209% increase in sales compared to the first nine months of operation preceding the pandemic.

Produce Perks Columbus 🍏

In 2020, Local Matters became the regional manager for all Central Ohio Produce Perks Midwest farmers' markets and grocers. Through the Produce Perks program, 16 Central Ohio food retailers (including all Veggie Van markets), offer a \$1-for-\$1 match for every SNAP dollar a customer spends. This allows SNAP customers to maximize their benefits and stretch their food dollars further, including families with school-age children who received Pandemic-EBT funds. Local Matters also leads the expansion of healthy food purchasing incentive programs like Produce Prescriptions (PRx) and TANF Fruit & Vegetable coupons in central Ohio. In 2020, Local Matters and Produce Perks Midwest brought more than \$120,800 in federal funds to central Ohio for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables through these incentive programs.



Ohio Farmers Market Network Supports Farmers Markets and Producers 🍏💰

Ohio Farmers Market Network provided extensive support to farmers markets in Columbus, Franklin County and across the state, identifying best practices and working with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to develop guidance for markets to operate safely amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This year, markets had to pivot quickly with many switching to new locations and operating models like drive thrus, online ordering and curbside pick up in order to meet social distancing and safety requirements. The Ohio Farmers Market Network provided support for market leaders and producers via monthly “COVID calls” and an online forum to share best practices from Ohio and across the country. With ongoing support and technical assistance, 22 of the 27 farmers markets located in Franklin County were able to operate successfully in 2020.



“This spring, when COVID was surging and the national food supply chain was failing, many Ohio farmers and food producers faced an uncertain future with crops already in the ground and the outlets they traditionally sell to – restaurants and schools – closed. With farmers markets identified as an essential service, I felt a tremendous sense of duty to continue to provide producers with a vital sales outlet and communities with a safe way to purchase fresh local foods. Many markets adopted varied operating strategies, from new locations to one-way shopper traffic patterns to online pre-ordering and drive thru. It wasn’t easy, but it would have been impossible without the guidance from Ohio Farmers Market Network and support from the community. The markets may have looked completely different, but the spirit of connecting consumers with local producers remained.”

– Michelle White, Certified Farmers Market Manager

“No Man is an Island. 2020 was the year of partnerships like none other. The safety guidelines for businesses set forth by the City of Columbus Public Health, which the market managers at Clintonville and Worthington Farmers Market and Weiland’s Meat Market strongly enforced, was great support for JNA BREAD. This gave the customers a safe and comfortable place to purchase.”

– Jacqueline Hill, owner JNA BREAD





“In a time of great need during the COVID Pandemic our partnership with the Ohio Farmers Market Network provided our WIC clients access to fresh fruits and vegetables in their communities. This strengthened partnership allowed WIC clients that had never participated in the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program the ability to access these benefits close to home.”

- Dawn Sweet, WIC Director, Franklin County WIC Program

2020 Franklin County WIC Farmers Market Fruit and Vegetable Program 🍏💰

In 2020, WIC programs across Ohio found themselves with less capacity to participate in the WIC Farmers Market Fruit and Vegetable Program because of COVID-19. Franklin County WIC, which provides nutrition and breastfeeding education, nutritious foods and support to over 35,000 residents and is housed at Columbus Public Health, recognized the financial impact that this program has on both their clients and the producers and farmers markets in Columbus and Franklin County. Unable to host the annual WIC Farmers Market at Columbus Public Health due to the pandemic, Franklin County WIC partnered with the Local Food Team and the Ohio Farmers Market Network to identify active farmers markets in Franklin County where they could distribute the 2020 WIC Farmers Market Fruit and Vegetable Program coupon booklets. As a result of this partnership, Franklin County WIC was able to support both their clients and farmers.

- 4,028 coupon booklets (valued at \$80,560) distributed
- 20 market day opportunities for WIC participants to obtain coupons
- 7 farmers markets and vendors saw increased WIC coupon redemption, including farmers markets in Westerville, Clintonville, Prairie Township, Bexley and Reynoldsburg

Linden McKinley STEM Academy Agriculture Career Pathway 🍏💰

The Linden McKinley STEM Academy Agricultural Career Pathway is a STEM-based agricultural science education program built on classroom/laboratory instruction, supervised agricultural experience programs, and FFA student organization activities and opportunities. The program has relied on small indoor hydroponic and aquaponics growing systems and rooftop raised beds to provide classroom/laboratory instruction and supervised agricultural experience programs for approximately 130 students. In the spring of 2020, the District leased three vacant parcels of land at the intersection of Medina Ave. and 25th Ave. through the City of Columbus Land Bank Community Garden Program. Totalling almost one-third of an acre, these lots are the site of the Agriculture Pathway Community Gardens where agriculture teacher Eric Valentine, community partners and parents work to provide new and innovative ways to engage the students and their families in agriculture. The City of Columbus Department of Neighborhoods has committed \$50,000 for water and electric installation, irrigation and fencing in 2021.



“These production lots, leased from the City of Columbus Land Bank, provide hands-on learning experiences for students enrolled in the Agriculture Pathway at Linden McKinley STEM Academy and at Windsor and Hamilton Elementary schools. Students performed a plant population study including a stand and yield count in these corn research plots. The information was added to a national data base for future research.”

– Eric Valentine, Linden McKinley STEM Academy Building Career Tech Lead and Agriculture Pathway Instructor

Franklin County Local Food Council

The Franklin County Local Food Council continued hosting monthly gatherings, switching to a virtual format in March 2020. The time was spent discussing the impacts of COVID-19 on the local food system and sharing new developments in response to the pandemic. This fall, the Food Council hosted a Listening Session series focused on learning about essential food system workers and the challenges they face, considering the pandemic and more broadly. Speakers included Columbus City Council Member Elizabeth Brown, Lloyd Blake from United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and Sarah Ingles from the Central Ohio Worker Center (COWC). Key takeaways from this series are summarized in a policy brief that is available online at www.fclocalfoodcouncil.org/news-and-updates. The Food Council also brought on three summer interns who conducted research to update the “Getting Started” tables for each action in the Local Food Action Plan and to provide background for the Listening Session. Looking ahead to 2021, the Food Council will continue hosting Listening Sessions that highlight timely topics in the food system as well as regular meetings, all of which are open to the public. Details for future gatherings can be found on Facebook (facebook.com/groups/fcolfc).

Our Team

The Local Food Board consists of 12 members appointed by the city and county who oversee, prioritize and guide implementation of the Plan.

Local Food Board Members

Board Member	Title, Organization	Food System Expertise
Susan Beaudry	Vice President, Osteopathic Heritage Foundation	Philanthropic support for food systems
Jill K. Clark, PhD	Associate Professor, John Glenn College of Public Affairs, The Ohio State University	Community food systems and research
D. David Daniel	Senior Vice President Operations, Mid Ohio Food Collective	Emergency food system
Tony Logan, JD <i>Chairperson</i>	Managing Partner, The Renewables Space LLC Farm Owner, Logan Brothers, LLC	Food production
Laquore Meadows, PhD	County Extension Director, The Ohio State University Extension Franklin County	Extension programming; Nutrition education
Ty Marsh	Executive Director, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio (SWACO)	Preventing food-related waste
Amy McCormick <i>Vice-Chairperson</i>	Corporate Affairs Manager, The Kroger Co.	Retail grocery industry
Michelle Moskowitz Brown	Executive Director, Local Matters	Nutrition education
Charles Nabrit	President, Greater Columbus Growing Coalition (GCGC) Associate, Penn Nabrit & Associates	Civic agriculture; Community gardens
Desiree Polk-Bland	Executive Dean Division of Student Affairs, Columbus State Community College	Workforce development; Culinary education
Randy Sokol	Restaurant Owner Ohio Restaurant Association representative	Food-related business
Adam Troy	Chief Engagement Officer, Community of Caring Development Foundation Director of Missions, New Salem Baptist Church	Food and community development

We extend our deepest gratitude to the community leaders who ended their service to the Local Food Board in 2020: Ernest Perry (former Chair, 2017-2020), Anne Geggie (2018-2020), and Matt Habash (2017-2020).

City-County Local Food Team

A team of city and county staff works with the Local Food Board to implement the Local Food Action Plan.

Brian Estabrook • Food Systems Planner, Franklin County Economic Development & Planning
baestabr@franklincountyohio.gov/614-525-7303

Cheryl Graffagnino MS, RD, LD • Local Food Systems Strategies Coordinator, Columbus Public Health
clgraffagnino@columbus.gov/614-645-0867

Get Involved

The Local Food Action Plan has always been a community plan — and with the help of the Franklin County local Food Council, the community remains at the heart of implementation efforts. Find out how you can get involved and sign up for the Council's email updates at www.fclocalfoodcouncil.org.



