



FOOD ACTION PLAN



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Background	5
About the Plan	5
The Food System	7
Benefits of a Healthy Food System	7
How this Plan was Developed	12
Goals & Values	13
Strategies	14
Approach	14
Healthy Food For All	15
Grow Local	21
Strengthen the Local Economy	27
Prevent Food Waste	31
Research Agenda	33
Tracking Progress	34
Summary of Recommendations	35
Appendix A: Community Listening Session Feedback	37
Appendix B: Food Action Plan Evaluation Criteria	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

About this Plan

Healthy food is integral to the health and well-being of our communities. Healthy food is defined as food that is fresh and nutritious and grown without harming its producers or our air, water, or soil. In a healthy food system, healthy food is available and accessible for all community members; there is a strong network of successful and culturally appropriate businesses that produce, process, cook, transport, and sell that food; there are opportunities to produce food locally; and food waste is prevented.

The Food System

The food system comprises all the ways in which food moves from farm (or producer) to table (consumer). That includes the farms on which it's grown, the manufacturers who process and produce foods, the venues in which the foods are delivered to the public, and the way the consumer receives and consumes food.

Seattle has made a healthy food system a priority. To support our food system in Seattle and the region, the City has created the Seattle Food Action Plan.

The City of Seattle cares about our local food system for many reasons. Rising obesity and diet-related diseases increase health care costs and decrease life expectancy. One in five children in King County does not always have enough to eat, and growing economic inequality makes healthy food even harder for many to afford. Chemically intensive agriculture degrades the quality of our land, our air, and our water. Food sales, restaurants, food products and food service are a growing sector of the local economy. Food inequities disproportionately affect low-income residents, children, seniors, and communities of color. Growing, eating, and sharing food brings local communities together.



Picardo P-Patch. Photo Credit: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

How this Plan was Developed

In 2008, the Seattle City Council passed the Local Food Action Initiative, which aims to improve the local and regional food system. Since then, the City has advanced this goal in a number of ways, including convening the Food Interdepartmental Team (IDT) to coordinate food system work across departments, updating the land-use code to support urban agriculture, making more City-owned land available for food production, and hiring a food policy advisor.

The Food Action Plan is the next step in this work. To initiate work on the plan, the city convened meetings with community members, as well as individuals and organizations currently working on food system issues. Through these meetings, food priorities were established. The Food IDT used these priorities to establish goals, review current activities and recommend new actions, and establish criteria through which to filter recommendations. The criteria include factors of feasibility, potential reach, inclusivity, and community health impacts. The final goals, and recommended current and potential activities, were filtered through these criteria.

Goals and Values

The City has outlined four goals for achieving a healthy food system in Seattle:

Healthy Food for All:

All Seattle residents should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food.

Grow Local

It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use or for business purposes.

Strengthen the Local Economy

Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Seattle.

Prevent Food Waste

Food-related waste should be prevented, reused, or recycled.

Strategies

This section lists the strategies and actions the City recommends to achieve the four goals identified, and our approach to achieving those goals.

Approach

- Create and sustain strong interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination on food issues.
- Enhance partnerships with the public and private sectors and community-based organizations in the City and across the region.
- Stimulate collaboration among community organizations, institutions, neighborhoods, and governments.
- Focus on racial and social equity and support the communities most at-risk for food insecurity and diet-related disease.
- Increase inclusive communication and engagement opportunities for the public.
- Use data to assess conditions, inform priorities, and track progress.

Goal 1: Healthy Food for All

Strategy 1: Promote the location of healthy food access points that can be reached by walking, biking, or transit by all residents.

Strategy 2: Use the City's purchasing and contracting power to support healthy, local, sustainably produced food.

Strategy 3: Support programs, policies, and projects that help get more healthy food to children and youth.

Strategy 4: Increase affordability of healthy, local food for low-income Seattle residents.

Strategy 5: Promote healthy food, especially in low-income communities and with youth, through education and collaborative efforts.

Goal 2: Grow Local

Strategy 1: Prioritize food production as a use of land.

Strategy 2: Develop and support programs to produce food on City-owned land.

Strategy 3: Support efforts to expand urban food production on privately owned land, including residential, commercial, and institutional properties.

Strategy 4: Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building-integrated agriculture.

Strategy 5: Work jointly with other jurisdictions to conserve agricultural land.

Goal 3: Strengthen the Local Economy

Strategy 1: Support businesses that grow, distribute, process, and sell local and healthy food.

Strategy 2: Celebrate and enhance local food as an element of Seattle's economy and identity.

Strategy 3: Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food.

Goal 4: Prevent Food Waste

Strategy 1: Prevent edible food from entering waste stream.

Strategy 2: Increase composting of non-edible food.

Research Agenda and Measuring Progress

Additional research is needed in some areas to help us move toward a healthy food system. These areas include: measuring access, engaging communities most at risk for diet-related illness in identifying barriers and solutions, further inventorying City-owned land for urban agriculture, assessing food-production potential of publicly and privately owned land in Seattle and the eco-system benefits of food production, assessing opportunities and benefits for business that grow healthy and local food, and exploring the need for food production-related infrastructure.

To measure progress, the City will prepare an annual report on the progress of the actions recommended, looking at the following indicators:

- Percent of Seattle residents within one-quarter mile of a healthy food access point
- Percent of Seattle residents who are food secure
- Acres of City-owned land used for food production
- Value of local food sold at Seattle farmers markets or other direct-to-consumer activities
- Value of EBT benefits redeemed at Seattle farmers markets
- Acres of farmland preserved through the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program
- Number of businesses increasing availability of healthy foods in stores through Healthy Foods Here
- Percent of Seattle's food waste diverted for composting or recycling

BACKGROUND

About this Plan

Across the country and around the world, communities are working to build food systems that foster health, equity, sustainability, and strong local economies. Municipal governments are recognizing their role in improving access to affordable and healthy food, supporting local and sustainable agriculture, strengthening food-related businesses, preserving our environment, and diverting food waste from landfills.

The City of Seattle cares about our local food system for many reasons.

- Rising obesity and diet-related diseases increase health care costs and decrease life expectancy.
- One in five children in King County doesn't always have enough to eat, and growing economic inequality makes healthy food even harder for many to afford.
- Chemically intensive agriculture degrades the quality of our land, our air, our water, and our communities.
- Food sales, restaurants, food products, and food service are a growing sector of the local economy. Food production, food sales, and dining establishments account for over 130,000 jobs in the Seattle area¹, and King County residents spend an estimated \$4.8 billion each year on groceries and food to eat at home.
- Food inequities disproportionately affect low-income residents, children, seniors, and communities of color.
- Growing, eating, and sharing food brings local communities together.

Seattle boasts a long tradition of urban gardening and agriculture, an ecosystem rich with native foods, a public market as one of our iconic tourist destinations, and a vibrant and diverse array of restaurants and businesses showcasing locally produced, healthy foods. For many years, individuals and groups around the region have been collaborating to build a regional food system that fosters health, equity, sustainability, and shared prosperity. Community organizations and businesses in Seattle have been working over many years to promote access to healthy food for all Seattle residents; reduce hunger and food insecurity; increase the use of local and sustainably produced food by schools, hospitals, and other institutions; expand markets for local producers; and engage people of all ages in growing, cooking, and eating healthy food.

The City of Seattle's work touches on food in many ways. From building and managing P-Patch community gardens to working with small shops to increase the amount of healthy food they sell; from creating nutrition standards for licensed childcare providers to incorporating cooking and gardening education into our parks and community centers, the City of Seattle is working to make it easier for all people to eat healthy, affordable, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food.



Pike Place Market. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons



Magnuson P-Patch. Photo Credit: Jim Day

With Seattle's population expected to grow by 100,000 people over the next 20 years, we must identify ways to ensure that everyone in Seattle is able to participate in a food system that promotes health, environmental sustainability, racial and social equity, and a thriving economy. This plan lays out the City of Seattle's goals for our food system, as well as recommendations for the first steps to achieving those goals. Some of these recommendations include the support or expansion of existing programs, others relate to new initiatives or activities. Some recommendations have already been funded, while others will require additional funding to implement.

This plan is divided into four action areas, but many of the actions within those areas cut across one another. For example, encouraging more food to be grown in Seattle strengthens emerging businesses; supporting immigrant farmers improves food access; and increasing healthy and local food procurement expands markets for local farmers. These mutual benefits are characteristic of taking a systems approach to our work on food.

The task of strengthening our regional food and farming economy, ensuring that all people have enough to eat and access to affordable healthy food, and preventing unnecessary food-related waste is a long-term commitment. This three to five-year action plan sets out the City of Seattle's next steps to reach these goals. The plan focuses on actions the City of Seattle can take within its departments, programs, and services. In addition, the City can use its leadership, outreach, and engagement role to act as a catalyst to promote positive change in our communities, institutions, and businesses. This action plan proposes building on Seattle's strengths to continue our tradition of progressive leadership. Realizing the benefits of this plan will require a commitment to new actions and investments; continued interdepartmental work; and new and strengthened partnerships with businesses, community-based organizations, government agencies, and other institutions.

1. Seattle Office of Economic Development. The Indicator, 7/12/12, CAI analysis based on <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/economic-reports/monthly-employment-report>

The Food System

The food system is a set of activities that encompass production, processing and cooking, distribution, access, consumption, and waste management related to food. This definition includes every phase of the process that gets food from the producer to the consumer (farm to plate), and ultimately how the food waste is disposed. Because everyone needs to eat, the food system we create and support has a significant influence on the health of our region's economy, environment, health, and communities.

Benefits of a Healthy Food System

What is Healthy Food?

Throughout this plan, we use the term healthy food to describe food that is healthy for people and the planet. In this report, healthy food is defined as:

Nutritious

Whole or minimally processed foods that promote the physical well being of people and communities.

Sustainable

Food that is produced in a way that promotes the health of ecosystems and communities for our generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to produce food. Sustainable food is produced without the use of artificial chemicals, pesticides, or herbicides, in a way that builds our soil, protects our waterways and air, and eliminates exposure to pesticides and artificial chemicals for farmers, workers, consumers, and communities.

A healthy food system has many benefits. Chief among them are its role in promoting physical health and preventing disease, increasing equity and opportunity for eaters, workers, and business owners, building shared prosperity in the region, protecting and enhancing our environment, and strengthening our communities.

Promoting health and preventing disease

Access to fresh, healthy food is critical to our individual health and the health of our communities. The methods used to produce, process, and prepare foods, as well as the food choices we make as consumers, have significant impacts on the health of individuals.

Most of the food grown in the United States is grown using pesticides and artificial fertilizers. In 2009, over 50 percent of food samples tested by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Data Program contained residues from at least one pesticide, and the number of samples with four or more pesticides increased by 64 percent between 2003-2009.^{2,3} The health effects depend on the type of pesticide, how toxic it is, and how much of it is consumed; some pesticides may have unique effects on children.⁴ The impacts of pesticides are felt more acutely among agricultural workers, among whom physicians diagnose 10,000 to 20,000 pesticide poisonings each year.⁵ Promoting food production practices that do not rely on pesticides can help to decrease the negative impacts of pesticides for workers and eaters alike.

Diet-related diseases including obesity and diabetes are national problems that have significant costs for the health-care system and for communities. In 2010, 47 percent of Seattle adults and 22 percent Seattle youth in grades 8, 10, and 12 were overweight or obese.^{6,7} Diabetes is the seventh leading cause of death in King County.⁸ Obesity in childhood is likely to continue into adulthood

47%

of Seattlites have an unhealthy weight⁶

Cost of Diabetes King County, 2006	
Direct	\$715,000,000
Indirect	\$310,000,000
Total	\$1,025,000,000

Source: King County Public Health Department.

and may increase an individual's risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Obesity also contributes significantly to health care costs at the local and national levels.

Eating a healthy diet has a host of positive impacts on health. Eating a healthy diet rich in minimally processed and whole foods including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains reduces the risk for heart disease, diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and some types of cancer. In order to reverse the trends in obesity and diabetes, and promote the health of Seattle's population, Seattle is working to create environments and programs that address barriers to healthy food access and affordability, and promote healthy food choices.

Increasing equity and opportunity for all

A healthy food system ensures that everyone, regardless of income or life situation, has access to healthy food. A strong food system can prevent food insecurity, reduce rates of obesity and diabetes, and support optimal nutrition.

Food security refers to individuals having access to culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate food through non-emergency sources at all times. Twenty percent of children and fourteen percent of all residents in King County experience food insecurity.⁹ Food insecurity is not evenly distributed throughout the population. Food is more likely to run out for households with children, for Latino and African-American households, and for households with lower incomes and less education.¹⁰

Obesity and diabetes rates in King County are higher for African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans than for other racial and ethnic groups.¹¹ Low-income households are also at a higher risk for diabetes. Some members of these communities may have a hard time affording healthy food and may have limited time available for food preparation. In addition, African American, Latino, Native American, and low-income households are heavily marketed to by companies selling high-calorie, low nutrition foods.

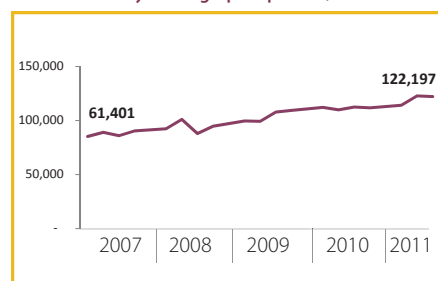
Many factors interact to determine how we eat. The affordability and accessibility of healthy food near where we live and work, the time we have available for food preparation, our exposure to food and nutrition education, and our exposure to food-related marketing are some of those factors.

Building a healthy food system means making changes across these areas. Building an equitable food system requires that we look specifically at communities who are at high risk for food insecurity and diet-related disease, and work together with these communities to remove barriers and find solutions.

Food Insecurity in King County



Visits to Foodbanks Monthly average per quarter, Seattle



Source: Food Lifeline, updated 12/11

SNAP caseloads have risen 83% since 2009

Source: Communities Count, 2012

Building shared prosperity in the region

Shifting to a local food system in which the food we eat is produced within the region supports jobs and keeps money in our local community. The 2008 report, “Why Local Linkages Matter” found that locally directed spending by consumers more than doubles the amount of money circulating among businesses in the community. The report found that if we shift 20 percent of our food dollars into local businesses, we would see a nearly half-billion dollar annual income increase in King County alone.¹²

Many of the conditions needed to create this shift exist. Individuals are demanding local food through farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), at restaurants, and at mainstream grocers. Innovative food distribution models are aggregating locally grown product and making it easier for smaller producers to access larger markets, such as hospitals, school districts, universities, and large grocers. These are the linkages that are making our local food economy stronger.

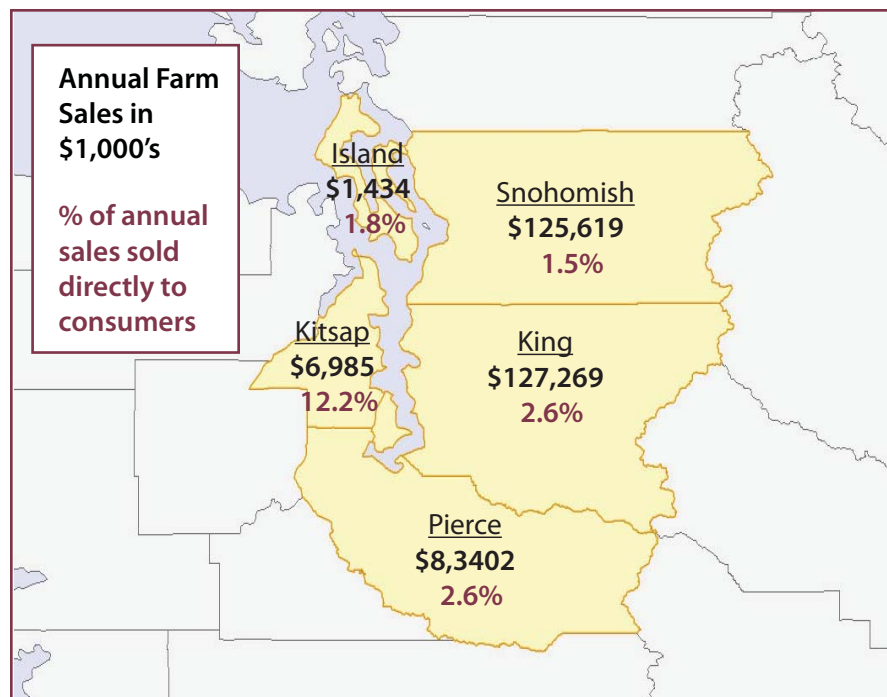
The Puget Sound region has a strong food economy, and it is poised to grow. The value of agricultural production in King County doubled between 1982 and 2007, and direct-to-consumer sales (farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs) grew an average of 15 percent per year from 2002 to 2007. Food production, food sales, and dining establishments account for over 130,000 jobs in the Seattle area.¹³ In King County, the food processing industry represents \$5.9 billion in gross sales and over 11,000 jobs.¹⁴ Increasing purchasing of local, healthy foods by large purchasers like school districts, hospitals, and universities creates an additional market for our local producers while getting food to consumers at the peak of freshness. Seattle is known for its craft food products and restaurants that feature local, seasonal cuisine. These restaurants and processing

businesses provide an additional market for our local farmers, further supporting regional agricultural businesses and creating the economic conditions necessary to preserve farmland in our region. At the same time, these businesses contribute to Seattle’s unique appeal, beloved by its residents and visitors alike.

The food sector of our economy provides opportunities for entrepreneurs from all walks of life. Restaurants and neighborhood stores have historically been businesses owned and operated by new immigrants and other community members. These entrepreneurs understand the unique food needs of their communities—and often develop businesses that can meet those

15 Farmers Markets in Seattle

Annual Farm Sales 2007



Data Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007

needs. They are well poised to help provide fresh, healthy food to more residents while creating innovations in the restaurant and retail space. New models of stores and restaurants, such as market stalls and food trucks, provide low-barrier opportunities to enter the market and test out business ideas. All communities benefit from this innovation that brings international flair to Seattle's food culture while increasing access to healthy food in culturally specific ways.

Building shared prosperity means creating the conditions that keep these businesses successful; allow farmers, business owners, and workers across the food system to earn a living wage; and support businesses that invest back into our local economy.

Protecting and enhancing our environment

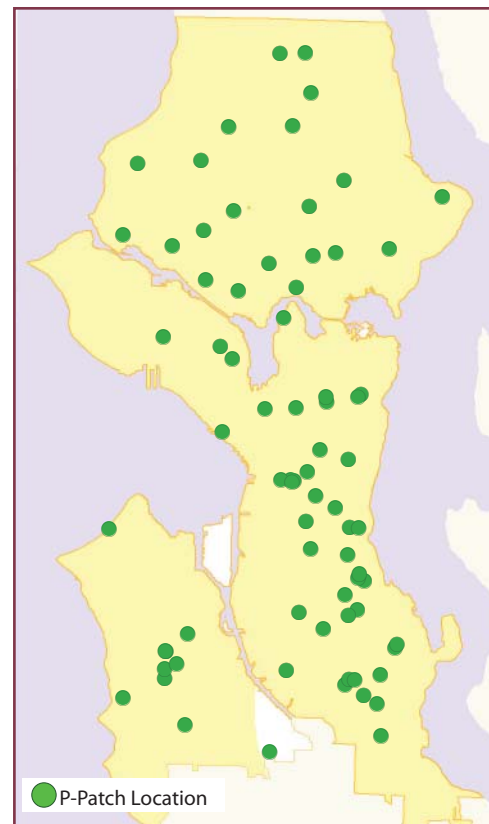
Large-scale industrial food production practices are characterized by intensive energy use and waste. Our current food system relies heavily on fossil fuels, a non-renewable resource. Environmental impacts such as water and air pollution from farm operations and food transportation, as well as habitat loss, soil depletion, and pesticide use as a result of some agricultural practices are of increasing concern across the country.¹⁵

Increasing demand for local and sustainably produced food may help to mitigate some of these stresses on the environment.

Locally produced foods often require less packaging and produce fewer greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced transportation distances. Organic food production methods eliminate synthetic chemicals such as herbicides, pesticides, and synthetic fertilizers that threaten our health and the health of our soil, air, and water. A 2009 survey by the King County Agriculture program found that most King County residents purchase locally grown food regularly, and do not want to see our regional farmland disappear.¹⁶ Keeping regional farmland in production requires a strong market for locally produced food, as well as other programs and protections.

Keeping waste local and encouraging composting of organic materials reduces the use of landfills and recycles nutrients. Food waste comprised about 17 percent of the Seattle's total generated waste stream in 2010. Also in 2010, 46 percent of the total residential and commercial food waste was diverted for composting and other processing.¹⁷ The other 54 percent was transported to landfills in Oregon, creating transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and releasing the potent greenhouse gas methane when it decomposes in the landfill. Preventing, reusing, and recycling food waste can reduce the environmental impact of our food system. Moreover, preventing food waste by taking small actions as individuals saves money and makes the most of available food. Recycling unavoidable food waste into compost returns valuable nutrients into our ecosystem.

P-Patch Garden Locations



Data Source: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

46%
of total residential
and commercial
food waste diverted
for composting &
processing¹⁷

Celebrating food and strengthening community

Food permeates virtually all aspects of society and plays an essential role in building community. In Seattle, the efforts of individuals, organizations, governmental agencies, and businesses to improve the food environment have fostered relationships among producers, processors, and consumers. For example, at farmers markets, consumers can meet the farmers and businesses growing and preparing their food. Food brings people together, be it at the dinner table, at farmers markets, community gardens, potlucks, neighborhood events, or local cafes.

The reasons to strengthen Seattle's local food system are many. The remainder of this plan lays out steps the City of Seattle can take in the next three to five years to move toward a healthy, local, sustainable food system for all.



Photo Credit: Neighborhood Centers



Photo Credit: Egan Snow, Flickr



Top Teen Chef Competition. Photo Credit: Seattle Parks

2. Pesticide Residues in Food.US EPA Report on the Environment. Accessed at: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/eroe/index.cfm?fuseaction=detail.viewInd&lv=list.listByAlpha&r=239788&subtop=312>
3. The PDP measures residue levels for hundreds of pesticides and their metabolites in fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, and dairy products from across the country, sampling different combinations of commodities each year.
4. US Environmental Protection Agency. Pesticides and Food: Health Problems Pesticides May Pose. Accessed at: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/risks.htm>
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6. Public Health – Seattle & King County.Community Health Indicators. 2010. Accessed at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/data/chi2009.aspx>
7. Youth weight information is gathered in grades 8, 10, and 12.
8. Pulic Health – Seattle & King County.Community Health Indicators. Indicator: Leading Causes of Death, 2003-2007. Accessed at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/data/chi2009/HealthOutcomesCauseofDeath/gender.aspx>
9. Feeding America. Mind the Meal Gap. Accessed at: <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>
10. Communities Count.Adequate Food in King County. Communities Count Early Release Report. February, 2012. Accessed at: <http://www.communitiescount.org/>
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13. Seattle Office of Economic Development.The Indicator, 7/12/12, CAI analysis based on <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/economic-reports/monthly-employment-report>
14. Washington State Department of Agriculture.Top Crops and Food Processing Industries.Accessed at: http://agr.wa.gov/AgInWA/Crop_Maps.aspx
15. The American Public Health Association provides an overview of environmental and health impacts of the industrial food system in its policy statement: Towards a Healthy, Sustainable Food System. Available at: <http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/policysearch/default.htm?id=1361>
16. King CountyDepartment of Natural Resources and Parks, Agriculture Section and the King County Agriculture Commission. FARMS report: Future of Agriculture, Realize Meaningful Solutions. 2009.Accessed at: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/waterandland/agriculture/documents/farms-report-future-of-agriculture.aspx>
17. This includes a small amount going to fats/oils/grease processing.

How this Plan was Developed

In 2008, the Seattle City Council passed the Local Food Action Initiative, Resolution 31019, which aims to improve the local and regional food system in a sustainable and secure way and, in doing so, advance the City of Seattle's interrelated goals of race and social justice, environmental sustainability, economic development, and emergency preparedness.

In 2009, the City of Seattle convened a Food Interdepartmental Team (IDT) to coordinate food system work across departments and take advantage of synergies between programs. In 2010, the Seattle Mayor and City Council declared it the Year of Urban Agriculture, and the City updated the land use code to make it easier for Seattle residents to grow and sell local and healthy food in Seattle, increased food growing and cooking activities at parks and community centers, and made more City-owned land available for food production.

In 2011, the Community Food Security released Recommendations for Food Systems Policy in Seattle, commissioned by the Seattle City Council. In 2012, Seattle hired a food policy advisor to coordinate food work across city departments, channel inter-agency efforts toward well-defined goals, and create an action plan that would advance policy and programs that support a healthy, equitable, sustainable food system for Seattle and region. The Food Action Plan is the City of Seattle's next step in developing a coordinated food policy.

The first step in creating this action plan was to learn from community stakeholders about their food system priorities. Through a series of listening sessions with over 150 Seattle residents, as well as many more meetings with individuals and organizations working on food system issues, the action plan team assessed what the community felt were the highest food-system priorities for the City.

Using these priorities as a guide—and informed by the work of the Community Food Security Coalition—the Food IDT clarified goals for the food policy program, identified a list of current activities and potential new actions that could advance these goals, developed a series of evaluation criteria, and filtered the activities list through the criteria. The community priorities and Food IDT criteria are listed in Appendix A and B. The resulting activities and actions are captured in this plan and provide the next steps for Seattle's food policy work. Some of these efforts have been underway for some time, and others are new activities that have recently been implemented, are in the planning stages, or are recommended for the future. Some recommendations have already been funded, while others will require additional funding to implement. All have been identified as priorities. There is much more work to be done. This work requires a unified interdepartmental strategy within City government and a broad-based collaboration with the community. We can only achieve our goals through working together with businesses, community-based organizations, individuals, and other institutions and government agencies. We look forward to working with partners throughout Seattle and our region to advance the recommendations in this report, and to identify actions that reach even further.

Goals & Values

The Food IDT identified four goals for Seattle's local food system based on the input from the community and alignment with the types of work the City of Seattle does. These include promoting public health and adequate food for everyone; supporting the growth of businesses that sustain our economy; providing services to improve the quality of life for Seattle residents and opportunities for residents to engage with their environments and communities; and leading efforts to build a clean and healthy environment.

The City of Seattle's goals provide an organizing framework for the plan and include different areas of work with distinct outcomes, reflecting these many types of work. Along with the goals, the Food IDT identified ten values that should guide our work. These values provide a basis for all the recommendations contained in this report. These values shaped the development of our recommendations, and will inform how we carry them out. Strategies and recommendations to achieve these goals were also determined and are detailed in the following section.

Goals

Healthy Food for All:

All Seattle residents should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food.

Grow Local

It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use or for business purposes.

Strengthen the Local Economy

Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Seattle.

Prevent Food Waste

Food-related waste should be prevented, reused, or recycled.

Values

- Make healthy, high-quality food accessible and affordable.
- Ensure the health and well being of all people.
- Improve equity in the food system.
- Build diverse and collaborative relationships with community organizations, businesses, and governmental entities.
- Support inclusive community participation in program and policy development.
- Promote regional food security.
- Value and support the role of food and agriculture in our region's economy.
- Support the economic viability of local, sustainable farms.
- Sustain and grow a healthy environment that enhances biodiversity and mitigates climate change.
- Build a food system that supports racial and social justice.

STRATEGIES

Approach

This section provides recommendations of actions the City of Seattle should take to reach our food system goals. In order to reach the goals, the Food IDT identified six elements that cut across strategies and describe how we will carry out the work contained in the recommendations.

- **Create and sustain** strong interdepartmental and intergovernmental coordination on food issues.
- **Enhance** partnerships with the public and private sectors and community-based organizations in the City and across the region.
- **Stimulate** collaboration among community organizations, institutions, neighborhoods, and governments.
- **Focus** on racial and social equity and support the communities most at-risk for food insecurity and diet-related disease.
- **Increase** inclusive communication and engagement opportunities for the public.
- Use data to **assess** conditions, inform priorities, and track progress.

Healthy Food For All

Goal: All Seattleites should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food.

- Strategy 1** Promote the location of healthy food access points, such as grocery stores, healthy food retail, farmers markets, food gardens, and farms, within walking or bicycling distance from homes, work places, and other gathering places.
- Strategy 2** Use the City's purchasing and contracting power to support healthy, local, sustainably produced food.
- Strategy 3** Support programs, policies, and projects that help get more healthy food to children and youth.
- Strategy 4** Increase affordability of healthy, local food for low-income Seattle residents.
- Strategy 5** Promote healthy food, especially in low-income communities and with youth, through education and collaborative efforts.

Strategy 1
Promote the location of healthy food access points, such as grocery stores, healthy food retail, farmers markets, food gardens, and farms, within walking or bicycling distance from homes, work places, and other gathering places.

Eating a healthy diet is difficult when residents must travel long distances to access healthy food. While many factors contribute to an individual's eating decisions, we can plan our communities to make it easier for Seattle residents to get to locations supplying fresh, healthy food on foot, by bike, or by transit. Efforts should first address communities with limited access to fresh healthy food, and should also take a city-wide approach to planning for food access in all communities.

Recommendations

Pursue these new actions:

- **Integrate policies supportive of food access into City of Seattle plans and efforts.** Plans exist at citywide, neighborhood, and departmental scale that influence what services exist in our neighborhoods. Integrate food access policies into the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Strategic Plan, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, the neighborhood planning process, and other relevant plans so that planning processes include consideration of the availability of healthy food.
- **Explore incentives for locating grocery stores in areas identified as having low food security and poor food access.** Zoning and financial incentives have been successfully implemented in other municipalities to attract healthy food retail to neighborhoods currently without access. Because grocery stores and other food retail create jobs, stimulate community investment, and increase neighborhood vitality, financial or zoning incentives may be appropriate. Assess the conditions in low food-security, poor food-access areas and explore zoning and financial incentives that might help attract grocery stores to these locations.
- **As criteria in evaluating transportation projects, include safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections between residential neighborhoods and community gardens, food banks, grocery stores, and farmers markets.** Making it easy for Seattle residents to get to food access points on transit, bike, or foot can help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions while also helping people to access healthy food. Develop a mechanism to include food access criteria into transportation planning and projects.

Strategy 2

Use the City's purchasing and contracting power to support healthy, local, sustainably produced food.

The City invests over three million dollars in food-related contracts each year. We can use those dollars to support food that is healthy, local, and sustainably produced, ensuring that our purchasing and contracting dollars support food production that preserves our health and our environment. Purchasing and contracting standards can also increase the amount of healthy, local, sustainably produced food available to food bank recipients and children at childcare centers, many of whom are at-risk for food insecurity and/or diet-related disease.



Healthy Vending Machines. Photo Credit: Seattle Parks

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Implement best practice nutrition and physical activity standards at Seattle-supported licensed child care facilities.** The City of Seattle Human Services Department (HSD) supports child care providers through the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). In partnership with the Coalition for Safety and Health in Early Learning (CSHEL) and Public Health Seattle-King County, HSD created a nutrition and physical activity best practice assessment tool to be used in ECEAP, serving 330 Seattle children ages 3 and 4. Spreading these best practices to other child care facilities and before- and after-school program sites and increasing provider education in nutrition and physical activity has the potential to increase the nutritional quality of food for 12,000 children ages 0-12.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Adopt healthy vending guidelines for vending machines on City property.** Parks and Recreation has adopted King County Healthy Vending Guidelines for healthy vending machines at all Parks and Recreation community centers. Ensuring that vending machines on all City property include nutrient-rich whole foods that are low in added sugars, saturated and trans fats, refined grains, and sodium gives City employees and the public the opportunity to make healthy purchasing choices.
- **Adopt healthy procurement guidelines for City contracts, events, and facilities.** What people eat is partially shaped by the food available to them. If healthy food is not easily attainable where people access food, they are less likely to choose it. Healthy procurement guidelines may include guidelines for city events, contracts, and vending machines in facilities. For example, HSD will include healthy food procurement as a priority area for upcoming contracts for senior meal and emergency feeding programs.

Healthy Food For All

Goal: All Seattleites should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food.

Strategy 3

Support programs, policies, and projects that help get more healthy food to children and youth.

In 2010, 10 percent of Seattle households with children reported that they often or sometimes didn't have enough food. Nearly half of Latino households and low-income households (less than \$35,000 per year) with children sometimes or often ran out of food and didn't have money to buy more¹⁸. At the same time, one-in-five eighth-, tenth-, and twelfth-grade students in King County is overweight or obese. Diet-related diseases have been on the rise and threaten the future of our city's health and economy.

Children and youth have fewer choices of where to eat—when they are at school or in childcare, their options are limited to what is being offered. Processed foods are heavily marketed to children and youth, and many have not had opportunities to learn about food, nutrition, and the connections between farms and food.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Support and expand the Farm to Table program.** The Farm to Table program connects City-supported licensed childcare facilities and City-supported senior meal programs with local farmers in order to integrate fresh local produce into meals served to kids and seniors. There are currently 30 childcare sites and 25 senior meal programs that have begun purchasing local, healthy, organic food directly from farmers to serve in their meals. Many sites have moved from reheating processed foods to cooking from scratch, and both staff and participants are enjoying the improved quality of meals offered while also learning about the local farms that produce our food. Expanding this pilot project has the potential to impact hundreds of low-income children and seniors.
- **Support and expand the Good Food Bag program** at community centers and City-supported licensed childcare facilities, linking low-income families with local food sources to provide healthy foods at low cost. The Good Food Bag provides affordable food to families via volunteer efforts at community centers and other Farm to Table sites. The program meets people where they are by forming distribution sites around "natural hubs"—places where families and/or food buyers for those families congregate. Volunteer coordinators arrange for purchase and delivery of food to the site, where participants can purchase family-sized or individually portioned bags.
- **Provide free summer meals to children, and leverage this opportunity to provide more fresh healthy food.** One-in-five children in Seattle experienced food insecurity in 2010. School lunch provides the most important meal for many children during the school year, and in the summer that meal is lost. The Human Services Department has been administering the federally funded Summer Food Service Program to children ages 1-18 since the 1970s. In 2012, 175,000 free summer meals were provided to children at community centers and partner sites. This food distribution effort provides an opportunity to get more healthy food to children. Continue to administer the Summer Food Service Program, and seek opportunities to leverage this work to provide additional healthy food access for kids.
- **Provide operational support to food banks and congregate meal programs.** Emergency food service and congregate meals help to meet the nutritional needs of seniors and low-income people. Congregate meal programs provide nutritionally sound meals to seniors over 60 in a group setting. Nutrition education and

18. Communities Count. Adequate Food in King County. Communities Count Early Release Report. February, 2012. Accessed at: <http://www.communitiescount.org/>

social and fitness activities are also provided. Home-delivered meal programs help homebound elders improve their nutritional intake allowing them to remain living in their communities. Food banks and emergency meal programs provide emergency food to low-income people, as well as assist individuals and families to secure and retain food stamps and other non-emergency food resources. They also provide nutrition education and other support services, such as food transportation and information and assistance to emergency food providers and their clients. The Seattle Human Services Department invests more than \$3.1 million in operational support to 17 local food banks, 9 emergency congregate meal program sites, meal and grocery home delivery, food bank transportation, food distribution, and systems support.



Rainier Community Center. Photo Credit: Seattle Parks.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Provide support to family childcare providers to help improve the quality of food served.** The need for nutritious meals served in licensed family childcare is critical to the health and well being of children. Nutritious, healthy foods cost more money. The City of Seattle's Child Care Nutrition Program is a USDA-funded program that provides funding to licensed family childcare providers, with the requirement that they provide meals that meet USDA nutrition standards to children in their care. USDA currently reimburses low-income providers, and those who are located in low-income communities, more than other providers. Supplementing the federal reimbursement rate for the City of Seattle-contracted family home providers who receive the lower federal reimbursement rate would improve the nutritional quality of meals served to children at these family childcares.



Healthy Foods Here. Photo Credit: CPPW

Healthy Food For All

Goal: All Seattleites should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food.

Strategy 4

Increase affordability of healthy, local food for low-income Seattle residents.

The cost of healthy food is a barrier to consuming recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables for many low-income Seattle residents, even in communities where places to purchase healthy food exist. Incorporating healthier food into meals served in childcare centers and senior programs, as mentioned above, is one way to make healthy food more available to these communities. Other innovations and incentives can help make healthy food more affordable for low-income individuals and families.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Distribute Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers to older adults. Distribute bags of local produce to home-bound seniors who are unable to access farmers markets.** The federally funded Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides vouchers to low-income seniors to purchase fresh produce at farmers markets during the summer months. These coupons, which are distributed by the HSD, provide a critical supplement to the food budgets of seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes. For seniors who are unable to get to the farmers market due to illness or disability, HSD delivers bags of local produce to their homes. Public Health – Seattle & King County distributes similar vouchers to participants in the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC).
- **Support and expand efforts to enroll eligible families in food assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC), to increase food security and physical well-being.** Federal and State nutrition programs help low-income families put food on their tables. The federally-funded WIC program provides eligible pregnant women, new mothers, and young children with nutrition and health education, breastfeeding support, and checks that can be exchanged for healthy foods. Benefits provided by the federal SNAP program and the WA State Food Assistance Program help low income individuals and families keep food on their tables. The Human Services Department works with Public Health – Seattle and King County to conduct outreach about these programs and make it easy for eligible residents to apply for multiple benefits in one place.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Incentivize healthy food purchases by recipients of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by working with partners to create a Fresh Bucks program for use at Farmers Markets.** Piloted in 2012, the Fresh Bucks program increases the purchasing power of and makes healthy choices easier for low-income Seattle residents by giving them a bonus for spending federal or state nutrition benefits at local farmers markets when purchasing fruits and vegetables. The Fresh Bucks program helps keep federal nutrition dollars in our local community by bringing more shoppers to farmers markets, where they can buy produce directly from local farmers. Explore partnerships and funding to support and expand the program.

Strategy 5

Promote healthy food, especially in low-income communities and with youth, through education and collaborative efforts.

Because today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow, engaging children and youth in growing and cooking their own healthy food are essential areas of work needed to change the culture of food. Low-income communities suffer disproportionately from limited food access, food insecurity, and diet-related diseases. Healthy food education and engagement go hand in hand with promoting food access and affordability.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education for teens, adults, seniors, and children.** Access to healthy food provides people with the opportunity to make healthy food choices in their environments. Education complements access by teaching our community about healthy eating, and growing and preparing food. Hands-on education is a cornerstone of the Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) programming. As part of the Healthy Parks, Healthy You initiative, the department includes gardening and cooking as activities available at parks and community centers for multiple populations. DPR also works together with HSD to provide culturally appropriate nutrition and health education sessions at ethnic senior nutrition programs. Continue to support this work and explore opportunities to expand these programs and collaborate with schools and other youth programs to promote healthy food.

Healty Food For All Highlight: Fresh Bucks

Cost is the biggest barrier to eating a healthy diet for many low-income Seattle residents. Fresh Bucks is a pilot program, started in 2012, that provides a bonus to farmers market shoppers who use their SNAP (food stamp) benefits at farmers markets. The bonus can only be used to purchase fruits and vegetables from local farmers. Fresh Bucks increases the affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables while supporting the regional farm economy.

The 2012 pilot is a partnership between the City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment and the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance, with funding from JPMorgan Chase and the Seattle Foundation.

Impact

In a survey on farmers market SNAP shoppers:

- 81% purchased more fruits and vegetables as a result of Fresh Bucks
- 74% purchased a greater variety of produce at the market than they normally would
- 72% said Fresh Bucks has made a difference in their families' diets

Goal: It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use and for business purposes.

Strategy 1 Prioritize food production as a use of land.

Strategy 2 Develop and support programs to produce food on City-owned land.

Strategy 3 Support efforts to expand urban food production on privately owned land, including residential, commercial, and institutional properties.

Strategy 4 Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building integrated agriculture.

Strategy 5 Work jointly with other jurisdictions to conserve agricultural land.

Strategy 1

Prioritize food production as a use of land.

Many uses compete for limited land in the City. Seattle's population is projected to add 100,000 new people in the next 20 years, and part of accommodating that growth is ensuring a high quality of life for all residents, current and future. Land in food production contributes to the quality of life for Seattle residents, while also providing ecosystem benefits, building community, and increasing access to healthy food. Vacant development sites, unused City-owned land, commercial rooftops, and residential lawns are all potential farms and gardens.

Recommendations

Pursue these new actions:

- **Integrate policies supportive of urban agriculture into City of Seattle plans and efforts.** Plans and efforts exist at citywide, neighborhood, and departmental scales that influence how different types of activities are allowed and prioritized. For example, changes to the Land Use Code made in 2010 clarified rules for growing food in the city. Integrating urban agriculture into the Comprehensive Plan can provide support for urban agriculture as we plan for the growth of our city. Using the competitive Neighborhood Matching Fund to fund food security projects has supported the growth of neighborhood-based food production and food security projects, and should be continued. Through the Healthy Parks, Healthy You Initiative, Parks and Recreation has incorporated gardening and cooking education into its community center activities, supporting community building around healthy meals and food education for all ages. Continue to integrate policies supportive of urban agriculture into additional plans and efforts.
- **Working within the City's property database, develop additional site criteria to more readily identify vacant or underused parcels suitable for urban agriculture.** The City of Seattle owns land within and beyond City limits. Most parcels except those associated with street rights-of-way are listed in a property database. Currently, the database does not contain information about many characteristics that would help assess site suitability for agriculture. Include these characteristics to facilitate identification of potential urban agriculture sites.

Strategy 2

Develop and support programs to produce food on City-owned land.

The City of Seattle is a recognized leader in community gardening. The P-Patch community gardening program, started in 1973, currently manages 78 gardens tended by members of 2,642 households. Many community centers and parks include community gardens, with gardening, nutrition, and food education programs for all ages. Many of Seattle's parks are home to historic fruit orchards, which produce valuable food for the community when maintained. Partnering with businesses and community-based organizations expands the potential to put more land into food production. Strengthening these programs, and pursuing opportunities to create new programs, will increase the City's food production, build community, and improve the health of Seattle residents.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Support and expand the P-Patch community gardening and market gardening programs, focusing on meeting the needs of all residents interested in growing food in a P-Patch.** The P-Patch program enjoys strong interest. Support ongoing P-Patch operations and continue to expand community gardening to under-served areas of the City and reduce wait times in densely populated areas. Continue to support the P-Patch market gardening program, which provides community integration and job skills to immigrants and refugees in two Seattle Housing Authority communities, while expanding fresh food access in these neighborhoods through farm stands and CSAs.
- **Improve management and harvesting of fruits and berries on existing City-owned property.** There are more than 37 orchards and fruit gardens, small and large, on City of Seattle-owned land, from which volunteers harvested over 1,500 pounds of fruit in 2011. Proper maintenance and harvesting of these trees and shrubs will help expand and sustain this valuable food resource for years to come. Nine of these orchards are currently maintained through a partnership between Department of Parks and Recreation, volunteers, and a community-based non-profit organization. Sustain this program and continue to collaborate with non-profit partners and the community to manage these resources and provide fruit for the Seattle community.
- **Where appropriate, consider leasing City-owned land to non-profit community partners to support community goals and produce food for the community.** Cross-sectoral partnerships are essential to increase production and consumption of healthy food. In some cases, the City owns land that community partners can use to train new farmers, engage children and youth in growing their own food, and provide locally grown food for the Seattle community. Consider this use of City-owned land and explore appropriate City entity to act as bridge between community partners and city agencies.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Lease underutilized City-owned land to urban farmers through the Seattle Farms program.** The City owns land that is underutilized, surplus, excess, interim, or unused. Some of this land is suitable for urban agriculture. Implement a pilot program leasing sites to urban farmers to gather more data about the potential to grow food on appropriate City-owned sites. Continue to inventory additional land available and work to reduce barriers to putting more underutilized land into agricultural production.

Goal: It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use and for business purposes.

Strategy 3

Support efforts to expand urban food production on privately owned land, including residential, commercial, and institutional properties.

Privately owned land constitutes 88 percent of land within Seattle's boundaries. This land provides an excellent opportunity to expand food production, helping to meet Seattle's fresh fruit and vegetable needs while building community and providing additional ecosystem benefits. Encourage the inclusion of food production in new development projects, the conversion of existing lawns, vacant sites, and rooftops to food production.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Encourage continued use of the competitive Department of Neighborhoods Neighborhood Matching Fund to develop and fund innovative community-based food production projects.** The Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF) provides an opportunity for the City to support community-based groups in coming up with solutions to challenges they see in their communities. Many innovative community-based food production and food security projects have been launched through NMF grants. These projects continue to enhance food access and food security and to expand food production in the city, long beyond their initial funding. Many Seattle neighborhoods have been shaped by the gardens, farms, and community networks that were launched with NMF funding. The Neighborhood Matching Fund should continue supporting community-based projects that address food access and food security needs and increase urban food production.
- **Encourage new developments to include garden or agricultural land through the Seattle Green Factor and Priority Green Permitting.** Seattle Green Factor is a landscape requirement designed to increase the quantity and quality of planted areas in Seattle while allowing flexibility for developers and designers to meet development standards. It currently applies to new development in commercial, neighborhood commercial, and multifamily zones. Green Factor applicants receive a bonus for landscaping in food production. Priority Green provides expedited and facilitated permitting services for projects that meet Seattle's sustainability goals. On-site food production is considered as an element of Priority Green Permitting. Continue to include food production as an element of these programs.
- **Include a fruit tree option in Trees for Neighborhoods, a project of Seattle reLeaf, to promote food production on residential property.** The Trees for Neighborhoods program provides free trees for Seattle residents to plant in their yards. Healthy, mature tree canopy positively affects issues ranging from health to economic development and sense of community. Urban trees also have environmental benefits. They break up heat islands, decrease flooding from stormwater runoff, absorb carbon dioxide, and shade buildings leading to a reduction in energy use. Fruit trees also add to urban food security, and connect residents with the source of their food.

- **Provide education about low-impact, chemical-free home gardening.** The Garden Hotline, sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities, the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program (LHWMP) in King County, and the Saving Water Partnership has provided information to Seattle and King County residents on ways to reduce waste, conserve water and other natural resources, and minimize the use of chemicals for over 25 years. The Garden Hotline staff also provide articles for local and regional newsletters, present workshops and seminars on natural yard care and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices, and research innovative management practices. Continue to provide education on ecological land management to Seattle and King County residents through this resource.

Highlight: Urban Agriculture Land Use Code Changes

In 2010, the Department of Planning and Development updated the Land Use Code to support and encourage urban agriculture. The updated code provides definitions of key urban agriculture terms; allows urban farms and community gardens as permitted uses in all zones, with some limitations; allows urban farmers to sell their farm products on the same lot or off-site; allows food-producing rooftop greenhouses a 15 foot exception to height limits in some zones; adds farmers markets to the definition of multipurpose uses; and increases the number of chickens allowed on residential property from three to eight, though roosters are not allowed.

Impact

These code changes help create a more sustainable and secure local food system by increasing opportunities to grow and sell food in all zones. Seattle residents can develop local sources of healthy food by turning existing lawn and garden space into productive agricultural plots. Small-scale urban agriculture can help create livable, walkable and sustainable communities, implement City goals of sustainability, and stimulate small-scale economic development.



UW Rooftop Garden. Photo Credit: Seattle Department of Neighborhoods



Plums in Wallingford. Photo Credit: Lettuce Link

Goal: It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use and for business purposes.

Strategy 4

Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building integrated agriculture.

Rooftops provide space and sunlight, and there are currently few competing uses for their space. Increasing urban farming on rooftops can capture storm water and divert it from the sewer system, and decrease transport distance of harvested produce and associated greenhouse gas emissions. Rooftop urban agriculture can create jobs, reconnect urban dwellers with the source of our food, and increase healthy, fresh food production within city limits.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building-integrated agriculture.** The UpGarden P-Patch, on the Mercer Street garage, is the first rooftop community garden on City-owned land that is open to the public. Particularly in dense neighborhoods, rooftops may be prime locations for expanding food production. Research suggests there are ecosystem benefits such as storm water diversion and greenhouse gas reduction from converting impervious rooftops into food producing gardens. Use this innovation to develop an understanding of the ecosystem benefits of food production on rooftops, and develop additional sites.



UpGarden P-Patch. Photo Credit: Trevor Dykstra.



Photo Credit: WA Department of Ecology.

Strategy 5

Work jointly with other jurisdictions to conserve agricultural land.

Western Washington has lost 1.3 million acres of farmland since 1950. Low-density rural residential development, competition for water, and the development of highways and office parks have reduced the land available for growing food to feed Seattle and the region. Once farmland is paved and subdivided, it is lost. Seattle supports regional farmland preservation by accommodating increased employment and residential growth, at all levels of affordability, within our urban area. The City can also partner with other jurisdictions to find additional ways to preserve regional land for farming.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Continue to support Seattle's role in conserving regional agricultural land through transferring development rights from farmland to urban areas.** The City of Seattle requires developers that want to take advantage of additional height and floor area gained through rezones to provide public amenities in proportion to the amount of additional floor area they gain. This program, known as incentive zoning, helps to mitigate the impacts of new development to ensure that neighborhoods that receive additional density also receive the kinds of amenities that support livability. As part of a proposed rezone in South Lake Union, the City is proposing to implement a new state program called the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP). Under this program, developers would be required to purchase development rights from farms and forests in the region to satisfy a portion of their incentive zoning requirement in South Lake Union and Downtown. The purchase of development credits would prevent these lands from being redeveloped for non-agricultural use and thus provide for the long-term preservation of working farms and forest. In exchange for supporting this regional goal, King County will provide Seattle with a portion of the future property tax revenue generated from new development to fund local improvements such as open space and transportation improvements. It is anticipated that this program will go into effect in March of 2013. If implemented, the program is estimated to result in the preservation of over 25,000 acres of farms and forests as well as provide \$28 million in new infrastructure investments.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Explore innovative ways in which Seattle can help to protect regional farmland.** Regional farmland is a critical resource that supports our ecosystem, provides local food and keeps farming alive in our region. Explore new opportunities to protect regional farmland and keep it in production.

Strengthen the Local Economy

Goal: Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Seattle.

Strategy 1 Support businesses that grow, distribute, process, and sell local and healthy food.

Strategy 2 Celebrate and enhance local food as an element of Seattle's economy and identity.

Strategy 3 Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food.

Strategy 1

Support businesses that grow, distribute, process, and sell local and healthy food.

Food production, food sales, and dining establishments account for over 130,000 jobs in Seattle area.¹⁹ In King County, the food-processing industry represents \$5.9 billion in gross sales and over 11,000 jobs.²⁰ King County residents spend an estimated \$4.8 billion each year on groceries and food to eat at home.²¹ These food businesses provide opportunities for local producers to reach new markets. A new crop of entrepreneurs is launching businesses that connect farmers with stores and institutions, create innovative food store formats, and produce and process local and healthy foods of all types.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Support market gardens for low-income immigrant and refugee communities.** The P-Patch market gardening program provides community integration and job skills to immigrants and refugees in two Seattle Housing Authority communities, while expanding fresh food access in these neighborhoods through farm stands and CSAs. Continue to support this program.

Pursue these new actions:

- **Explore the need for local and regional food-processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure.** Increased coordination and aggregation of local produce from small and mid-size farms is a key element in expanding markets for these businesses and increasing the number of venues selling local food. Coordinate with partners in exploring opportunities to work together to meet these needs.
- **Provide comprehensive, user-friendly information on the requirements to operate as a food processor.** Food-processing businesses in King County represent \$5.9 billion in gross sales and support over 11,000 jobs.²² Food processing businesses are subject to many requirements from multiple government agencies. Making these regulations as easy as possible to navigate—by creating a user-friendly website or manual—will help businesses to focus on what they do best, making healthy, local food.

Strategy 2

Celebrate and enhance local food as an element of Seattle's economy and identity.

The Pacific Northwest has an abundance of delicious and nutritious native and locally produced foods, including salmon, fresh local greens, and many varieties of berry. These foods have sustained the people of this region for many generations. Locally produced foods are important to our history, our health, and our economy. Taking a cue from our region's history and ecology, Seattle chefs highlight these foods in kitchens, restaurants and food trucks. Pike Place market, created in 1907 to connect farmers directly with consumers, is one of our iconic tourist destinations, and other Seattle farmers markets are regularly found on national top-ten lists. Craft food processors turn our local bounty into jams, pickles, and even chocolate confections. There are many opportunities to further celebrate our native and locally produced foods, and the businesses that grow, process, cook, and sell them.

Recommendations

Pursue these new actions:

- **Assess the economic development potential of the food system as a local industry cluster.** Industry clusters are “geographically concentrated cooperative networks for interdependent firms, research and development institutions, and other intermediary actors where the close contacts of members and the continuous, fast knowledge exchange between them contribute to the competitive increase of both the members and the whole region.”²³ In a cluster, businesses cooperate toward common goals to improve their collective competitiveness.

The food system provides employment in a range of occupational areas, including agriculture, food service, processing, distribution, and retail. Conventional cluster analyses split these occupations into different clusters, leaving us with a gap in understanding how this sector compares to others in terms of employment and economic development potential. Our region boasts strong agriculture and fisheries industries, an identified specialty food cluster, and widely known restaurants that highlight local food. Assessing the food system as a cluster will help us to assess its revenue and employment potential. Identification of the food system as a cluster could lead to additional opportunities to create linkages and help businesses throughout this sector grow and thrive.

- **Identify opportunities to enhance Seattle's local food business identity.** Explore partnerships and collaborative efforts that highlight the unique qualities of Seattle's local food businesses and showcase these businesses in our tourism, arts, and cultural affairs.



Photo Credit: Flickr, Nate Gray



Photo Credit: Flickr, S Pants

Strengthen the Local Economy

Goal: Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Seattle.

Strategy 3

Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food.

Farmers markets and neighborhood retail provide easy access points for healthy and local food, while also serving as gathering places for community. Farmers markets support many small farm business owners, who contribute to the local economy. Small stores are often run by entrepreneurs who want to make a positive contribution to their communities. Helping these businesses increase healthy food options in their stores has the potential to be a win for both business owners and their communities.

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Deliver streamlined permitting services to farmers markets and help existing farmers markets maintain viable locations.** Farmers markets are cornerstones of Seattle's vibrant neighborhoods. Farmers markets provide a direct link between farmer and eater, create lively neighborhood gathering places, and directly support small farm businesses. In 2011, over 23,000 people shopped at Seattle farmers markets per market day, supporting more than 183 small farming businesses and generating an estimated \$13,129,803 in sales.²⁴ The Office of Economic Development works with farmers markets to identify locations on City-owned land (including parks and street right of ways) or help markets find and stay in viable locations. These markets provide a direct link between producer and consumer, reduce the distance food travels from farm to plate, keep food dollars in our local community, and contribute to the vitality of our business districts. Continue to support farmers markets through streamlined permitting, low fees, and assistance with locations.
- **Support existing business owners in increasing healthy foods offered in their stores.** In 2011 and 2012, the Healthy Foods Here program, a partnership with Public Health – Seattle & King County, provided technical assistance and financing to 47 Seattle and King County businesses to increase the fresh and healthy food offered in their small markets and corner stores. Continue to provide technical assistance, based on the Healthy Foods Here business assistance toolkit, to small business owners who are interested in offering more healthy foods in their stores. Supporting these business owners has the dual benefits of improving the profitability of local small businesses while increasing fresh food availability for low-income communities.

19. Seattle Office of Economic Development. The Indicator, 7/12/12, CAI analysis based on <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/economic-reports/monthly-employment-report>
20. WSDA. http://agr.wa.gov/AgInWA/Crop_Maps.aspx
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22. Washington State Department of Agriculture. Top Crops and Food Processing Industries. Accessed at: http://agr.wa.gov/AgInWA/Crop_Maps.aspx
23. Prosperity Partnership. Regional Economic Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region: Economy. 2012. Accessed at: <http://psrc.org/econdev/res/>
24. Based on data reported to Washington State Farmers Market Association.



Photo Credit: Seattle Market Gardens



Photo Credit: Flickr, John P



Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Prevent Food Waste

Goal: Food-related waste should be prevented, reused, or recycled.

Strategy 1 Prevent edible food from entering the waste stream.

Strategy 2 Increase composting of non-edible food.

Strategy 1

Prevent edible food from entering the waste stream.

Food waste comprised about 17 percent of Seattle's total generated waste stream in 2010. Also, in 2010, 46 percent of the total residential and commercial food waste was diverted for composting and other processing.²⁵ The other 54 percent was transported to landfills in Oregon, creating transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and releasing the potent greenhouse gas methane when the waste decomposes in the landfill. The City is on the path to increase food waste recycling and decrease food waste brought to the landfill through the steps outlined in SPU's Solid Waste Management Plan and the strategies laid out here.

Recommendations

Pursue these new actions:

- **Implement a behavior change campaign aimed at reducing edible food entering the waste stream.** Food waste comprises 29 percent of Seattle's residential waste stream.²⁶ On average, we throw out just over a dollar per day of edible food. For a family of four, that's \$1,600 wasted every year.²⁷ Nationally, approximately 64 percent of discarded food is preventable—meaning someone could have eaten it.²⁸ Preventing food waste comes down to small changes in what we do as individuals—purchasing the right amount of perishable foods, storing produce to retain freshness, and eating older food first. A food waste composition study, currently underway, will help the City to better understand the composition of our household food waste, and provide an opportunity to launch a food waste prevention campaign.



Photo Credit: Joshua Trujillo

Strategy 2

Increase composting of non-edible food.

Some of the food entering the waste stream is non-edible. The banana peel from your lunch, the egg shells from the morning omelet. Nationally, 18 percent of food waste is non-edible. SPU is a recognized leader in diverting food waste from landfills and turning it into compost.

A Brief Timeline in the History of Seattle's Food Waste

- 1989 Yard waste collection offered to all residents. No more yard waste allowed in garbage.
- 2005 Expanded service allows vegetative food waste to be added to yard waste carts. Recyclables banned from residential collection.
- 2009 All food waste, including meat, is allowed in food waste collection and weekly pick up begins. All single-family households now required to participate in a composting program. Styrofoam use banned; restaurants and grocery stores allowed to use plastic as interim solution.
- 2010 Styrofoam ban final in all restaurants and grocery stores. Throw-away containers are required to be compostable or recyclable.
- 2011 All multifamily buildings are required to subscribe to a food and yard waste collection program.
- 2012 One less truck pilot evaluates picking up garbage every other week, and food & yard waste weekly

Recommendations

Support and expand these current activities:

- **Continue to require food waste recycling for all residential customers and encourage food waste recycling for commercial customers.** Single-family households have had to participate in an organics management program since 2009. Households can subscribe to curbside collection, compost on their own, or do both. Multifamily buildings have had to subscribe to an organics collection program since 2011. Continue to work with Seattle's businesses to increase food waste recycling in Seattle.
- **Explore the benefits of collecting garbage every other week, and yard/food waste weekly.** A 2012 pilot is exploring the benefits of and implementation strategy for reducing garbage collection to every other week. Such a reduction has the potential to cut garbage truck traffic in neighborhoods by 20 percent, which would reduce greenhouse gas emissions, fuel consumption, and air pollution, while reducing costs to the solid waste management system. Reducing the frequency of garbage collection while retaining weekly food waste collection would provide an additional incentive for Seattle residents to prevent or recycle food waste.
- **Establish food waste recycling or composting at municipal facilities.** Not all municipal facilities currently recycle food waste. By establishing food-waste recycling at municipal facilities, the City of Seattle can set the example by preventing and recycling food-waste, and conducting waste-reduction education.
- **Continue to promote backyard composting.** Backyard composting of kitchen scraps and garden waste eliminates the need to truck organics to a recycling facility, and provides a healthy, natural soil amendment for yards and gardens. Education and promotion of backyard composting can increase Seattle residents' knowledge of and capacity to take food waste recycling into their own hands. Continue Seattle Public Utilities 25-plus year tradition of promoting backyard composting and soil building through the Master Composter/Soil Builder program, and explore additional opportunities to further promote backyard or neighborhood-scale composting.

- 25. This includes a small amount going to fats/oils/grease processing.
- 26. Cascadia Consulting. Seattle Public Utilities 2010 Residential Waste Stream Composition Study FINAL Report. Seattle, August 2011. Accessed at: http://www.seattle.gov/util/about_spu/garbage_system/solidwastereports/compositionstudies/index.asp
- 27. Dana Gunders. Wasted: How America is Losing Up to 40 Percent of its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill. NRDC Issue Paper. August 2012, IP:12-06-B.
- 28. Quested and Johnson, 2011, Household Food and Drink Waste in the U.K., WRAP Report

RESEARCH AGENDA

Additional research is needed in some areas to help us more fully understand where the best opportunities to improve the food system exist and how to address challenges. The City will seek partnerships to explore the following high-priority research areas more in depth.

- Measure accessibility of healthy food in neighborhoods and communities throughout Seattle.
- Engage communities most at risk for diet-related diseases, and immigrant and refugee communities, to identify strategies to improve their access to healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- Develop site criteria and conduct a further inventory of City-owned land available for urban agriculture.
- Assess the food production potential of publicly and privately owned land in Seattle, including rooftops and lawns.
- Assess the ecosystem benefits of urban and rooftop agriculture.
- Assess the opportunities and challenges of businesses that grow , process local and healthy foods.
- Explore the need for local and regional food processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Seattle Food Action Plan Indicators

The following indicators will track progress toward meeting our goals. In addition, the Office of Sustainability and Environment will prepare an annual report to provide a progress update on our actions and the results of those actions.

- Percent of Seattle residents within one-quarter mile of a healthy food access point
- Percent of Seattle residents who are food secure
- Acres of City-owned land used for food production
- Value of local food sold at Seattle farmers markets or other direct-to-consumer activities
- Value of EBT benefits redeemed at Seattle farmers markets
- Acres of farmland preserved through the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program
- Number of businesses increasing availability of healthy foods in stores through Healthy Foods Here
- Percent of Seattle's food waste diverted for composting or recycling

SUMMARY OF RECOMM

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations
Healthy Food For All All Seattle residents should have enough to eat and access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food	Promote the location of healthy food access points, such as grocery stores, healthy food retail, farmers markets, food gardens, and farms, within walking or bicycling distance from homes, work places, and other gathering places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate policies supportive of food access into City of Seattle plans and efforts. Explore incentives for locating grocery stores in areas identified as having low food security and poor food access. As criteria in evaluating transportation projects, include safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections between residential neighborhoods and food access points.
	Use the City's purchasing and contracting power to support healthy, local, sustainably produced food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement best practice nutrition and physical activity standards at Seattle-supported licensed childcare facilities. Adopt healthy vending guidelines for vending machines on City property. Adopt healthy procurement guidelines for City contracts, events, and facilities.
	Support programs, policies, and projects that help get more healthy food to children and youth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and expand the Farm to Table program. Support and expand the Good Food Bag program. Provide free summer meals to children. Provide operational support to food banks and congregate meal programs. Provide support to family childcare providers to help improve the quality of food served.
	Increase affordability of healthy, local food for low-income Seattle residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers to older adult and bags of local produce to home-bound seniors. Support and expand efforts to enroll eligible families in food assistance programs, including SNAP and WIC. Motivate healthy food purchases by SNAP recipients by working with partners to create a Fresh Bucks program for use at Farmers Markets.
	Promote healthy food, especially in low-income communities and with youth, through education and collaborative efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education for teens, adults, seniors, and children.
Prevent Food Waste Food-related waste should be prevented, reused, or recycled	Prevent edible food from entering the waste stream.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a behavior change campaign aimed at reducing edible food entering the waste stream.
	Increase composting of non-edible food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to require food-waste recycling for all residential customers and encourage food-waste recycling for commercial customers. Explore the benefits of collecting garbage every other week, and yard/food waste weekly. Establish food-waste recycling or composting at municipal facilities. Continue to promote backyard composting.

ENDATIONS

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations
Grow Local It should be easy to grow food in Seattle and in our region, for personal use of for business purposes.	Prioritize food production as a use of land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate policies supportive of urban agriculture into City of Seattle plans and efforts Working within the City's property database, develop additional site criteria to more readily identify vacant or underused parcels suitable for urban agriculture.
	Develop and support programs to produce food on City-owned land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and expand the P-Patch community gardening and market gardening programs, focusing on meeting the needs of all residents interested in growing food in a P-Patch. Improve management and harvesting of fruits and berries on existing City-owned property. Where appropriate, consider leasing City-owned land to non-profit community partners to support community goals and produce food for the community. Lease underutilized City-owned land to urban farmers through the Seattle Farms program.
	Support efforts to expand urban food production on privately owned land, including residential, commercial, and institutional properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage continued use of the competitive Department of Neighborhoods Neighborhood Matching Fund to develop and fund innovative community-based food production projects. Encourage new developments to include garden or agricultural land through the Seattle Green Factor and Priority Green Permitting. Include a fruit tree option in Trees for Neighborhoods, a project of Seattle reLeaf, to promote food production on residential property. Provide education about low-impact, chemical-free home gardening.
	Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building integrated agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to expand rooftop and building-integrated agriculture.
	Work jointly with other jurisdictions to conserve agricultural land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support the Seattle's role in conserving regional agricultural land through transferring development rights from farmland to urban areas. Explore innovative ways in which Seattle can help to protect regional farmland.
Strengthen the Local Economy Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should grow and thrive in Seattle.	Support businesses that grow, distribute, process, and sell local and healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support market gardens for low-income immigrant and refugee communities. Explore the need for local and regional food-processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure. Provide comprehensive, user-friendly information on the requirements to operate as a food processor.
	Celebrate and enhance local food as an element of Seattle's identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the economic development potential of the food system as a local industry cluster. Identify opportunities to enhance Seattle's local food business identity.
	Support farmers markets and small retailers that sell healthy and locally produced food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver streamlined permitting services to farmers markets and help existing farmers markets maintain viable locations. Support existing business owners in increasing healthy foods offered in their stores.

APPENDIX A

Community Listening Session Feedback

The first step in creating this action plan was to learn from community stakeholders about their food system priorities. Over 150 Seattle residents attended a series of listening sessions in the spring of 2011, and shared their ideas and priorities for the City of Seattle's work on food.

At the listening sessions, participants were asked to choose two of five issue areas in which to share their ideas and priorities. What we heard in these listening sessions is summarized below.

1. **Improve the accessibility and affordability of healthy food**

Ensure that everyone can eat healthy food. This includes both physical access and affordability of fresh and healthy food. Ideas included increasing healthy food in city contracts; providing incentives to locate farmers markets and full service grocers in underserved neighborhoods; decreasing price through aggregation of local buyers for institutions or small markets; increasing access to living wage jobs so people can afford to choose healthy food; providing healthy, local foods through current programs (school breakfast, lunch, childcare, etc) and increasing utilization of these services; creating incentives for people to make healthy choices; and taxing processed (unhealthy) food and subsidizing healthy food.

2. **Use public and private land to grow food**

Provide more access to space for people to grow food – community gardens, urban farms, and P-Patches – on the ground and on rooftops. Empower groups and neighborhoods to produce their own food. Identify vacant or unused City-owned land and make that land available for commercial urban farming.

3. **Leverage existing facilities**

There are many places around the city where people regularly gather. These include community centers, schools, religious institutions, and child care sites. Use these places to get more healthy food where it is needed through classes, healthier food in meals, and food distribution. Support and increase food-related education and activities at community centers, including gardening, eating, cooking, and sharing.

4. **Support small food businesses**

Reduce barriers for new small business development and entry into the marketplace and support disadvantaged populations to become food entrepreneurs. Explore the idea of food business incubators.

5. **Reduce food waste**

Redirect food out of the waste stream (to food banks, secondary uses) and support neighborhood-scale composting.

6. **Identify and fill gaps in distribution and processing infrastructure**

Many identified cold storage, aggregation, and minimal processing infrastructure as a gap in the local food system. This infrastructure would make it easier for small and micro farms in and around Seattle to expand their opportunities to sell local food in more markets.

7. **Support food education.**

Increase efforts to educate the public about eating, cooking, and growing food through P-Patch, schools, community centers, and to the public. Education helps to drive demand for healthy, local, sustainable food.

8. **Research and assess.**

Define key terms like "healthy" and "access"; identify indicators and track over time.

9. **Communicate and collaborate**

Many people don't know what the City is currently doing and would like to know. Listening session participants were glad that they were being engaged, and wanted the communication to continue. People would like to see more opportunities for businesses, organizations, and public agencies to share knowledge and information and to collaborate. There was a high priority placed on ensuring participation from diverse communities.

APPENDIX B

Food Action Plan Strategy Evaluation Criteria

After clarifying goals for the food policy program, the Food Interdepartmental Team (IDT) identified a list of current activities and potential new actions that could advance these goals, developed a series of evaluation criteria, and filtered the activities list through the criteria. The evaluation criteria used by the Food IDT are listed below.

- Addresses a priority identified in the community listening sessions
- Aligns with regional collaborative efforts
- Has the potential to improve racial and/or social equity
- Has the potential to improve public health
- Directly relates to shared prosperity
- Has the potential to improve environmental sustainability
- Has the potential for significant impact
- Is currently being worked on by a City department
- Is something that members of the Food IDT believe is of high priority
- Is something that aligns with priorities of a City department
- Is something that seems doable in three to five years
- Is something that can take place within our own departments, programs, and services



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