



Sustainability Commission

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May 29, 2012

Mayor and Members of City Council:

The City of Eugene has made strong commitments to expanding opportunities and access to local food through the Climate and Energy Action Plan among other policies and plans. The Sustainability Commission feels there are additional opportunities that can leverage existing partnerships and resources. Bolstering the region's food system will also boost our economy, improve our public health, enhance food security, and increase community engagement.

Over the past several months, the Sustainability Commission's Local Food Subcommittee has been evaluating existing initiatives and opportunities around local food expansion for the City. The Subcommittee met with several organizations, individuals, and city and county staff that represent producers, processors, distributors, and advocates. The objective was to assess major food issues facing our region, note efforts underway to address these issues, find opportunities for the Commission or Council to support local food, and identify short and long-term priorities.

We identified a number of exciting projects that are underway and benefiting our community. However, we also believe that there is additional action that can be taken by Council to increase opportunities and reduce barriers. Based on our conversations with the local partners, we identified seven major themes that need to be addressed for the benefit of consumers and suppliers:

- 1) Expanding access to markets;
- 2) Increasing access to land for production;
- 3) Improving and expediting access to processing sites;
- 4) Providing access to capital;
- 5) Ensuring equal access to public transportation;
- 6) Enhancing food security; and
- 7) Engaging in and expanding region initiatives.

Within each of these themes, specific policies and actions are recommended for City Council consideration. We provide the full suite of possible policies and actions in Appendix A.

In closing, the local food economy is a complex system involving growers, processors and marketers of a wide variety of food and beverage products. This complexity means that needed change will be difficult to achieve and that there is a large number of possible policies and actions to consider.

To facilitate the progress desired, the Sustainability Commission recommends that immediate action be taken on the following:

- Work with public and private partners to create a larger and more accessible, seasonal farmers market in Eugene;
- During the implementation phase of Envision Eugene, update the land use code to facilitate the siting of food processing facilities; and
- Request that the Mayor appoint a time-limited Food Policy Task Force to make recommendations regarding feasible policies and actions to enhance local food economy and security, with special attention to (i) mapping urban food production site opportunities, (ii) utilizing partnerships to enhance community garden productivity, and (iii) reviewing other policies and actions included in Appendix A of this document for implementation.

Sincerely,

Sustainability Commission

Appendix A
Sustainability Commission: Food Subcommittee
Spring 2012 Update and Recommendations

A subcommittee of the Sustainability Commission coordinated or attended a number of meetings with relevant stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the state of local food production and to gather ideas for city policies and actions that would support these efforts.

When possible (marked with an *) we asked those with whom we met to respond to five probe questions:

1. What are some of the key food issues facing our region?
2. What are you doing to address these issues?
3. How do your efforts fit in with a regional initiative?
4. How can the Sustainability Commission or the City of Eugene support your efforts?
5. What should the Commission's food priorities be?
6. Who else should we talk to?

We gathered information from:

- Kelly Hoell* of Good Company (Shawn Boles, Stacy Vynne)
- Lynn Fessenden* of Willamette Valley Food and Farm Coalition (Shawn Boles, Art Farley, Stacy Vynne)
- Local Food Connections Conference (Art Farley)
- Karen Edmonds* of Food for Lane County (Art Farley)
- Mike Sullivan, Sarah Mizejewski and others of the Regional Food Initiative (Art Farley, Stacy Vynne)
- Lane County Food Policy Council* (Shawn Boles)
- Neighborhood Economic Development Council (NEDCo) (via email)

As a result of these interactions, the subcommittee identified a series of themes and compiled the following list of possible city actions and policies that could be considered under each of the themes. We italicize those items that align with recommendations from Eugene's Climate and Energy Action plan (CEAP).

1. Expand Access to Markets
 - a. Locate and subsidize a year-round, covered farmers market
 - b. Allocate a city lot downtown for a seasonal Saturday farmers market which provides better access for the public and equal opportunities for the vendors
 - c. Facilitate creation of a local food hub, with market, kitchens, etc.
 - d. *Incentivize local government and institutional purchases (city, public schools)*
 - e. Complete a TBL analysis of benefits and costs of local food production
 - f. Expand equal access for people of all incomes and non-English speakers (e.g. working with local partners to produce materials in Spanish)
2. Increase Access to Land for Production

- a. Work with students and/or partners to map the availability of land for growing food (e.g. alley ways, parks)
 - b. *Increase availability of, and access to, community gardens*
 - c. *Enhance support and training for food producing gardens*
 - d. Lease garden plots on city parks land to groups/CSA
 - e. *Strengthen land-use protection for farm land bordering UGB*
 - f. *Encourage planting of food bearing shrubs and trees in parks*
 - g. Find opportunities for a private/public partnership for management of public services (e.g., community gardens) given reduced city resources
 - h. Explore opportunities for a private/public partnership and incentives for homeowners to convert grass to edible gardens
3. Improve and Expedite Access to Processing Sites
- a. Create special (enterprise, cluster) zone for local food processing
 - b. Incorporate policy supporting local food processing in Envision Eugene
 - c. Update land use code to facilitate food production siting
 - d. Appoint (or identify) city staff with expertise in local food systems
4. Provide Access to Capital
- a. Create a public bank to provide micro-loans to food-related firms
 - b. Fund city backed loans for local food startups
 - c. Pursue federal USDA grants that support local foods
5. Ensure Access to Public Transportation
- a. Encourage LTD to explore options for allow shopping bags of food on buses (e.g. to provide public transportation options for those visiting markets, community gardens, etc.)
6. Enhance Food Security
- a. Incentivize food donations, possibly through a tax deduction or other means for businesses and individuals
 - b. *Create city liaison to local food production and hunger relief systems*
 - c. Work with neighborhood associations, students or other partner to explore opportunities for a gleaning program using social media
7. Engage In and Expand Regional Initiatives
- a. Develop Lane County and Willamette Valley foodshed studies
 - b. Support efforts for recognizable branding of local food
 - c. Assist regional, cooperative food production, processing and distribution
 - d. Coordination of disparate local food groups to increase opportunities for federal funding.

MEMORANDUM

To: Shawn Boles, Sustainability Commission
From: NEDCO Staff
Date: March 6, 2012
RE: Questions from Eugene Sustainability Commission

1. *What are some of the key food issues facing our region?*

Equity issues

- Access (location, financial concerns)
- Affordability
 - Price Point Conundrum (fair pricing vs. compensating farmers)
 - Availability for people of all incomes
- Education
 - For consumers
 - For businesses
 - For new farmers/growers
- Outreach and Coordination
 - Common messages and shared goals among food industry players, nonprofits and government
 - Ensuring work done by one entity connects with work done elsewhere – identify, coordinate, and disseminate efforts more thoughtfully

Economic issues

- Framing local food as a community economic issue – impacts job creation, wealth generation, health, food security, and community engagement
- Aggregation of local produce and products for small producers
- Distribution of local produce and products for small producers
- Burgeoning business sector: food projects as economic development
- Incubator kitchen Space for food based businesses
- Food business support, technical assistance and access to customizable capital

Environmental issues

- Waste prevention
- Sustainable year-round growing
- Localization of food supply to reduce carbon emissions

2. *What are you doing to address these issues?*

Springfield Farmers' Market gives Springfield residents the option of buying fresh, local produce on Friday evenings from 3 – 7pm in May to October. SFM generates economic opportunities for farmers and vendors, and engages the community in contributing to and supporting the regional economy.

We are interested in supporting local food consumption by people of all incomes. We offer a SNAP match program where participants receive a 1:2 match back for every \$1 they spend at the market, up to \$5 total each week. Our outreach materials are in English and Spanish to promote this program. We also provide monthly chef demonstrations, showcasing a seasonal vegetable from a local area chef to encourage people to learn how to eat seasonally and on a budget. We encourage other learning opportunities, such as composting, gardening, home canning, etc. The project addresses **equity, economic, and environmental** issues.

MEMORANDUM

Sprout! combines Springfield Farmers' Market (which will become year-round in 2012) with the Hatch: Business Incubator program. Our incubator kitchen will offer business support services and loans (through NEDCO-affiliated nonprofit Community LendingWorks) to local, food-based businesses in the region. Sprout! addresses many of the **equity, economic and environmental** issues dealing with food in our region. This is a regional facility that will target entrepreneurs of all incomes, with a focus on low-moderate income business owners, looking to start up or enhance their food-based business.

Regional Farmers' Market Coordination: NEDCO documents EBT and credit/debit sales for eight farmers' markets in Lane County. With funding from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program, we have purchased and distributed six wireless terminals to market managers in the following rural communities: Creswell, Cottage Grove, Florence, Junction City, Spencer Creek, and Dexter Lake. In an effort to measure the economic impact contributed by every Lane County farmers' market, NEDCO tracks the SNAP, credit/debit, WIC, and cash sales of these six markets plus Springfield Farmers' Market and Lane County Farmers' Market (who already owned their own wireless terminals at the inception of the grant). This year Community Supported Agriculture farm Circle H will be a part of the economic analysis as well; they recently purchased a wireless terminal. This project addresses both **equity** and **economic** issues.

The **Healthy Cornerstore Initiative** partnership with Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth involves NEDCO as a partner. We offer LCHAY's farm stand access to a wireless EBT terminal. We are excited to be a part of this project, which provides access to fresh, organic, local produce from McKenzie River Farms in a Dari Mart parking lot in Springfield. This project addresses **equity** and **economic** issues.

3. *How do your efforts fit in with a regional initiative?*

We see the regional initiative as an opportunity to coordinate different aspects of our food system and economy in a strategic way. NEDCO has developed several projects that specifically target the economic base that local food provides for the community, and that has potential to tap into the human and financial capital available to help bolster this industry. In particular, Sprout!, with its regional focus, comprehensive supply and demand enhancing features, and efforts to smooth the supply chain for local foods is a key effort toward moving forward a regional (including all of Lane County, not just Eugene or Springfield) approach to food security and economic stability.

NEDCO's role is as one point in a continuum of what can and should be a strategically designed pathway with on-ramps for businesses and consumers alike to increase access to locally produced and marketed food.

We are connecting rural and urban communities, farmers, and markets in Lane County with resources, partnerships (others working on similar issues), and options for selling, adding value, and distributing produce. We also educate people about the fundamental economic, social, and health impacts of food projects in the region by studying market trends to determine how best to encourage food-based businesses and small farms to thrive while providing them with access to capital in the form of low-interest, short-term loans.

MEMORANDUM

4. *How can the Sustainability Commission or the City of Eugene support your efforts?*

We would love to be able to contact the Sustainability Commission for letters of recommendation, volunteer opportunities, and programmatic support. This commission may have the clout and influence to encourage and support a more comprehensive, inclusive coordination of regional community food security efforts. In particular, we aim to coordinate more effectively with complimentary programs and groups to increase the federal funding that comes to Lane County to support this work. We can't do that if we don't all cooperate and join forces strategically.

5. *What should the Commission's food priorities be?*

We encourage the Commission to take a truly regional, cooperative approach and to consider the community food system through the lens of community economic development. We know that bolstering our food system can boost our economy, improve our public health, and increase community engagement. We also think a top priority should be coordinating currently disparate local food groups to increase opportunities for federal funding.

6. *Who else should we talk to?*
 - City of Eugene Waste Prevention and Green Building Department: Ethan Nelson (wrote the Food Security Scoping and Resource Plan and was a client in the Lane County Market Analysis)
 - Lane County Economic Development Department: Sarah Mizejewski – working on food-as-economic development projects in the county
 - Community Planning Workshop at UO: Bob Parker (planner for EcoNorthwest and project lead for Food Market Analysis study)
 - Other businesses and nonprofits working on food issues: FOOD for Lane County, Huerto de la Familia, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition, Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation and Development, Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth, Hummingbird Wholesale, Lane County Farmers' Market, OSU Extension and their affiliate groups
 - Ten Rivers Food Web (based in Corvallis, OR) – another nonprofit working on similar regional projects in a different region
 - We would also be delighted to provide more input and details on our vision for a strong regional food system.