Planning for Food Systems: Whats, Whys, and Hows

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Food Systems 101

What is a Food System?

• “The chain of activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management, as well as all the associated regulatory institutions and activities.” Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000

A supply chain model?

Yes, but a network approach is better for understanding why system is, who has interests, and who is represented in decision making
The food system ties issues together

- Poverty
- Public Health
- Emergency Preparedness
- Land Use
- Environment
- Community Development
- Transportation
- Local Economy
- Food System
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- Transportation
- Land Use
- Environment
- Public Health
- Emergency Preparedness
- Poverty
- Food System
Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults

(*BMI \( \geq 30 \), or about 30 lbs. overweight for 5’4” person)
Planning and food policy: what can be done?

- Research—Food System Assessments
- Educate (electeds, and other folks)
- Organize (government, community, businesses)
- Regulatory reform (subsidies, entitlements, land use: planning and zoning, marketing, production and processing, etc.)
- Governance change: FPC, IDT, DOF, SLIs
- Economic development supports: gap analysis, lending
What can planners do? Continued...

APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning (2007)

Two overarching goals:

1. Help build stronger, sustainable, and more self-reliant community and regional food systems,

2. Suggest ways the industrial food system may interact with communities and regions to enhance benefits such as economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability, social equity, and cultural diversity.
Seattle examples of food planning activity

• **Governmental**: Resolutions (Local Food Action Initiative), statements of legislative Intent (SLI), IDTs, comprehensive plan inclusion

• **Cooperative, governmental advisory**: Acting Food Policy Council, now Regional Food Policy Council at PSRC

• **Cooperative, community project**: King County Food and Fitness Initiative, Healthy Corner Store Project
We’re learning: resources for policy

• American Planning Association planning.org
  • Policy Guide, Planning Advisory Report, JAPA, Planning

• Public Health Law & Policy healthyplanning.org
  • Model legislation, technical assistance, general amazingness

• International City/County Management Association icma.org

• NGOs—policy and programmatic innovators
  • Community Food Security Coalition: foodsecurity.org
  • World Hunger Year whyhunger.org
  • Growing Power growingpower.org
  • King County Food and Fitness Initiative kcffi.org
Six lessons learned, in fits and starts

1. No “one size fits all”
2. Be patient, and prepared to learn about the local situation and alternative responses
3. Be prepared to organize and educate—find a champion
4. Work through pre-existing channels, allies, networks, political platforms
5. Choose wisely: you will become a resource, don’t be fooled into bumper sticker solutions. Think values-based decisions, then actions to match
6. Did I mention be patient?
Thank You

Comments, questions?

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The Local Food Action Initiative

• Resolution 31019, or LFAI
• Advisory
  – Recognizes food systems as important for governmental consideration
  – Establishes goals and creates a policy framework
  – Directs 10+ city departments to address food related topics within and across their missions
  – Introduces Food Policy Council and city-county coordination
LFAI: Who Does What?

• Department of Neighborhoods
  – Food Action Plan
  – P-Patch Strategic Plan
  – P-Patch potential site inventory
  – Develop community kitchens at Parks & Rec facilities

• Office of Economic Development
  – Examine Farmer’s Market and Market Garden policies
  – Recognize Food and Beverage as key industry sector
  – Report on improving local purchasing and procurement
LFAI: Who Does What? (2)

• Department of Planning and Development
  – Land use code review for grocery stores and urban agriculture, particularly gardens in multi-family development
  – Report on policies to strengthen local/regional food system sustainability and security

• Office of Emergency Management
  – Improve food system security w/r/t disaster readiness
    • Local agreements developed for access and distribution
  – Evaluate and prioritize transportation access to emergency food supplies and distribution routes (w/ SDOT)
LFAI: Who Does What? (3)

• Department of Transportation
  – Include access to food sources as evaluation criteria

• Office of Sustainability and Environment
  – Identify GHG reduction opportunities

• Seattle Public Utilities
  – Food diversion and composting

• Human Services Department
  – Identify opportunities to increase fresh local food in food support system

• And a cast of… well, several more
  – PSRC, King County, AFPC, Universities, WA Dept of Ag
LFAI: Early Conclusions

• Provided a **policy anchor** to prevent slipping back

• **Executive-Council** relationship problematic
  – Example policy changes: reduce FM fees, allow sales from P-Patch

• **Institutional context important**, esp. with King County
  – Relationships, finances

• In context of limited resources, university and other community organizations can be key information providers