

Best Practices for City-Sponsored Sustainable Food Planning

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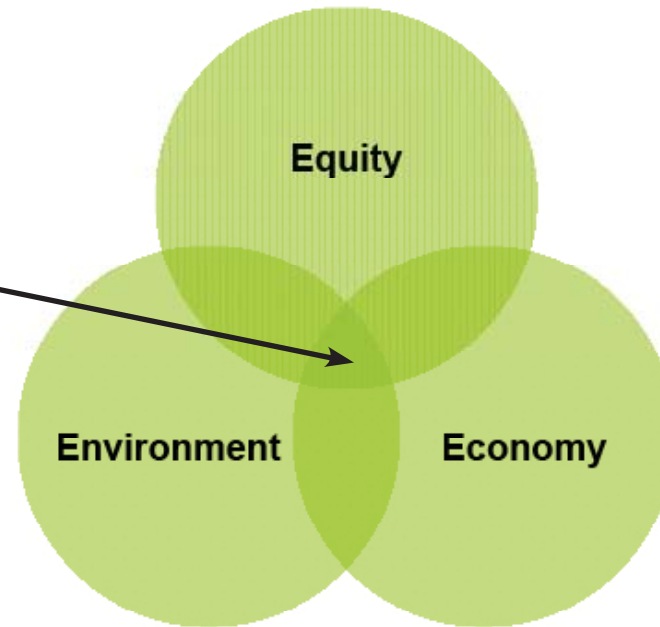
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Why Plan for Food?

Sustainable Development
=
Sustainable Food Policy

Sustainable food policy heavily intersects with city planning's overriding goals to strive for economic development, environmental conservation, and social equity. Potential outcomes of planning for food include:

- Productive use of vacant land, productive reuse of brownfields and greyfields
- Economic multipliers: food sector job creation, retention of local dollars
- Stabilization of property values in vulnerable neighborhoods with aesthetically-pleasing, attractive projects
- A powerful tool for community and neighborhood development
- Complete, compact neighborhoods with access to fresh, healthy food
- Reduced carbon emissions from long-distance trucking and manufacturing
- Relationship building between local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and stakeholders



Sustainable food policy can achieve multiple planning goals simultaneously:

***Open space** goals and policies can encourage the conversion of vacant or abandoned land to urban agriculture and the preservation of existing urban agriculture. **Economic development** goals and policies can lead to new financing tools for urban agriculture development ... **Housing** goals and policies can encourage urban agriculture near affordable housing through the provision of community gardens, and community kitchens in multifamily and low-income housing projects.*

- American Planning Association Guidebook on Urban Agriculture, 2011

Initiatives

- **BALTIMORE**

Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

- **SEATTLE**

Local Food Action Initiative

- **SAN FRANCISCO**

Healthy & Sustainable Food for SF

- **MINNEAPOLIS**

Homegrown Minneapolis

- **LOS ANGELES**

Good Food LA

Many major cities have planned for sustainable food within the framework of an initiative or campaign. The benefits of framing policies, ordinances, and projects within an initiative include a high amount of visibility, a coordinated and transparent effort, and the opportunity to set long- and short-term benchmarks in alignment with the initiative's and other planning documents' overall goals and objectives--for example, goals and actions of the initiative can be clearly aligned with goals and priority actions of the comprehensive plan.

Initiatives

Local Food Action Initiative



2011 Key Actions

The Local Food Action Initiative establishes goals, creates a policy framework, and identifies specific actions to strengthen Seattle and the region's food system in a sustainable and secure way. Resolution 31019, passed by the Seattle City Council in April 2008, outlines the Initiative. It aims to improve the local and regional food system, and in doing so, advance the City of Seattle's interrelated goals of race and social justice, environmental sustainability, economic development, and emergency preparedness.

Healthy Food for All

- Continuing efforts with the anti-hunger community to develop a long-range campaign for healthy food for all and to end hunger and poor nutrition, and a strategy for working with food banks to align their work towards increasing the food self-sufficiency of their clients
- Established a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop-off site at the Seattle Municipal Tower
- Working with the Board of Health to adopt healthy food guidelines for vending machines, including on Parks and Recreation property, and incorporate these standards into vending machine contracts

Grow and Eat

- Ensuring that healthy eating is supported in the Families and Education Levy as an important element in ensuring student success
- Developing a business directory of urban agriculture-related businesses in Seattle, assisting in the development of an urban agriculture business association, and working to improve meeting the needs of emerging businesses
- Working with immigrants, refugees, and Seattle Housing Authority through the P-Patch Program to operate community supported agriculture farm and farm stands at two public housing sites

Seattle's Local Food Action Initiative provides the framework for its yearly cycle of food policy planning, in which it sets goals and develops actions and projects tied to the goals. This ensures accountability and transparency in its long-term food policymaking.

Food as a Plan Element

- **Portland:** [Portland Plan](#) (2011)
- **Chicago Metropolitan Area:** [GO TO 2040](#) (2011)
- **Madison, WI:** [City of Madison Comprehensive Plan](#) (2006)

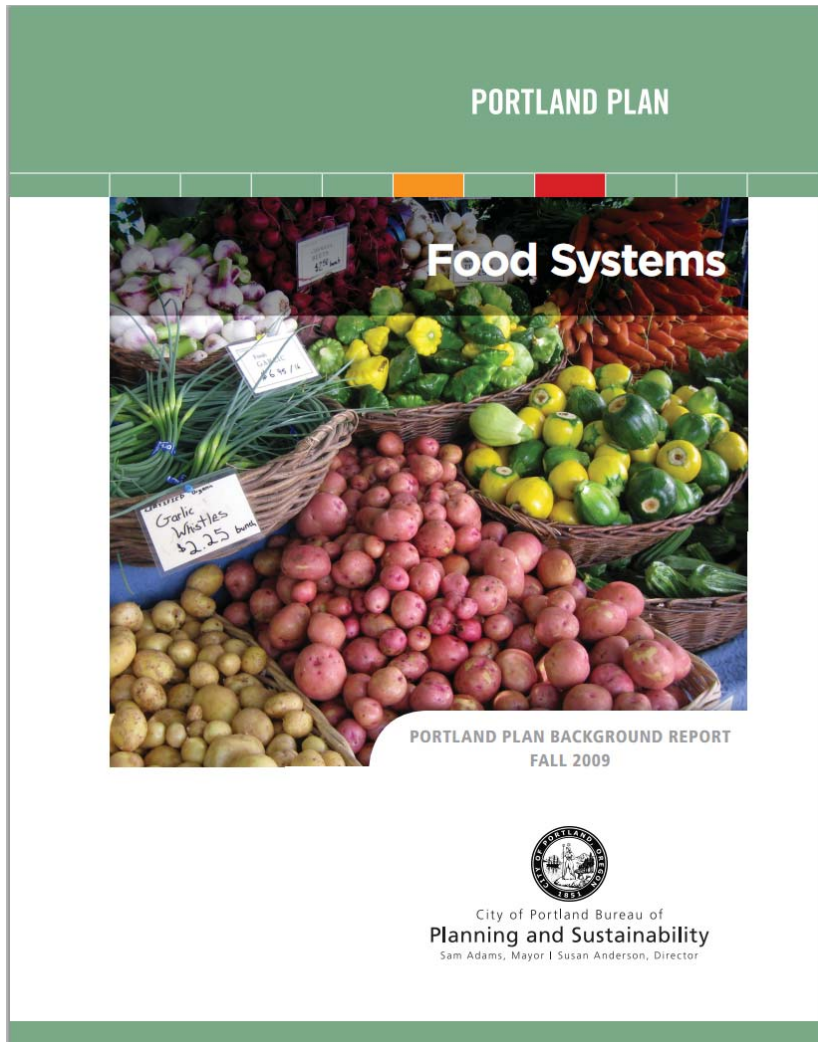
Since the emergence of sustainable food policy in comprehensive planning is still relatively new, very few urban jurisdictions feature a food policy element in their comprehensive plans (although rural or regional jurisdictions have included agricultural elements for some time). Portland, Chicago, and Madison are of the few major jurisdictions that have included food systems policy as a major element or sub-element in their planning processes.

Portland is currently undergoing the final phases of its comprehensive planning process. During the process, the city compiled a comprehensive fact-finding report on food systems in the Portland area and locating food systems within the “action area” (plan element) of “Human Health, Food, and Public Safety.” Similar to Austin’s “complete communities,” an overarching guiding concept in the plan is “complete neighborhoods,” in which access to healthy food is identified as a key goal.

Similarly, Chicago’s regional plan identifies “Local Food Systems” as a sub-element under their “Liveable Communities.”

In contrast, Madison, Wisconsin’s comprehensive plan locates its food planning element within its natural resources planning area. These examples highlight that in comprehensive plans, food planning can be categorized in numerous ways, depending on a city or region’s context and priorities.

Food as a Plan Element



Portland produced a fact-finding background report about its local and regional food system during its planning process, and highlighted the two “action areas” that food planning intersects with.

Food as a Plan Element



RECOMMENDATION

4 Promote sustainable local food

Promote Sustainable Local Food



Like air, water, and other basic human needs, food is easy to take for granted when it is abundant. Three times each day, we decide what to eat, often without consideration of how that food was produced or where it came from.

While patterns of consumption depend significantly on personal choices, the public policies for land use, transportation, and many other issues in the GO TO 2040 plan influence the effectiveness and sustainability of our food systems. To benefit the region's economy and the health of its residents, GO TO 2040 addresses the separate but related factors of food production and access.

Food Production

"Local" food—which is grown, processed, packaged, and distributed on land in or adjacent to our seven counties—can contribute to a sense of community and regional identity. Farming practices, food distribution, and waste disposal should all be sustainable, meeting our present needs without compromising the future.

Local production of and equitable access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable food can benefit our economy, environment, public health, equity, and overall quality of life. From commercial farms to community co-ops and even backyard gardens, emphasizing local food production and access can help to preserve farmland in traditionally agricultural communities or to revitalize neighborhoods by bringing agriculture to vacant, unused parcels in urban settings where it is usually absent.

Food Access

In most of our region, residents can buy food in large full-service groceries, smaller specialty shops, or even corner fruit stands. Increasingly prevalent neighborhood farmers' markets are becoming social gathering spots where consumers can meet the people who grow their food.

Yet in parts of our seven counties, too many people lack access to nutritious food—putting them at increased risk for obesity, diabetes, and other nutrition-related conditions. Nine percent of our region's residents live in "food deserts" without a nearby grocery. Instead of eating fresh, affordable food, they may depend on the closest convenience store where prices are high and nutrition is low. Distance to the nearest grocer has been correlated to increases in cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and liver disease, especially in African American communities.

A Pivotal Moment

Livable Communities

- Liveability Matters
- Land Use and Housing
- Water and Energy
- Parks and Open Space
- Local Food Systems

Human Capital

Efficient Governance

Regional Mobility

Context & Best Practices

Portraits

Appendices

VAMOS AL AÑO 2040

Process Archive

[Download the short plan \(PDF\)](#)

[Download the full plan \(PDF\)](#)

[Download the Promote Sustainable Local Food section of the full plan \(PDF\)](#)

In GO TO 2040, Chicago's regional plan for the next thirty years, planners identified Local Food Systems as a sub-element of their planning area of Liveability.

Food as a Plan Amendment

- **Minneapolis: Urban Agriculture Policy Plan**

Adopted by Council April, 2011

Even if food is not included as an element in the comprehensive plan, cities and communities can develop a separate food policy plan that can be later added as an amendment to the larger plan. The most notable and recent example of this strategy is the city of Minneapolis.

A major goal of Homegrown Minneapolis, the city's sustainable food campaign, was the inclusion of food policy in the city's long-range planning. The comprehensive planning process was completed in 2000 and last updated in 2008. Homegrown Minneapolis produced a series of recommendations in 2009, which spurred City Council to form a task force which ultimately wrote the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan, passed by Council as an amendment to the city's comprehensive plan in April 2011.

The plan aims to provide the rationale for changes in zoning and other ordinances such that food policy is incorporated into long-range planning and that barriers are reduced for urban agriculture opportunities within Minneapolis. Within months of the plan's passage, a major zoning update related to urban agriculture was begun.

Food as a Plan Amendment

TABLE 5-1: A Cross Reference of Recommendations, Policies, and Goals

Homegrown Minneapolis Recommendations	Comprehensive Plan Policies	Related Plan Goal	Related Major Recommendations (details found in below)
Prioritize local food production and distribution when determining the highest and best use of City-owned and private land and when planning new development or redevelopment projects that could potentially affect existing local food resources.	<p>Support the creation and improvement of community gardens and food markets which sell locally and regionally grown foods.</p> <p>Encourage the equitable spatial distribution of community gardens and food markets to provide all Minneapolis communities with access to healthy, locally grown food.</p>	<p>Promote and support the local food system.</p> <p>Make more land available for urban agriculture.</p> <p>Ensure equal access to land for growing and to fresh food sources.</p>	<p>Incorporate urban agriculture uses into long range planning efforts.</p> <p>Review City-owned land inventories and consider selling or leasing more parcels that are not desirable for development but are well-suited for urban agriculture, particularly in underserved areas.</p> <p>Utilize the existing land sale procedures for the consideration of the sale of land for growing and open space.</p>
Integrate farmers markets into the City's development plans, including detailed planning and action steps.	Support the creation and improvement of community gardens and food markets which sell locally and regionally grown foods.	<p>Promote and support the local food system.</p> <p>Make more land available for urban agriculture.</p>	Incorporate urban agriculture uses into long range planning efforts.
Identify additional policies and incentives to encourage the establishment of new green roofs and the	Where appropriate, support the planting of edible fruit and vegetable plants.	<p>Promote and support the local food system.</p> <p>Promote innovative design</p>	Amend the zoning code to better accommodate urban agriculture uses.

An important piece of Minneapolis' Urban Agriculture Policy Plan is its transparent alignment of urban agriculture policy goals and actions with existing planning goals and actions. This provides decision makers and stakeholders with a clear view and context of how the urban agriculture plan serves the goals of the comprehensive plan and Homegrown Minneapolis' overarching vision.

Food as a Plan Update

- **Seattle**

Updated yearly, now undergoing
“Major Review”

- **New York City**

April 2011

Food policy can also be included in a comprehensive plan's regular or periodic plan updates. In several states, cities are required to update their plan every so often--sometimes even yearly. In Texas, cities are not required to update their plans (or even have comprehensive plans in the first place), but there is also nothing preventing a city from developing a plan update to address new trends, changes, and pressing needs.

Seattle adopted its comprehensive plan in 1994 with little mention of food policy. However, in accordance with the city's Local Food Action Initiative, begun in 2009, major recommendations intended to enhance Seattle's local food system have been included in the yearly update of the plan. The results of this update are in turn generating the development of a Local Food Policy Action Plan for Seattle. Additionally, the comprehensive plan is now undergoing a Major Review for the first time since 2004, with a planning horizon of 20 years, and it can be expected that recommendations from the Local Food Action Initiative will have an impact on this review.

Similarly, New York City's comprehensive plan, passed in 2007, lacked discussion or actions involving the local food system. However, the emergence of City Council Speaker Christine Quinn as a champion of local food has led to a substantial food policy update that is serving as a launching pad for new initiatives. The latest plan update, passed this year, reflects the city's recent turn to local and sustainable food.

Food as a Plan Update



INITIATIVES **Housing and Neighborhoods** • Promote walkable destinations for retail and other services | **Parks and Public Space** • Facilitate urban agriculture and community gardening | **Brownfields** • Promote green space on remediated brownfield properties | **Water Supply** • Continue the Watershed Protection Program | **Transportation** • Improve freight movement | **Solid Waste** • Promote waste prevention opportunities • Create additional opportunities to recover organic material • Revise City procurement practices to reduce solid waste • Improve the City government's diversion rate

Healthy, sustainable food systems are critical to the well-being of our communities and central to our ability to accommodate a growing population. Yet food presents a unique planning challenge; unlike sewers or streets, much of New York City's food systems infrastructure is privately owned and shaped by the tastes and decisions of millions of individual consumers. These complicated and inter-related subsystems aren't easily understood or influenced, even by concerted municipal interventions. Furthermore, many of food's most significant climate and environmental impacts are associated with food production, most of which takes place outside the city, and shaped by federal policy. Nonetheless, our food systems intersect with several areas addressed by PlaNYC. Improving the distribution and disposal of food within New York City and increasing access to healthy food will not only benefit the environment, it can also have positive public health and economic impacts.

We are developing a multi-faceted strategy to increase access to affordable and healthy foods and reduce the environmental and climate impacts of food production, distribution, consumption, and disposal.

On food production, we will survey municipal lands to identify underutilized properties that may be suitable for urban agriculture or community gardens. We will continue facilitating agriculture projects at publicly-owned sites by planting 129 new community gardens on New York City Housing Authority land and promoting school gardens through Grow to Learn NYC, our citywide school gardens initiative. We will also review existing regulations and laws to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to creating community gardens and urban farms. In some cases, remediated brownfield sites also present an opportunity for community gardens, and we will design state-of-the-art protective measures that allow com-

Seattle Comprehensive Plan Major Review 2011- 2013

Your City – Your Future

Communication Plan

June 29, 2011



- **Build Healthy, Complete Communities.** Seattle is fortunate to have strong neighborhoods, each with its own identity and distinct character. The Comprehensive Plan will use the concept of "the complete neighborhood" —one with shops, services, and institutions close to where people work and live—as an organizing concept for this discussion. For example, how can we improve our walking and biking infrastructure—give people more choice in how they get around and encourage active lifestyles? How can we provide better access to food locally, and make it easier to produce food at home in our neighborhoods?

Excerpts from New York City and Seattle's plan update documents related to food policy planning

CMAP Local Food Planning Guidelines



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning

233 South Wacker Drive
Suite 800
Chicago, Illinois 60606

312 454 0400
www.cmap.illinois.gov

As a part of Chicago's GO TO 2040 Regional Plan, CMAP, the entity that wrote the plan, included a guide intended to aid planners and decision makers who seek to include local food into municipal planning processes and documents. The guide can be found on the GO TO 2040 website.

[CMAP Local Food Guidelines](#)

CMAP Local Food Chapter Outline

Preface

The purpose of this food chapter outline is to provide municipal planners with a generalized framework for incorporating local food into a comprehensive plan. Local food strategies and policies can help achieve the overall goals outlined in a community's comprehensive plan.

The CMAP Food Chapter Outline is broken into the following sections:

- Step 1: Defining Local Foods**
- Step 2: Outlining Benefits**
- Step 3: Setting Goals**
- Step 4: Evaluating Current Conditions**
- Step 5: Developing Recommendations**
- Step 6: Next Actions**

This outline will need to be customized for each individual community as not all communities will have the data available or the need to include every component in this document. Each local government should decide which particular components will benefit their community. Furthermore, local food overlaps with other "more traditional" comprehensive plan sections, such as transportation, open

APA Urban Agriculture Guidebook

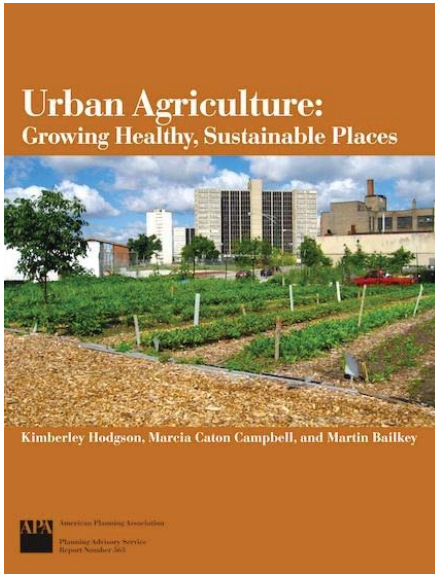


Figure 3.13. Seattle's P-Patch community gardens

SUPPORTING URBAN AGRICULTURE THROUGH PUBLIC-SECTOR PROGRAMS

Beyond supportive zoning regulations and other policies influencing public and private land use, a number of programs administered by local governments can be used to build the capacity of local growers or strengthen the infrastructure necessary for widespread, sustainable urban food production. These initiatives include community-garden programs, demonstration farms, municipal composting, education and technical assistance for growers, job training, grants, and direct-sale programs.

Municipal Community-Garden Programs

Municipal community-garden programs connect prospective gardeners and gardening groups with public land set aside for food or horticultural production. These programs also typically establish gardening standards and operating rules for participation. Some programs even provide supplies or technical assistance. Two of the oldest and most successful of these programs are found in Seattle and New York City. Seattle's P-Patch program, housed in the city's Department of Neighborhoods, currently oversees 73 gardens covering 23



The American Planning Association's guidebook on urban agriculture, entitled *Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places*, is an incredibly useful resource for planners and decision makers. In addition to providing persuasive arguments for the *why* of urban agriculture, it also features many examples of *what* cities are doing to incorporate urban agriculture policy and programming at the city level in addition to *how* they are doing so.

The guidebook also features extensive appendices highlighting specific plans and policies undertaken by cities around the country relating to food policy, shown at left.

The book is available from the APA's website:

<http://www.planning.org>

Appendix 3. Urban Agriculture Components in Local Sustainability Plans		
Jurisdiction	Plan Name, Date, and Link	How does plan support urban agriculture?
San Francisco	Sustainable San Francisco, 1997 www.sustainable-city.org	Promotes urban agriculture through community and private gardens, adequate growing spaces, and food access issues
Baltimore	The Baltimore Sustainability Plan, 2009 www.baltimorecity.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=D8RqJL%2fBcE%3d&tabid=128	Supports developing an urban agriculture plan that will promote healthy, local, and, where possible, organic food production. The plan should identify the predicted demand for urban farmed food and recommend location and distribution of urban agricultural institutions.
Kansas City, Mo	City of Kansas City Climate Protection Plan, 2008 www.marc.org/Environment/airQ/pdf/CP-Plan-7-16-08.pdf	Promotes residential neighborhood and metropolitan food production, expansion of the existing urban forestry program, and matching participation from the private sector
Philadelphia	Greenworks Philadelphia, 2009 www.phila.gov/green/greenworks/PDFs/GreenworksPlan002.pdf	Promotes access to fresh, healthy foods, innovative financing for redeveloping open spaces, expanding the number of neighborhood farmers markets, fostering commercial farming, and creating an urban agriculture workforce strategy to grow green jobs
Cleveland	Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland, 2008 www.cudc.kent.edu/shrink/images/reimagining_final_screen-res.pdf	Supports urban agriculture and commodity farming, establishing water rates that promote agricultural uses and improving community composting. Encourages developing urban agriculture incubator to provide land and appropriate infrastructure for urban agriculture enterprises
Philadelphia	Green Plan Philadelphia (forthcoming) www.greenplanphiladelphia.com	The final version of this plan will include a chapter on urban agriculture and food access.
Alexandria, Va.	Eco-City Alexandria Environmental http://ecocity.ncr.vt.edu/actionplan.html	Encourages local and regional food production and equitable access to safe, healthy, and organic food, for children and adolescents in particular