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communityspotlight



Local Food Action Plan Provides Access to Healthy, Affordable Food

by Laurie Zinn

A newly enacted plan will soon make an impact on our community's access to nutritious and affordable food and create a stronger, more sustainable food system.

The Local Food Action Plan (LFAP) is a partnership between the City of Columbus, Franklin County and Local Matters, a local nonprofit with a mission is to create healthy communities through food education, access and advocacy. The plan will address the underlying social issues such as poverty, underemployment and unemployment that contribute to food inequality.

Local Matters' Executive Director, Michelle Moskowitz Brown, said the plan was launched in November of 2014 and adopted in November of 2016.

"The plan itself has four goals. The goals are to improve coordination

and communication of existing food resources, to improve access and education about nutritious foods, to increase the role of food in economic development, and to prevent, recover and recycle food waste," Moskowitz Brown says.

The first phase of the plan was to assess current conditions and a vision forward. The LFAP team studied local,





national, and international plans that addressed food-related issues. The Columbus and Franklin County LFAP is not alone in its efforts to implement a plan specifically for food.

"There are many cities that have food plans, so we researched those as we created this one," Moskowitz Brown says. "The goal is to figure out a strategy that works city and county-wide, that leverages your existing resources and prioritizes what your particular community needs."

The second phase of the plan was policy and program recommendations. More than 1,000 residents and stakeholders provided input into the plan through community feedback

sessions, surveys, one-on-one interviews and food planning meetings.

Using the stakeholder feedback and the food plan research information, a 24-member Working Committee created the vision for the LFAP, identified policy and programmatic targets and developed action steps.

The final phase of the plan was plan development. A 12-member Local Food Advisory Board will implement the LFAP and address the action items identified by the Working Committee. These influential community leaders will increase awareness of food related issues among decision makers in the community. Their first meeting is to be scheduled for March.

They will then meet quarterly to prioritize LFAP's actions for implementation, report the progress to City and County officials, and then evaluate the food system-related proposals made to the City and County.

All along the way, the Columbus and Franklin County LFAP got feedback and buy in from partners, farmers, restaurant associations, committees and urban growers. The response has been positive, with each partner working on specific goals.

As the plan is implemented, the Franklin County Local Food Council will continue to be a sounding board for these efforts.

"Now they have additional city and county support when they have projects that they're interested in getting support for," Moskowitz Brown said. "There's more general cooperation for projects and for innovation."

By strengthening the local food system with the LFAP, more residents will have access to healthy affordable and locally-grown food where possible.

For more information, visit Columbus.gov/LFAP.

Laurie Zinn is a Columbus-based freelance writer and the owner of Line-By-Line, a digital content management service for websites, blogs, email marketing and social media. Connect at laurie@line-by-line.us.

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