Food Access and Resiliency: Building a Vision with Local Governments

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In this session, we’ll learn how to build relationships with local governments to prioritize sustainable food systems in community planning.
Introductions

Line Exercise for Introductions

What key question or issue do you want to make sure gets addressed in some way today?
Why advocate with local governments?

• As of 2012, using the Census Bureau's definition, there were 89,055 local government units in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 Census of Government.)

• Local government appointed and elected officials are accessible! They are part of your community.

• Local government has jurisdiction over a host of important issues, including local regulation, local ordinances, community planning, and stewardship of local resources.

• One voice MATTERS.
Opportunities for Change

Environment that Supports Improved Food Policies

- Community Mobilization
- Community Education
- Advocacy with Organizational Decision Makers
- Educating Government Policymakers
Food: Basic Need, Ultimate Equalizer
Health and Resilience

• How do we prepare ourselves for climate change and strengthen our ability to “bounce back”?

• How can local governments prioritize people’s basic daily needs:
  – Food
  – Water
  – Air
  – Shelter
  – Safety, security, and well-being
  – Social networks

[Diagram of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs]

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs
Factors Reshaping Food Systems

Understanding Levels of Regulation

Federal

State

Local

Internal Policy/Rules
Community Food Advocates in Local Government!

- Informal Food “Networks”
- Food Policy Councils
- Commissions
- Community Engagement with city councils and mayors, commissioners, and planners
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<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th>Program</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ordinances</td>
<td>• Farmers markets</td>
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<td>• Resolutions</td>
<td>• Food pantries</td>
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<td>• Planning &amp; zoning</td>
<td>• Eat local dinners</td>
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<td>• Purchasing policies</td>
<td>• Brochures</td>
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<td>• Economic development</td>
<td>• Booths at special events</td>
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<td>incentives/budget</td>
<td>• Cooking classes</td>
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Some Historical Context: Community Planning as a Focus for Advocacy
historical context

how did we get here?
Especially, if public health gave birth to the profession of city planning?

http://interactive.wttw.com/timemachine/pioneer-court
historical context
Now, community planning is beginning to return to its public health roots....
Generally, the purposes of community planning are to:

- Promote the health, safety, and general welfare
- Manage growth, change, and renewal of a community
- Improve the quality of life for its residents
- Insure a safer, more pleasant and more economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial, and public activities
The Current Opportunity: A Comprehensive Plan

The local comprehensive plan is a public document that:

– Describes how a community wants to develop over a longer planning period

– Clarifies how the community and other areas of the region affect each other (Example: Transportation Infrastructure)

– Serves as a guide for decision making including policy, programs, projects, and public spending
Other Kinds of Planning

• Small Area or Neighborhood Plan
• Climate Impact Plan
• Transportation Infrastructure Plan (ie. Station Areas)
• Bike and Pedestrian Plan
• Watershed Plan
Community Engagement is Key to Planning and a Critical Opportunity!

Become an expert. Be able to talk about pros and cons and make your argument!

Establish a long-term relationship as an asset to officials.

Find a way to collaborate and be helpful. (Gather community members, sponsor a joint event, partner, etc.)

Check in even when you don’t have an “ask!”

Share successes and progress, and share credit!
Comprehensive Plan’s Effect

- Comprehensive Plan
- Policies and Practices
  - Investments, Programs, Education, Regulations, Development, Infrastructure
  - Health opportunities, barriers, and choices

The plan has a ripple effect
“Our neighborhood needs a grocery store.”

Zoning doesn’t allow for that use. What advocacy tools do we have to change the zoning?
The small area plan supports improving neighborhood food access, including adding a grocery store in this area.

The city’s comprehensive plan prioritizes improved food access, especially in areas with food insecure households.
Community members make their case to the city officials, backed up by the plans and demonstrated community interest.

Elected officials, city staff, and planning commission support the changes. City changes zoning and approves needed variances.

Grocery store is built and exceeds sales forecasts by 150% in the first year!
Roles will vary

Roles will vary for each jurisdiction, and for each stakeholder.
Roles will vary

What are examples that health could play on this spectrum?

- Attend a presentation
- Gather key players
- Host workshops on key issues/priorities
- Research
- Study
- Convene
- Educate
- Facilitate
- Operate
- Partner
- Regulate
- Demonstrate
- Advocate
- Fund
- Sponsoring and funding demonstration or other community projects
- Join a committee, testify, write letters, form coalitions, attend planning meetings
- Conduct and share results of research on community health issues
Reliable access to safe, healthy, affordable food for all

What is the Food Charter?
Local Strategies

• Create policies, technologies, and incentives that reduce food waste or transform it into compost or energy.

• Increase adults’ opportunities to learn food skills at schools, worksites, community education classes, hunger relief programs, and food stores.

• Provide support (such as tax breaks or incentives) to stores, restaurants, and other places that serve and sell food to limit the number of unhealthy options and improve the availability of affordable, healthy foods, including foods familiar to people of many ethnicities.

• Establish accessible, adequate gardening plots, equipment-lending libraries, garden education options, and seed and seedling giveaways.

• Offer incentive programs for consumers, such as ‘market bucks’ and ‘veggie prescription’ programs for healthy food purchases at stores and farmers markets.
Common Themes: Utilizing Food Charter Strategies

• Embedding into food system policy scan

• Identifying most relevant strategies for local coalitions and networks
What’s Your Vision?
What component of the food system can you impact?

What exists in your community that could be modified or strengthened?

What policies/strategies do you want to pursue?

What are the possible obstacles?

What are the tools available to help?

What barriers currently keep your community members from having access to healthy food?
Creating comprehensive plans that build healthy food environments to promote community health and prosperity.
Activity
what matters to your community?

1. Work individually to start.
2. Review the second half of the Guide. Identify one theme that fits with the priorities of your community.
3. Within the theme you choose, identify several strategies that are of most interest.
Find a partner
Share the theme areas and priorities and discuss why you chose those strategies.

• What would it take to ensure that these policies are incorporated in your comprehensive plan?
• What are concrete next steps you can take to advance these priorities?

what matters to your community?
Common Themes:
Coalition Priorities

• Comprehensive planning and local government partnerships
• Liability & food safety regarding farm to institution
• Liability & regulations for mobile food shelves
• Community gardens
• Food system policy scan
• EBT at Farmers Markets
intersection

Planning
Food
Health
Equity
In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.

In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.

In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.
A resource to ensure healthy food access for all

Health Equity Guide
Drafting a Resolution to Create a Food Council

A community food council encourages how the local food system operates, and provides policy recommendations to improve that system. Food councils are often made up of a diverse group of stakeholders for the purpose of improving the food environment within a particular community.

Creating a food council through resolution is a powerful tool that a local government can utilize to interact with the community in deliberating and seeking solutions to complex issues. Food councils are becoming more commonly used and have proven to be an effective means for implementing and executing state and local food policies.

No food council is an exact copy of another; each one can be adapted to the specific needs of each community. That being said, a governing body can look to similar councils and councils in order to describe the organizational structure of the entity. Likewise, a food council can have any name and that name can be changed to match goals or desires of that community. This term “food council” will be used.

What’s in this document?
- How to draft a resolution
- Sample resolution
- Who should be a member
- Job description of a council coordinator
- Examples of resisting resolutions

Public Health Law Center
750 Summit Avenue St. Paul, Minnesota 55105 www.publichealthlawcenter.org 651.290.7050

http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/food-policy-council-resources
One word that sums up how you are feeling right now...
what are your next steps?
Thank you to all the organizers, participants, presenters, sponsors, partners, and allies who have made this Gathering a truly extraordinary event!

Find more information at www.TransitionGathering.org