

# CUYAMA VALLEY FOOD ACTION

MAY - OCTOBER 2017

@BLUESKYCENTER



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# A LOOK BACK AT 2017

# BLUE SKY VISIONS

## RURAL SUMMIT

May 12-13, 2017

After a year of stakeholder meetings, information gatherings, and internal visioning, Blue Sky Center decided to host a Rural Summit aimed at bringing together a diverse group of community members and stakeholders for two days of action.

The Rural Summit featured focused conversations in creative placemaking, food systems and agriculture, and rural tourism. The food systems and agriculture panel featured leaders in local agribusiness, philanthropy, and a food cooperative.



Thank you to our panelists for providing perspective on cross-sector collaboration for agricultural and food systems innovation: Byron Albano, Cuyama Orchards; Emily Miller, CEC; Derek Yurosek, Bolthouse Properties; Juan Calderon, Duncan Family Farms; Jon Hammond, Tehachapi Grain Project; Melissa Cohen, Isla Vista Food Coop; Sharyn Main, SB Foundation.

## FOOD SYSTEMS & AGRICULTURE

Breakout Session Results

- 1) LINK** large agricultural resources, local youth, and academic institutions to create an educational pipeline
- 2) DEVELOP** a space where local youth and community members can experiment with tools and assets to become local food entrepreneurs
- 3) SEED** a local farm with profits and products that remain in the community, with an emphasis on value-added, branded products

## AVIVAR ROUNDTABLE

Summer 2017

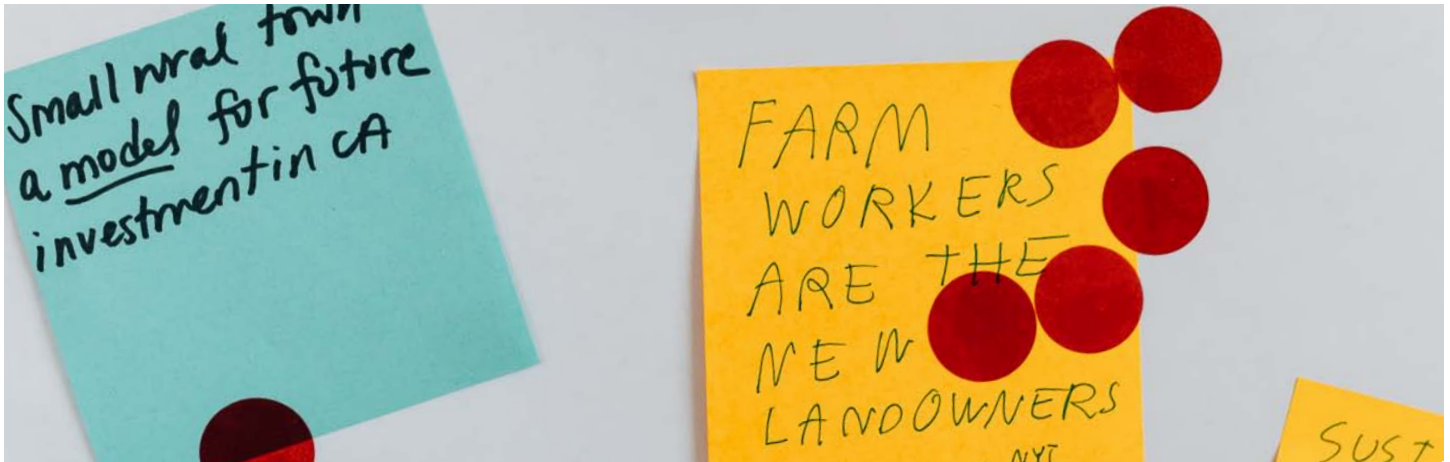
In July, we hosted Avivar Capital in the Blue Sky Flagship Office, for a listening session with representatives from Cuyama Orchards, North Fork Ranch & Vineyard, Laetitia Vineyards, and Santa Barbara Pistachios. Topics of discussion included the history of the valley through the agricultural lens and obstacles currently facing agribusiness and economic diversity in the Cuyama Valley and ways to stimulate economic development through community planning and agribusiness opportunities.

Since then, our team has secured the initial grant funding from Santa Barbara Foundation and Pacific Standard Magazine / Miller McCune Foundation to begin linking stakeholders in the Cuyama Valley in a formal Food Action Task Force to advise food access strategies and long-term investment opportunities in food systems and agriculture in the Cuyama Valley. These strategies will be vetted by the community first and driven by cross-sector investment, promoting collaboration and innovation in focused community resilience projects.



## CUYAMA VALLEY

# FOOD ACTION TASK FORCE



## TASK FORCE FORMATION

Community and regional partners in the Cuyama Valley continue to take steps to address chronic rural food insecurity, catalyze investment in land and food systems, and contribute to a regional strategy around the greater county foodshed.

Creating change at the community scale needs to be a collaborative effort, so The Blue Sky Center engaged LegacyWorks Group to aid in forming the Cuyama Valley Food Action Task Force aimed to identify opportunities for food-related projects that advance community goals and build collaborative capacity and trust.

During phase one, we built a framework for ideas that increase local access to fresh, affordable, and healthy food while expanding economic opportunities in the Cuyama Valley utilizing the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan as a blueprint. LegacyWorks Group facilitated the first two meetings and published the outcomes into a document that clearly outlines future funding and investment opportunities. Our aim is to continue the work of the Task Force as additional funding and direction become available.

## TASK FORCE RESULTS

Across the diverse stakeholders who met in September, there was general agreement about the most important needs of the Cuyama Valley. Chief among these are (1) The need to invest in the youth of the community, especially through education, and (2) The need for families to have better access to healthy food. In addition to the two high priority needs, other needs identified include coalition building, capacity building, housing in the community, community amenities, water in the valley, leadership, and diversification of agricultural business.

These needs were used as criteria for discussing project opportunities with the most potential for addressing the community needs in the valley, as well as generating further collaboration and a path forward to larger investments in the community. A list of projects generated from these discussions, formatted in an Opportunity Matrix for easy visualization, were used to solicit the top few project opportunities from the perspective of the diverse stakeholders engaged in the process. Comparing these rough rankings gives a clear idea of which projects both address the biggest needs and have the highest potential for collaborative action. Results from this process are on Page 10.

This matrix and the data informing it will leverage support into many of these key projects. This process is already well underway with a LEAF grant awarded from the Santa Barbara Foundation to fund local food programming and a business plan for a mobile community kitchen.



# NEW CUYAMA COMMUNITY RURAL PERSPECTIVES

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In Fall, 2017, Blue Sky Center has been focused on fostering strong relationships with key community groups, like the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center, and has been gathering community opinion via a broad-based Community Food Action Survey distribution. As an organization with “prosperity through equitable relationships” at its core, it is essential to allow community feedback to shape the process of developing an actionable and collaborative project to increase food security in New Cuyama. Through meetings with the Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center (CVFRC), an organization that has organized the community’s food distribution for 18 years, and the Community Circle (Blue Sky’s community-driven steering committee) we are able to integrate community priorities and concerns within our Task Force meetings and working documents.

## COMMUNITY FOOD ACTION SURVEY

The survey intends to gather general opinions ranging from: affordability of food in town, the percentage of monthly food purchased locally, the percentage of monthly food received via free distribution, type of restaurant residents would most like to see in town, and ranking of food-related actionable projects derived from the Opportunity Matrix produced by the Task Force. It should be noted that the survey, unfortunately, has not reached all demographic groups in the Cuyama Valley at the time of this report, and therefore cannot be interpreted as complete community representation.

The survey was successfully distributed at the CVFRC’s food distribution, where Blue Sky AmeriCorps VISTA members handed out surveys in both English and Spanish to more than half of the distributions’ recipients. Refreshments were provided at the survey site and community members were encouraged to engage with VISTA members in a one-on-one setting by asking questions about the SB County Food Action Plan and share opinions about projects they would and would not like to see implemented in town.

### RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY

**Elise Dixon, Food Action Coordinator, VISTA Member**

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Ryan Flanagan, Development Coordinator, VISTA Member

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# CUYAMA FOOD ACTION SURVEY RESULTS

*“The Blue Sky community food access effort has been diligent in research and continued commitment to improving awareness and availability of healthy food in the community”*  
*-Pam Baczuk, New Cuyama resident*

## NEW CUYAMA RESIDENT PRIORITIES

Following the survey distribution period, the results were compiled and analyzed to demonstrate the general patterns present in the data gathered. The highest prioritized project ideas are as follows:

1. Invest in Cuyama Elementary School Garden Initiative
2. Establish Cuyama Farmer’s Market
3. Offer cooking and nutrition classes for community and youth
4. Create Commercial Kitchen Facility for community and entrepreneurial use

### SURVEY NOTES

It is important to mention that the results may be inaccurate due to this question’s phrasing, as some respondents gave multiple #1 rankings to various project ideas they deemed important. This question will be simplified to avoid confusion in future survey iterations.

The community priorities were tabulated based on the sum of #1, #2, and #3 rankings given to the respective project ideas.

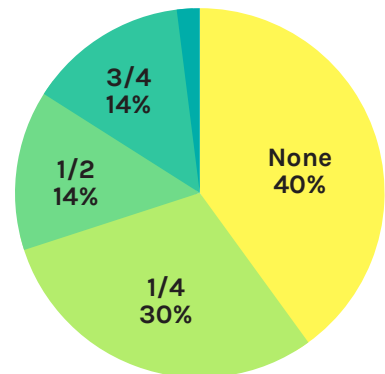
If another restaurant operation opened in town more than 1/3 of participants answered that they would like to see it offer Mexican or Latin food, and more than 1/3 indicated that they wanted fresh or healthy options.

### SURVEY LOCATION

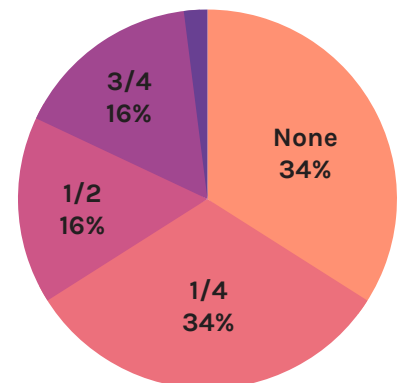
Surveys were distributed at the Food Distribution in New Cuyama, coordinated by:

- Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center
- Catholic Charities
- SB County Foodbank

HOW MUCH OF YOUR FAMILY’S MONTHLY FOOD IS PURCHASED IN TOWN?



HOW MUCH OF YOUR FAMILY’S MONTHLY FOOD IS FROM THE FOOD DROP OFF?



## LOOKING AHEAD

# KEYS TO SUCCESS

## CUYAMA VALLEY FOOD ACTION PLAN

### 3-Tiered Integrated Project

Moving forward, community engagement remains a key objective in the integration of Cuyama Valley Food Action initiatives.

To date, the Cuyama Community Food Action Survey results have informed funding applications including, Santa Barbara Foundation LEAF Initiative and Santa Barbara Foundation Capital Improvement application. In December 2017, Blue Sky Center was awarded a \$20,000 LEAF grant, which will fund the development of culinary arts and nutritional programming for Cuyama Valley residents, as well as the formation of a business and operations plan for a community kitchen facility. The prospective capital improvement grant project aims to outfit an existing commercial catering trailer with the necessary permits, supplies, and branding to become fully operational for community use as the future Cuyama Community Kitchen. Long-term, Blue Sky Center also envisions implementing a greenhouse growing facility for year-round food production in order to increase the quantity and quality of fresh produce for the community.

These three integrated projects seek to address the top priorities that community members identified via the Community Food Action Survey, and together they will bolster community resilience and capacity. Further community engagement efforts, including Blue Sky Center's Holiday Open House event, seek to continue the dialogue around food action in the Cuyama Valley.



## STRATEGIC PARTNERS:

Santa Barbara Foundation  
Community Environmental Council  
LegacyWorks Group  
Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan  
Santa Barbara County Food Bank  
AmeriCorps VISTA



# THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR FOOD ACTION PARTNERS IN 2017



## **GROWERS**

Bolthouse Farms & Properties  
Cuyama Orchards  
Duncan Family Farms  
Gimmway Farms  
North Fork Vineyard  
Santa Barbara Pistachio Co.  
Sunridge Nurseries  
Watkins Ranch

## **BUSINESS**

Pacific Standard Magazine  
Patagonia Provisions  
Topa Topa Brewing

## **PHILANTHROPY**

Santa Barbara Foundation  
McCune Foundation  
The Fund for Santa Barbara  
Zannon Family Foundation

## **ACADEMIA**

Cuyama Joint Unified School District  
UC Santa Barbara

## **INVESTMENT**

Avivar Capital  
LegacyWorks Group

## **ORGANIZATIONS & ASSOCIATIONS**

Community Environmental Council  
Cuyama Valley Family Resource Center  
SB County Food Action Plan  
SB County Foodbank  
Quail Springs Permaculture

## **MEDIA & STORYTELLING**

Kiss the Ground

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Garrett Gerstenberger  
HipCamp Field Scouts  
Laura Dart



# HELP OUR HIGH DESERT TOWN BLOOM IN 2018

## CONTACT

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*INTERESTED IN MORE INFORMATION REGARDING  
FOOD ACTION IN THE CUYAMA VALLEY?*

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*INTERESTED IN MAKING A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION?*

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*INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH BLUE SKY?*

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		Community Impact Areas														
● Indicates High Impact    ● Indicates Impact		Relative Cost	Coalition Building	Capacity Building	Education/ Youth	Housing	Food Access	Amenities	Water	WorkForce/Jobs	Leadership	Ag Business Diversification	Climate	Potential Partners	Champion	Source of Capital (Philanthropy, Investing, Blend)
1	Create a commercial kitchen facility with catering trailer at Blue Sky Center		●	●	●		●	●		●	●			CVFRC	BSC	Philanthropy
2	Retrofit cold storage facility at Blue Sky Center		●	●			●	●						BSC, Santa Barbara Pistachios, Food Bank, Duncan Farms, Cuyama Orchards	BSC	Blend
3	Create a greenhouse to grow fresh food year round		●		●						●			BSC, CJUSD, FreightFarms, WOOF	BSC	Blend
4	Invest in Cuyama Elementary Edible School Garden initiative		●		●		●	●						CJUSD	CJUSD, Parent's Club, Exchange Club	Philanthropy
5	Improve Cuyama Education Quality		●	●	●		●		●	●	●			School Board, BSC, QS, community, Alan Hancock	BSC to start --> School board	Blend
6	Viticulture/Appellation		●				●	●	●	●	●			Forkfork and Santa Barbara Highlands, CVCA	Forkfork and Santa Barbara Highlands	Investing; Blend
7	Cuyama Cidery		●				●		●	●	●			Cuyama Orchards Apiary? Topa Topa?, Quail Springs, Rockfront Ranch	Cuyama Orcahrds, BSC	Blend
8	Cuyama Olive Oil		●				●	●	●	●	●			Sunrise Olives, BSC, Cuyama Orchards, Santa Barbara Pistachio Co	Sunrise Olives, BSC	Blend
9	Low interest loan facility for smaller scale ag/food startups		●	●	●		●		●		●					Blend
10	Local investment fund for equity investments in ag/food ventures		●	●			●		●		●					Investing
11	Grant fund and incubation support for new ag/food ventures		●	●			●		●		●					Philanthropy
12	Impact-oriented refinancing for existing loans to nonprofits and for profit mission driven ventures		●	●			●		●		●					Blend
13	Vacant Housing Opportunity Analysis			●		●		●		●				BSC, County of Santa Barbara, CVCA	BSC	Philanthropy
14	Cuyama Fresh Food Market		●	●			●	●		●						Blend
15	Establish a Chamber of Commerce		●	●			●		●	●						
16	Increase Place Based Education		●	●	●		●		●	●				Quail Springs, Blue Sky	Quail Springs	
17	Shift to Perennial Crops/Cover Crops		●					●	●		●	●		Business Community - who?		
18	Expand Fallow Land Grazing/Carbon Sequestration							●				●		Agriculture community, QS		



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