

# *Healthy Food for All Prince Georgians*

**An assessment of access to healthy food  
in Prince George's County, Maryland**

**Accessibility**

**Affordability**

**Cultural Variety**

**Customer Service**

**Quality Assurance**



***Prince George's County Food  
System Study***

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The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission  
Prince George's County Planning Department  
[www.pgplanning.org](http://www.pgplanning.org)

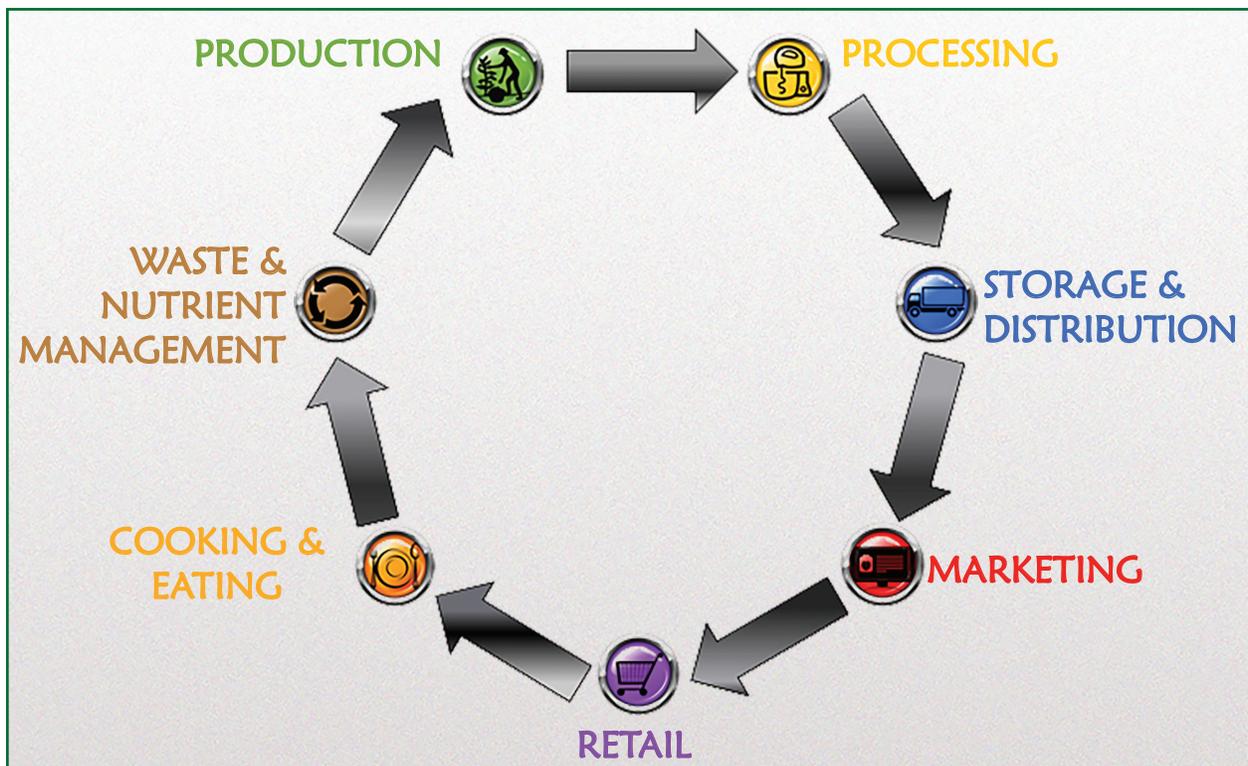
# Introduction

Everybody eats! Therefore, food is important to everybody. People usually think about food as a means to alleviate hunger or something to simply enjoy. Relatively few people see food as the nutrition and fuel that our bodies need to function. Even fewer people think or know about the journey food makes to get onto their plates.

## Food system and food equity

The journey of food explains what a food system is all about. A community's food system is a soil-to-soil system of interconnected activities that facilitates the production, processing, distribution, acquisition, and consumption of food and the reduction, disposal, and management of food waste.<sup>1</sup>

**Chart 1: Food system**



It is crucial to understand every component of the food system to make it sustainable and to ensure that every member of the community has equal and equitable access to healthy food—a right of every human being. Access to healthy food is one important piece in moving toward a more sustainable and equitable food system.

*Ensure food equity to prevent health disparities*

Eating healthy food is paramount in having good health. Thus, health disparities between neighborhoods can be reduced through providing equitable food access to all neighborhoods.

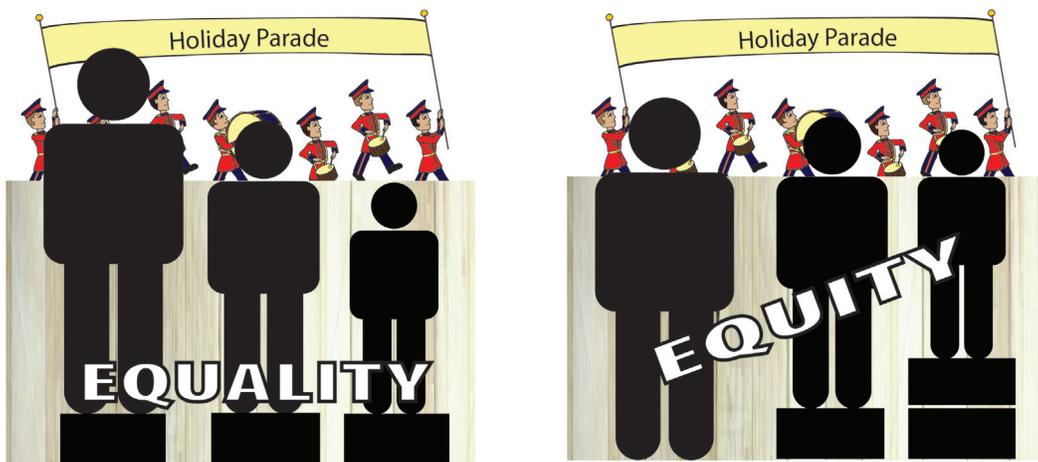
<sup>1</sup> American Planning Association

## Prince George's County Food System Study

The Prince George's County Planning Department of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission initiated a Food System Study to assess the County's food system. The goal of the study is to identify challenges and opportunities and provide recommendations for creating a healthy, equitable, and sustainable food system that ensures every Prince Georgian has access to nutritious, affordable, sustainably grown, safe, and culturally appropriate food.

### What is food equity?

- *Healthy, affordable, sustainably grown, culturally appropriate, safe food available to all neighborhoods.*
- *Justice and economic opportunity being built into every step from farm to fork.*



### Access to Healthy Food

The report gives special attention to the most urban areas of the County, which includes all communities inside the Capital Beltway plus Greenbelt and Oxon Hill outside the beltway (see Map 1 on page 4). As shown on the map, the study area is subdivided into three subareas (North, Central, and South) where US 50 and MD 4 are the dividing lines. The report includes findings of the research study on access to healthy food in these areas.

The study identified issues related to demand and supply of healthy food through surveys and focus group discussions with consumers and surveys of food retailers. The report includes an analysis of two national food desert studies and research on food-health connections, school meals, and food security in the County. Some of the many programs, initiatives, and services were included to showcase the resources available to County residents. Recommendations pertinent to Prince George's County, based on national promising practices, are included in the conclusion of the report.

This study focuses on only a few pieces of the food system puzzle. A community's food system is very complex and complicated. It requires substantial resources and commitment to be fully assessed and improved.

There are several issues with accessing healthy food in the County. At the same time, there are many efforts by various agencies and organizations to address most of these issues. Despite the

availability of many resources, these piecemeal attempts are only partially successful due to the lack of a coordinated approach to food. The residents of Prince George’s County still face challenges in accessing healthy food, evidenced by the considerable number of residents who are food insecure, the rapidly increasing number of overweight and obese residents, and the many Prince Georgians who are dying from diet-related chronic diseases every year. Too many residents lack basic nutrition knowledge and are thus unaware that the kinds of foods they eat are detrimental to their health. Cheap, processed, unhealthy food—a major cause of these diseases—is abundant, but healthy food is expensive and harder to find. There are more than enough food retail outlets, but most of them lack quality and healthy food. There are disparities in accessing healthy food. Neighborhoods with low-income, minority, and/or immigrant residents have lower quality and unaffordable foods. People without cars cannot easily travel to places where healthy foods are available. There is no equitable food system.

The County needs an overall vision for food. To achieve this vision, overarching food system policies should be created. These policies would allow the existing initiatives—that are overlapping and competing for funding— to fit together for the general good. These policies would provide guidance to develop effective food strategies to substantially improve and, eventually, achieve a sustainable and equitable food system.

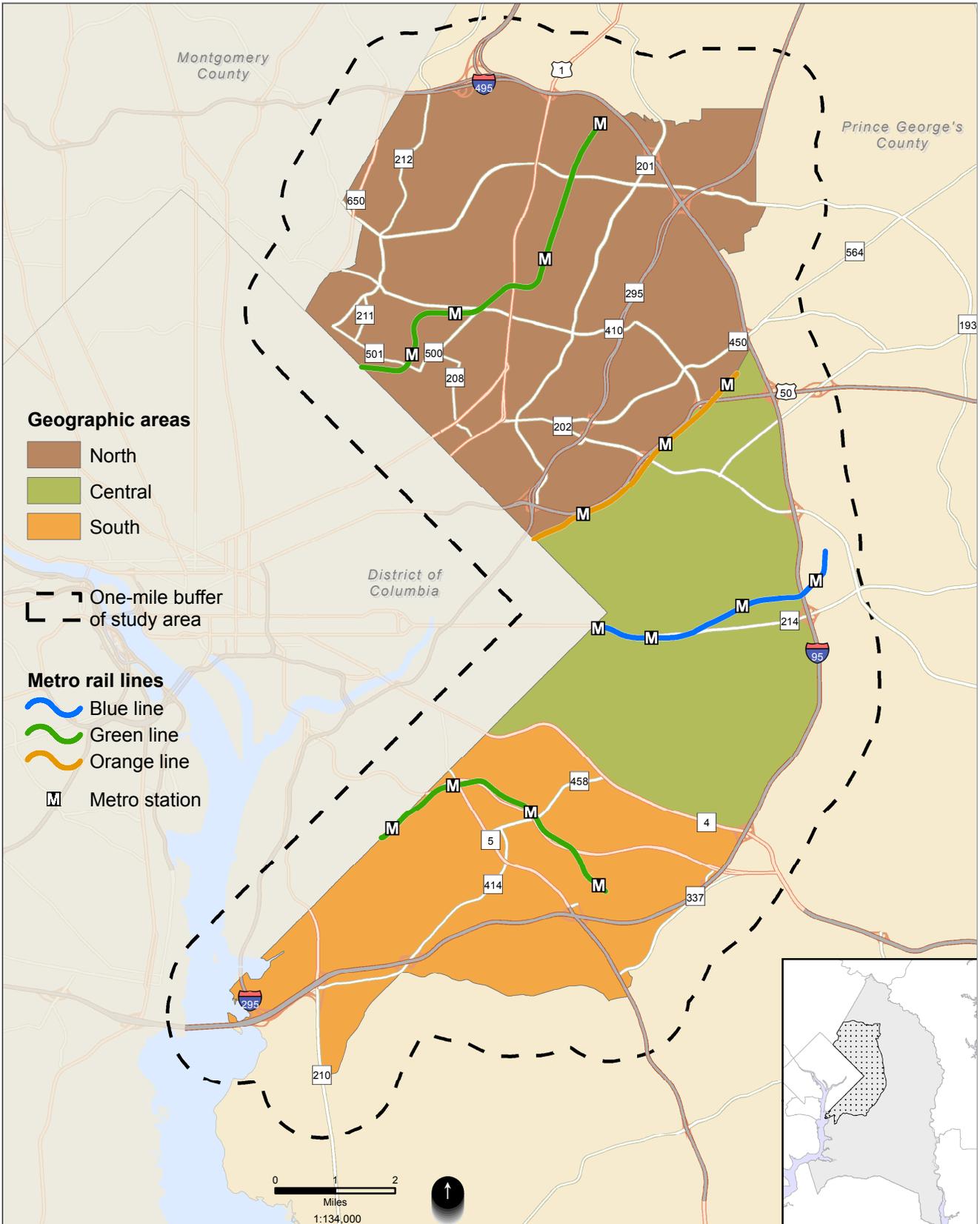
The Prince George’s County Food Equity Council (FEC), in conjunction with the County government, could take the lead in reaching out to the community to create a shared vision. FEC could help articulate this vision for achieving food system sustainability in the County.

The County government has an important role in nurturing a food system that helps improve community health and well-being and local economic development. The County government can be a catalyst in stimulating collaboration and synergy by leveraging its connections. It can also be a catalyst in regulating land uses and encouraging local food production to create a robust local food economy.

This report is the first step in the food system assessment. More work is needed to further assess and understand the food system, with all of its nuances and complexities. Since the food system is dynamic, an ongoing investigation is needed to effectively address key issues and opportunities. An evaluation of existing programs and services is needed to determine their effectiveness. The County should put food on the agenda through the development of a food charter and vision as well as policies and strategies. The County needs to develop and implement a food system plan. Unless there is a coordinated approach to food, equitable access to healthy food cannot be achieved in the County, and due to the alarming obesity epidemic and other diet-related chronic diseases, public health will be in jeopardy.



**Map 1: Food system study area**



# Executive summary

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Food is one of the basic necessities for life, and everybody has the right to access healthy food. Healthy food access is not only important for public health but also to build a sustainable and equitable community.

## *Significant findings*

In the most urbanized parts of Prince George's County, equitable access to healthy food is an issue. The findings of a consumer survey of close to 600 residents, discussions with 7 focus groups, and healthy food availability surveys of all 70 supermarkets and 22 percent of the 484 small markets that serve the study area revealed that:

- County residents are having difficulty accessing quality, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food within a reasonable distance from where they live.
- It is not the lack of supermarkets but the spatial distribution of them and the quality and price of products they carry that create inequity in accessing healthy food.
- There are more than enough supermarkets in the study area; in fact, there are 20 more supermarkets than this market would normally support. Therefore, opening new supermarkets may not solve the problem.
- Food access challenges are more related to the quality of local stores and what they carry than the physical access to food outlets. Many residents do not patronize nearby supermarkets but travel elsewhere, even to other jurisdictions, where more variety and better quality food are sold for less.
- Healthy foods are not widely available in the study area food retail outlets. The Healthy Food Availability Index (HFAI) survey showed that the majority of supermarkets have a "fair" rating, and the average HFAI score for supermarkets is 56 out of 100. The small market HFAI survey revealed an average score of 27 out of 100, indicating not enough healthy food alternatives in small markets.
- HFAI scores of individual stores reveal that there is discrepancy in terms of healthy food availability and/or quality among the stores of the same retailer.

## *"Food desert" methodologies are of limited utility*

An analysis of two nationwide food desert studies, Food Access Research Atlas by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Limited Supermarket Access (LSA) Areas by The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) revealed that these studies have serious shortcomings:

- USDA-identified food deserts, now called "Low-Income and Low-Access" areas, as well as TRF's LSA areas do not reflect the essence of the food access problem in Prince George's County. The methodologies, assumptions, and data they use put the County in an unfair position.
- The study area has more USDA-identified food deserts not because of the availability of fewer supermarkets compared to other low-access areas in the region but due to the presence of areas with lower median family income (MFI) than the Metro area's MFI. If Prince George's County were in a different metropolitan area with less wealthy jurisdictions, these areas would not be identified as food deserts.
- Labeling communities as food deserts based on nationwide studies' outcomes may have adverse effects. Policy decisions at the local level should not be made based on these studies.

## ***Place matters for food equity***

- There are geographic disparities in accessing healthy food in the County, which is a sign of food inequity. The cost of acquiring a balanced diet depends on where one lives within the study area. The cost of a typical market basket of healthy foods varies by the location of stores, even between the stores of the same chain supermarket. For every 10 market baskets that an average household in Cheverly buys, households in each of the remaining nine subareas can buy less than nine baskets, and as low as six baskets in Suitland.
- Another reason for difficulty in accessing healthy food, especially for residents who cannot drive, is the location of supermarkets. Supermarkets are generally located along main arteries and cluster at major intersections, leaving most residential neighborhoods without supermarkets. One culprit is zoning regulations; separation of commercial and residential uses does not allow supermarkets to operate close to where people live.

## ***Food retail stores and prepared food service outlets***

- In the study area, both the number and location of the prepared food outlets make them more easily accessible than food retail stores where groceries can be purchased.
- There are close to 1,600 food retail outlets, of which about 1,000 are prepared food service outlets (places where food is cooked and made ready for consumption, such as restaurants, cafeterias, and carry-out places), and over 600 are food retail stores (grocery stores and other markets where primarily unprepared food is sold).
- Carry-out places comprise almost a quarter of all food retail outlets; full-service restaurants have the second highest presence (over 12 percent) followed by gas station stores (9 percent) and fast-food restaurants (8.5 percent). Supermarkets, small groceries, and international markets, combined, comprise close to 12 percent of all food outlets.
- While the food retail stores are concentrated along major roads, the prepared food outlets that mostly carry foods high in fat, salt, and sugar are scattered, making unhealthy foods easier to access than healthy foods.

## ***Food and health***

There is a strong correlation between the food we eat and our health. Disparities in accessing healthy food may deprive people of a balanced diet and hence affect public health, leading to these alarming health statistics:

- Prince George's County has higher than average rates in diet-related chronic diseases in Maryland.
- More than two thirds of the adult population in the County is overweight or obese. The obesity rate is on the rise; in the last 20 years it increased from 19 percent to 35 percent.
- Most people are aware of the connection between what they eat and their health but keep eating the foods that may cause major health risks due to the following reasons:
  - Insufficient nutrition knowledge.
  - Food insecurity—food insecure people eat inexpensive, high calorie prepared foods, which are also high in salt, sugars, and/or fat.
  - Processed unhealthy food is cheap and healthy food is expensive.
  - Healthy food may not be available.
  - Not everybody knows how to cook.
  - Lack of time to shop for and cook from scratch.

## *School meals could be healthier*

Healthy eating habits may be easier to adopt at an early age. Therefore, what children eat at school is very important. Some facts about meals at Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) include:

- Almost 80,000 lunches and over 53,000 breakfasts are served daily at PGCPS. Close to two thirds of the students participate in the National School Lunch Program, and 64 percent of participating students are enrolled in the federal Free and Reduced Meals program.
- Although the food served at PGCPS meets the federal and state requirements, students are not always offered high quality, healthy food with wholesome ingredients.
- Both school principals and students shared similar opinions about the need to improve school food.
- While PGCPS participates in the Farm to School Program, not enough local foods are served to students. PGCPS spends only 2 percent of its food budget on local foods while Baltimore City Public Schools and Montgomery County Public Schools spent 29 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of their budgets on local foods.
- Results of the evaluation of PGCPS sample school menus and cafeteria observations include:
  - PGCPS Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) provides some nutritional information for school food, but it is limited.
  - Added sugar in school breakfasts exceeds limits recommended by the American Heart Association.
  - Lunch periods are too short.
  - Free drinking water and hand washing stations are not available where students are eating.

## *Food insecurity is a serious problem*

Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country, but there are many Marylanders who are food insecure, of which 17 percent live in Prince George's County. Food insecurity is a serious problem in the County:

- One in seven people in the County is food insecure.
- Participation in the federal food assistance programs are on the rise.
  - The number of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cases are close to 55,000, and about 112,000 people benefit from this program.
  - Number of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) participants are about 5,000.
  - A little more than half of the eligible people participate in these programs.
- There are 132 food pantries in the County; 86 of them are located in the study area.
- A survey of participants of the federal nutrition assistance programs revealed that:
  - Almost all respondents run out of their SNAP benefits before the end of the month.
  - A third of the respondents are not able to feed their children enough nutritious food all or some of the time.
  - There was not enough food to eat in the households of almost one-third of the respondents in the past year.
  - More than one in three said that they or their household members had to skip meals in the past year because of not having enough food.
  - More than half of the respondents buy fresh fruits and vegetables only once a month.
  - Almost half of them indicated that if their benefits doubled they would like to spend the difference on fruits and vegetables.

## Recommendations

Developing local food policies that can eliminate disparities in food access is critical in creating healthy, sustainable, and livable communities. The following are the policy recommendations to address the issues identified in this research study. For some policies, sample strategies are included. Multiple strategies for each policy as well as related promising practices are presented in the report.

**Policy 1:** Develop an overarching food policy framework for the County.

 Create a food charter for the County

**Policy 2:** Support the Prince George's County Food Equity Council.

**Policy 3:** Launch an integrated healthy eating and food-health connection awareness campaign.

 Expand health and nutrition education programs  
 Develop partnerships with faith-based organizations

**Policy 4:** Encourage local food consumption, and support the local food economy.

 Revise procurement policies, and require that County agencies purchase food from local producers.

**Policy 5:** Increase sustainable local food production in rural and urban areas.

 Provide incentives to local farmers who produce sustainably grown food for local consumption.  
 Establish a farm incubator to help new farmers start farming business.

**Policy 6:** Establish a food hub in the County to support local and regional food distribution and marketing.

 Partner with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission to establish a regional food hub.  
 Convert the underutilized Cheltenham farmers' market/auction facility into a distribution and processing facility for the food hub.

**Policy 7:** Promote local food processing and invest in food processing infrastructure.

 Lift barriers for production, distribution, and sales of value-added products by revisiting existing regulations.  
 Establish a community kitchen incubator.

**Policy 8:** Increase sale of quality healthy fresh foods at existing food retail outlets, and decrease unhealthy options.

 Launch a "healthy small markets" program.  
 Require all vending machines and concession stands in schools and government owned/operated facilities to carry mostly healthy foods and drinks.  
 Create a healthy carry-out program.

**Policy 9:** Ensure good quality food, a safe and clean environment, and excellent customer service at supermarkets.

**Policy 10:** Encourage alternative food retail models to improve healthy food access.



Allow and promote mobile healthy food markets, particularly in underserved communities.  
Allow and promote healthy prepared food trucks to provide healthy food options.

**Policy 11:** Launch a “mini healthy neighborhood grocery store” initiative to make healthy foods accessible within residential neighborhoods.

**Policy 12:** Looking through an equity lens, rethink zoning with food and health in mind to make access to healthy food easier.



Consider creating a floating grocery store zone and/or permit small-scale healthy food retailers in all residential zones.

**Policy 13:** Improve transportation options to healthy food outlets.

**Policy 14:** Make healthy food affordable.



Encourage supermarkets to sell imperfectly shaped but fresh produce at a reduced price.

**Policy 15:** Improve the quality of school meals.



Exceed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 guidelines.  
Increase purchasing of local foods.

**Policy 16:** Ensure that school cafeterias promote healthy and positive eating experiences.



Meet the federal regulation to offer unrestricted access to free drinking water in the cafeteria.

**Policy 17:** Develop food literacy in the school community.



Offer nutrition seminars and cooking lessons to parents

**Policy 18:** Eliminate hunger and food insecurity in the County by ensuring access to affordable, sufficient, and healthy food for all food insecure people all the time.



Increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs  
Fund the Prince George’s County’s “SNAP to Health” initiative  
Encourage food pantries to offer mostly healthy foods

## *Part 3*

### Recommendations





# Policy recommendations, strategies, and promising practices

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Food is one of the basic necessities for life, perhaps only third after air and water. Food plays a role in our health, economy, and culture and is a critical part of a sustainable community.<sup>190</sup> Traditionally, with the exception of food safety and food security, there has not been a broader look at food in policymaking. A more holistic approach to food in recent years revealed disparities in availability and accessibility of healthy food. Disparities in food access are not only influenced by geographic, economic, and social factors but also by a community's food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste recovery policies and practices. Food access is not simply a health issue but a community development and equity issue. For this reason, access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food is a key component not only in a healthy, sustainable local food system but also in a healthy, sustainable community.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, developing local food policies that can eliminate disparities in food access is critical in creating healthy, sustainable, and livable communities.

This research study identified the issues in accessing healthy food in the most developed parts of Prince George's County. Policy recommendations to address these issues are presented in this chapter. These recommendations were developed based on thorough research on national and international best practices as well as the solution ideas presented by the focus group participants. For each policy recommendation, multiple strategies are proposed, and a sample of promising practices is presented. Promising practices contain information on specific food access initiatives that have been successfully implemented in various communities and can potentially have success if implemented in Prince George's County.



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<sup>190</sup> Kimberley Hodgson, *Planning for Food Access and Community-Based Food Systems: A National Scan and Evaluation of Local Comprehensive and Sustainability Plans*, American Planning Association, November 2012, p.6.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

## Policy 1: *Develop an overarching food policy framework for the County.*

Prince George's County should have a holistic approach to food to understand and control the dynamic local food system, which is critical for everybody who eats in the County. An overarching food policy framework is required to create a healthy, equitable, and sustainable food system that ensures every Prince Georgian has access to nutritious, affordable, sustainably grown, safe, and culturally appropriate food. Eradicating diet-related chronic diseases and disparities in accessing healthy food can be achieved by developing effective policies and coordinated strategies through collective impact.

### Strategies:<sup>192</sup>

- 🥕 Establish a County agency for food policy, or at the very least, create a food policy director or coordinator position within an appropriate department or office.
- 🥕 Create a shared vision for food and local food system involving the community.
- 🥕 Create a food charter for the County. Food charters are public declarations of a community's intent toward its food system. They express key values and priorities for creating just and sustainable food systems. Food charters generally combine vision statements, principles, and broad action goals pointing toward a coordinated local food strategy.
- 🥕 Develop and implement a food system plan. A food system plan integrates all food system issues and identifies policies, strategies, and action items for the development of a healthy and sustainable local food system to support and enhance the overall public, social, ecological, and economic health of the community. It requires a holistic approach to its functional parts that include agriculture, land use, environment, economy, education, government policies and regulations, social justice, health, and food cultures.
- 🥕 Examine the linkages between food and health, economic development, planning, revitalization, and environmental protection and encourage appropriate County agencies to collaborate and implement necessary strategies to achieve common goals related to local the food system.



<sup>192</sup> A Seat at The Table: Resource guide for local governments to promote food secure communities.

## Learn from promising practices

-  **Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI)**<sup>193</sup> is an intergovernmental collaboration with the Baltimore Department of Planning, Baltimore Office of Sustainability, Baltimore Development Corporation, and the Baltimore City Health Department. Using a holistic and comprehensive food systems approach, BFPI is working to increase access to healthy and affordable foods in underserved communities. Baltimore hired a food policy director and updated the city's animal husbandry regulations and zoning code to support urban agriculture. Homegrown Baltimore, the city government's urban agriculture program, encourages residents to grow local, buy local, and eat local. BFPI supports existing carryout vendors to introduce healthier prepared foods. BFPI's virtual supermarket enables residents to order and receive groceries without delivery fee. BFPI also supports healthy eating in Baltimore City Schools.
-  **City of Boston Office of Food Initiatives (OFI)**<sup>194</sup> has encouraged, developed, and promoted Boston as one of the nation's leading innovative food systems since its establishment in July 2010. The Office has become the starting point for establishing food enterprise in Boston, and is the home of food access programming such as the Boston Bounty Bucks, FreshFoodBoston, Parent University's culinary classes, and Boston's Farmers Markets. Over the course of the last three years, OFI has also piloted, launched, and developed robust programming around two new industries: Mobile Food Trucks and Urban Agriculture.
-  **Philadelphia Food Charter**<sup>195</sup> presents a vision for a food system that benefits the community, the economy, and the environment. It establishes the City of Philadelphia's commitment to the development of a coordinated sustainable food and urban agriculture policy and articulates the intention of establishing a Food Policy Council.
-  **Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Eating Here: Greater Philadelphia's Food System Plan**<sup>196</sup> identifies opportunities to develop the regional economy and strengthen the agricultural sector, decrease waste and want, improve public health, protect the region's soil and water, and encourage diversity, innovation, and collaboration.
-  **Seattle Food Action Plan**,<sup>197</sup> a stand-alone citywide food system plan, was developed by the Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment and the Seattle Food Interdepartmental Team and adopted by the City Council in 2012. The plan established an overarching food policy for municipal government by providing guidance to all city departments on the development of specific strategies to achieve the higher-level goals of the Seattle Local Food Action.

<sup>193</sup> Baltimore City Planning Department. [www.baltimorecity.gov](http://www.baltimorecity.gov)

<sup>194</sup> [www.cityofboston.gov/food](http://www.cityofboston.gov/food)

<sup>195</sup> [http://phillyfoodjustice.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/philadelphia\\_food\\_charter.pdf](http://phillyfoodjustice.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/philadelphia_food_charter.pdf)

<sup>196</sup> [www.dvrpc.org/reports/10063.pdf](http://www.dvrpc.org/reports/10063.pdf)

<sup>197</sup> [www.seattle.gov/environment/food](http://www.seattle.gov/environment/food)

## **Policy 2: *Support the Prince George's County Food Equity Council.***

The Prince George's County Food Equity Council (FEC) is an independent local food policy council for the County. FEC works collaboratively with stakeholders to revitalize the local, regional, and national food system and elevates the voice and connectivity of farmers, grassroots organizations, low income residents, business leaders, health advocates, educators, and others who are often not at the table when food and farm policies are developed.

The FEC is made up of 22 local leaders representing anti-hunger direct service and advocacy groups, grocery stores, government agencies, community based organizations, civic associations, urban farms, universities, and health care providers. FEC's mission is to significantly improve food security and community well-being of all who live, work, study, worship, and play in Prince George's County. By identifying deficiencies and promoting innovative solutions, FEC will help transform the food system into one that improves public health, ensures environmental sustainability, and spurs sound economic development.

### **FEC Goals:**

1. Develop and advance comprehensive policies and programs to address the social determinants of food equity and related health effects.
2. Integrate food system planning into all County economic and community development, both in the short and long-term.
3. Ensure the availability, affordability, and accessibility of healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate, safe food for all who eat in Prince George's County.
4. Expand the reach and impact of nutrition programs for low-income people including federal nutrition assistance programs and emergency food assistance.
5. Create countywide awareness of the role healthy food plays in the overall health and wellbeing of the County and its residents.

FEC is a valuable resource to the County in providing research and information about the local food system and developing food policies. Working in collaboration with other food policy councils in the region, FEC is following food related developments in the region and makes sure that Prince George's County benefits from the collective efforts to improve the regional food system. Coordinating with and supporting FEC would help the County government in developing and implementing healthy food policies and strategies.

### **Strategies:**

-  Consider implementing the policy recommendations FEC develops on a continuous basis.
-  Provide political, technical, and financial support to FEC for implementing its strategies for local food production, healthy eating and nutrition education, and healthy food retail (see below) as well as future strategies related to access to healthy food in the County.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY  
**FoodEquityCouncil**

### Local Food Production



**GOAL:** Promote economic viability and equity through local food production, processing, and distribution.

**Strategy 1:** Document the barriers farmers, craft and value-added food producers, and distributors face to starting or expanding their businesses in Prince George's County.

**Strategy 2:** Convene a coalition of Maryland food councils interested in improving regional production, processing, and distribution chains.

### Healthy Eating and Nutrition Education



**GOAL:** Alleviate the burden of hunger and prevent the spread of diet-related chronic disease.

**Strategy 1:** Educate the community on healthy eating.

**Strategy 2:** Connect families with food assistance providers and increase Food Supplement Program registration rates in Prince George's County.

### Healthy Food Retail



**GOAL:** Increase economic and marketing opportunities for both existing and new healthy food retailers.

**Strategy 1:** Develop policy/zoning change to allow and promote mobile food vending in Prince George's County.

**Strategy 2:** Develop a phone app and map that plots current food retailers and create a rating system that incentivize retailers who stock/promote healthy food items through a partnership with a local University.

### Policy 3: *Launch an integrated healthy eating and food-health connection awareness campaign.*

Diet-related diseases are major public health issues in the County. Helping residents have healthier lifestyles is critical in preventing these diseases. Healthy eating, along with active living, is essential to have a healthy lifestyle. In order to follow a nutritious and balanced diet, residents need to have access to healthy foods. Making quality and affordable healthy food easily accessible to everybody is critical in promoting healthy living. However, availability of healthy food alone is not enough to create healthy communities. Willingness of people to eat healthy food is perhaps more critical to living healthy lives. Educating the public on healthy eating is, therefore, paramount in reducing diet-related diseases. Government agencies, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations play an important role in providing this education and creating awareness about how what we eat affects our health.

#### Strategies:

-  Integrate all existing campaigns and initiatives in the County related to healthy eating and prevention of diet-related diseases under one umbrella campaign with a catchy name and expand it.
  -  Partner with food retail outlets and health providers to promote this campaign.
  -  Use cable TV, radio, webinars, smart phone apps, social media, and other innovative ways to outreach all residents.
-  Create a “healthy eating” logo that is appealing for kids and adults, and display it at public places, on citizen handouts, and County web site. Use this logo at places that sell healthy foods.
-  Start a “Water is Life” campaign to encourage drinking water, which is good for health and may reduce consumption of sugary drinks. At public places, build visible water fountains with faucets for refilling portable bottles.
-  Promote healthy food marketing, and limit unhealthy food marketing, especially those targeting children.
-  Expand health and nutrition education programs offered to the residents.
  -  Teach health impacts of food and importance of a balanced diet.
  -  Educate residents about Body Mass Index (BMI) and how to calculate their BMI.
  -  Provide information on nutrition, healthy eating tips, how to access healthy food sources, as well as growing and cooking food.
  -  Encourage residents to eat more natural, wholesome foods and less processed foods with artificial ingredients, added sugar and preservatives, and high sodium.
-  Promote Wholesome Wave’s Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program (FVRx). (See promising practices on the next page.)
-  Develop partnerships with faith-based organizations to launch a program to educate people on healthy eating. Under this program, each faith-based organization should do one or more of the following:
  -  Provide motivational speeches, counseling, facilitated group discussions, and health and nutrition education.
  -  Increase access to fresh and healthy foods at events.
  -  Start community gardens, and teach residents how to grow and prepare food.
  -  Have cooking demonstrations, and promote healthier ways to cook traditional meals.



### Learn from promising practices:

-  **Boston's Rethink Your Drink Campaign** is an initiative of the Mayor's Office and the Boston Public Health Commission to help people make healthier choices easier. This healthy beverage campaign includes schools, community centers, and other city property. The city requires food vendors interested in vending on the public way to join the campaign.<sup>198</sup>
-  **Wholesome Wave's Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx)**<sup>199</sup> measures health outcomes linked to increased fruit and vegetable consumption. FVRx promotes innovative partnerships between healthcare providers and farmers' markets to provide assistance to families with diet-related diseases and reinforce healthy eating habits. FVRx participants receive prescriptions of a specified number of servings of fruits and vegetables per day from their doctor. These prescriptions can be redeemed weekly at participating farmers' markets. FVRx is implemented in Washington, D.C. and Montgomery County, MD.
-  **The Kidz Bite Back Initiative in Florida**, spearheaded by the health departments of Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, addresses the issue of childhood obesity by integrating five campaigns (school environment, fast food and junk food industries, video game and television industries, parents and household, and the influence of cultural norms) into one effort. The Kidz Bite Back campaign is the only elementary-school-based grassroots effort in the nation formed by counter marketing campaigns.<sup>200</sup>
-  **MOM's Organic Market in the Washington, D.C., Metro Area** does not carry any products that feature cartoon characters based on their core value that marketing to children is wrong.
-  **The Nutrition Challenge Program in Nevada**, developed by the Southern Nevada Health District, is a free 12-week web-based program that provides nutrition education, specifically focusing on the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption. An evaluation of the program showed statistically significant improvements in fruit and vegetable intake and the stage of behavior change among participants utilizing pre- and post-program survey responses.<sup>201</sup>
-  **Eat for Life in Atlanta**,<sup>202</sup> a program that involved 14 African American churches, focuses on increasing the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and provides various levels of health education, increased access to fresh foods at church events, and counseling by dietitians. Eat for Life focuses both on the individual barriers to changing behavior and the broader personal food environment to reinforce the message of adopting new behavior. The use of motivational interviewing<sup>203</sup> by counselors appears to be a promising strategy for modifying diet. African American churches are excellent settings in which to implement and evaluate health promotion programs.

**Marketing to KIDS is Big Business**

Every year, major food and beverage brands spend \$1.6 billion (or more) to market products to children.

**Marketing to children is wrong.** Studies have shown that young children do not understand the persuasive intent of advertising, and can be easily swayed by familiar cartoons on product packaging.

**MOM's is taking action** by eliminating products that feature licensed cartoon characters. We have organic alternatives for every item being discontinued. See customer service for a list.



<sup>198</sup> City of Boston web site: [www.cityofboston.gov](http://www.cityofboston.gov)  
<sup>199</sup> [www.wholesomewave.org](http://www.wholesomewave.org).  
<sup>200</sup> National Association of County and City Health Officials, Model Practice Database.  
<sup>201</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>202</sup> TRF, Approaches to Healthy Shopping and Eating, April 2014, pp. 11-12.  
<sup>203</sup> Motivational interviewing is a directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavioral change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence toward the barrier to change.

## Policy 4: *Encourage local food consumption, and support the local food economy.*

Buying locally grown food has many benefits to residents and the local economy. Buying local keeps more of the money spent within the community, and farmers retain a greater portion of the value-added costs when there are no middlemen. Eating locally grown food helps preserve small-scale local farms and reduces the distance food travels, thus helps protect the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Eating locally is correlated with improved nutrition, increased likelihood of making healthier food choices, obesity prevention, and reduced risk of diet-related chronic disease. People feel more connected to the food they eat when they know where it comes from, and getting to know local producers gives them a stronger sense of place and community pride.

### Strategies:

-  Define “local” to include a specific geographic range, such as 100 miles.
-  Amend County regulations to be more “local food” friendly. Reduce red tape by easing and expediting permits, licensing, and other cumbersome bureaucratic procedures for producing, processing, distributing, marketing, and selling locally grown and processed food.
-  Revise procurement policies, and require that County agencies purchase food from local producers, giving priority to County farmers.
-  At government events, identify local foods and promote local producers.
-  Create and promote “Be a Locavore!”<sup>204</sup> campaign.
-  Initiate/support farm-to-institution, farm-to-school, and farm-to-table programs, and connect farmers to schools, colleges, hospitals, other institutions, and restaurants.
-  Support Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission’s (SMADC) Hub and Spoke program.<sup>205</sup> Encourage churches and other organizations to become “spokes” to distribute locally grown produce.
-  Encourage supermarkets to buy a certain percent of their produce from local farms.
-  Connect local farmers to “mini healthy neighborhood grocery stores” (see Policy 11) and other small markets. Encourage local farmers to grow specialty items sought by these markets.
-  Promote and support direct marketing to consumers, and encourage alternative creative ways to market locally grown foods.
  -  Promote Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations.
  -  Allow roadside farm stands and on-farm sales.
-  Support and promote farmers’ markets.
  -  Reduce farmers’ market vendor fees, and expedite permitting process to attract local farmers to bring their products to the County farmers’ markets, which are struggling to secure local farmers.
  -  Provide assistance with the logistics of farmers’ market operations, such as parking, security, street closures, and bus routes. Promote farmers’ markets with free banners and roadside signage.
  -  Implement farmers’ market strategies in the Urban Agriculture report:<sup>206</sup>
    -  Establish an indoor, daily farmers’ market that operates year round— similar to Eastern Market in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore’s Lexington Market—close to a Metro station.
    -  Help establish and administer affordable farmers’ markets, particularly in food deserts.
    -  Allow farmers’ markets on private property.
    -  Provide free space for farmers’ markets on public and private property.
    -  Create a “mobile market” (farmers’ market on wheels) initiative to bring locally grown produce to neighborhoods.

<sup>204</sup> One who eats foods grown locally whenever possible. Merriam-Webster Dictionary.

<sup>205</sup> The Hub and Spoke model is designed to increase the availability of fresh, locally grown farm food to the hunger community in the five counties of Southern Maryland, including Prince George’s County. [http://www.smadc.com/food\\_farms\\_nutr/hubspoke.html](http://www.smadc.com/food_farms_nutr/hubspoke.html)

<sup>206</sup> [www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban\\_Agriculture.htm](http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban_Agriculture.htm), p. 105

## Learn from promising practices

- 🍎 **Illinois Local Food, Farms, Jobs Act of 2009** set a goal that all state institutions purchase at least 20 percent of food from local sources by 2020.<sup>207</sup>
- 🍎 **In Massachusetts**, state agencies are required to purchase food grown within the state, unless the price is more than 10 percent higher than the price of an equivalent, but out-of-state product.<sup>208</sup>
- 🍎 **Lopez Island School District in Washington** requires that the district food program support and utilize local foods whenever possible, including school-grown products, and menus will be developed to complement local growing seasons and availability of foods.<sup>209</sup>
- 🍎 **Seattle Farm-to-Table Partnership Project**<sup>210</sup> was developed by the municipal government intentionally in lieu of instituting a local food purchasing requirement for the 300 plus child care and senior meal sites that use city funding to purchase and prepare food in some of Seattle's most underserved neighborhoods. The project provides technical support and assistance to link these sites with local farms for the purpose of providing access to healthy, local food. Funded in part by the municipal government, the project focuses on identifying and developing sustainable purchasing models for fresh local produce and providing meal program providers with necessary education and training to implement the purchasing models and make changes to their meal preparation to incorporate seasonal, from-scratch foods. This project is considered a necessary step to help test the feasibility of a local food procurement policy within the city.
- 🍎 **Dane County, Wisconsin** Planning and Development Department established the Institutional Food Market Coalition as an economic development program to expand market opportunities for Dane County and regional growers, and connect large volume buyers with local Wisconsin food, and identify and resolve obstacles to local sourcing.<sup>211</sup>



<sup>207</sup> Illinois Public Act 096-0579

<sup>208</sup> Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 7, Section 23B.

<sup>209</sup> A School's Guide for Purchasing Washington-Grown Food, September 2012, p. 51.

<sup>210</sup> Growing Food Connections, Championing Food Systems Policy Change in Seattle. [growingfoodconnections.org](http://growingfoodconnections.org)

<sup>211</sup> K. Neuner, S. Kelly, and S. Raja, Planning to Eat? Innovative Local Government Plans and Policies to Build Healthy Food Systems in the United States, 2011, pp. 31-32

## Policy 5: Increase sustainable local food production in rural and urban areas.

Locally grown food plays a critical role in ensuring fresh, nutritious, and affordable food to County residents. Growing urban agricultural activities have already proven their effectiveness in providing nutritious food to many residents. Sustainable local food production helps create resilient communities and decreases dependency to outside sources. Relying on food coming from a long distance, especially from other countries, puts the food supply in jeopardy during natural disasters, bad weather conditions, geopolitical tensions, terrorism, and energy crisis. Food shortage causes increased food prices and makes it even more difficult for low-income residents to have access to healthy food.

Prince George's County has a big potential to expand its food production for local consumption. There is enough farmland in the rural parts of the County for relatively large-scale vegetable and fruit production as well as animal husbandry for meat and dairy products. There is enough appropriate land for urban agriculture in more developed areas. In addition to providing easy access to healthy food and its public health implications, local food production is a significant economic development opportunity for the County. It creates jobs, triggers opportunities for value-added production, promotes agritourism, and keeps the money in the County.

### Strategies:

-  Provide incentives to local farmers who produce sustainably grown food for local consumption. These incentives may include allowing new farmers to farm on surplus government properties for free or at a reduced-rent as well as providing crop insurance; long-term, low-interest loans; and technical assistance.
-  Encourage local farmers to grow food year round by providing reduced-price material, technical assistance, and low-interest loans to build and operate hoop houses or green houses.
-  Encourage local farmers to grow high-value specialty crops sought by restaurants as well as specific ethnic vegetables and fruits to meet the needs of growing immigrant population.
-  Promote and support urban farms.
-  Support new farmer education programs.
-  Establish a farm incubator to help new farmers start farming businesses.
-  Preserve land for farming.
-  Allow sales of produce grown at community and home gardens.
-  Ensure living wages for farm workers.
-  Consider policy recommendations (listed below) and implementation strategies provided in *Urban Agriculture: A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George's County*.<sup>212</sup>
-  Recognize urban agriculture as a viable industry, and use it as a tool to develop a robust economy.
-  Integrate urban agriculture into land use planning.
-  Provide access to suitable land for urban agriculture activities.
-  Establish community gardens in all neighborhoods.
-  Encourage new development and redevelopment projects in the Developed and Developing Tiers to include urban agriculture.
-  Provide education on urban agriculture and healthy eating.
-  Promote and support direct marketing opportunities for urban and suburban farmers.
-  Permit backyard chickens in all residential areas.
-  Permit beekeeping in urban and suburban areas.
-  Promote and support composting.
-  Encourage edible landscaping.
-  Amend the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate urban agriculture uses and activities, and remove, reduce, and/or loosen zoning barriers to urban agriculture.



<sup>212</sup> [www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban\\_Agriculture.htm](http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban_Agriculture.htm), pp. 93-113.

## *Learn from promising practices*

-  **Seattle Tilth Farm Works**<sup>213</sup> is a farm incubator operated by Seattle Tilth, a nonprofit organization, on land owned by the Seattle Parks and Recreation. It provides farm business training and support to immigrants, refugees, and people with limited resources in South King County, Washington. After completing a comprehensive educational program that covers farming, business planning, operations, and marketing, participants rent land, equipment, and utilities at subsidized rates. In addition to having hands-on experience growing food on 1/4-acre plots using organic practices and on-site mentorship from experienced farmers, graduates receive market and distribution support and sell their products at farm stands and CSA.
-  **North Carolina Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) programs**<sup>214</sup> are established at the county or municipal level to protect farmland from non-farm development. Landowners sign a conservation agreement that limits the non-farm uses and development on the property for a period of 10 years. While VAD agreements are revocable, EVAD agreements are irrevocable and are automatically renewable for a three-year term. Landowners can benefit in a number of ways in exchange for voluntarily restricting non-farm development and uses on their property for 10 years. Participants in an EVAD conservation agreement are eligible to receive a higher percentage of cost-share funds under the Agriculture Cost Share Program. They may receive up to 25 percent of gross sales from the sale of non-farm products, while still maintaining its zoning exemption as a bona fide farm. Farmers who are farming land subject to an EVAD agreement receive priority consideration for grant awards.
-  **Cincinnati Health Department's Urban Farming Program** increases access to healthful foods, addresses issues of health disparities, and works to establish local food systems. The Urban Farming Program recognizes urban agriculture as an innovative and comprehensive approach to improving the health of social, ecological, and economic systems. It also helps increase physical activity, community involvement, and education of healthful lifestyle practices and eating habits. Since its inception in 2010, the practice of urban agriculture has rapidly expanded throughout Cincinnati's many neighborhoods. Through community engagement and small-scale intensive farming methods, seven community-based farms are able to provide nutritious foods to neighborhood residents, community recreation centers, community food pantries, and local senior centers. The distribution process is unregulated, meaning the food is available to all community members regardless of participation. There are no barriers or fencing restricting access to each site, and community members are trained on proper harvesting techniques and sustainable gardening practices. In 2012, six community-based farms in Cincinnati provided thousands of pounds of fresh produce to residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods.<sup>215</sup>

<sup>213</sup> [www.seattletilth.org/about/seattletilthfarmworks](http://www.seattletilth.org/about/seattletilthfarmworks)

<sup>214</sup> North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Fund. [www.ncadfp.org](http://www.ncadfp.org)

<sup>215</sup> City of Cincinnati, Creating Healthy Communities. [www.healthy.ohio.gov](http://www.healthy.ohio.gov) and [www.odh.ohio.gov](http://www.odh.ohio.gov).

## Policy 6: *Establish a food hub in the County to support local and regional food distribution and marketing.*

A food hub is an innovative, value chain-based business model that strives to achieve triple bottom line (economic, social, and environmental) impacts by offering a suite of services to producers, buyers, and the wider community. It coordinates aggregation, distribution, and marketing of locally produced foods from multiple producers to multiple markets. A food hub actively seeks to provide new market outlets for small and mid-sized local producers and ensures that they can meet the buyer requirements and get a good price for their products.<sup>216</sup>

Prince George's County is located in an ideal place for a regional food hub due to its strategic location next to the nation's capital and its excellent transportation routes. A food hub is an economic development opportunity for the County. It will create jobs, promote entrepreneurship, and create relationships with regional businesses. It will expand economic opportunity for local and regional sustainable growers and value-added producers as well as increase consumer access to locally grown healthy food.

### Strategies:

-  Partner with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission to establish a regional food hub.
-  Convert the underutilized Cheltenham farmers' market/auction facility into a distribution and processing facility for the food hub. (See Policy 7 on page 138.)
-  Apply for various federal programs that fund and provide technical assistance for food hubs to finance the food hub and get support for its development.



Cropped from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service food hubs poster.

<sup>216</sup> USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Regional Food Hub Resource Guide. April 2012.

## Learn from promising practices

 **Local Food Hub (LFH) in Charlottesville, Virginia**, partners with farmers to increase community access to local food. It offers a smarter, healthier alternative to traditional agribusiness models by reinstating small farms as the food source for the community. It provides support services, infrastructure, and market opportunities to farmers that lead to the direct distribution of fresh high-quality food to institutions, retailers, restaurants, and schools. Their Farm to School Program breaks down the barriers to the consumption of and knowledge about farm sourced food in schools, and Community Partners Program opens new avenues for access to fresh local food. It donates large amounts of produce, including 25 percent of the organic produce from its own six cultivated acres at the educational farm, to area food banks, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters. In addition to its work with more than 70 area public schools, LFH collaborates with many local organizations and businesses, including the Keany Produce Company based in Prince George's County. In the first three years of its operation, its gross sales increased from \$75,000 in 2009 to \$675,000 in 2011. LFH ensures that 80 percent of the price paid by buyers goes back to the farmer. LFH's producers have reported that they increased their farm sales by an average of 25 percent since working with the food hub, and 60 percent reported that they plan to increase production.

*“Local Food Hub provided a good opportunity to open up a market that was not available to us otherwise, and as a result, we have expanded production of our crops considerably and hired more folks due to increased demand.”*

*—Whitney Critzer,  
Critzer Family Farm*

 **Eastern Carolina Organics (ECO) in Pittsboro, North Carolina**, is a food hub formed by a local nonprofit Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. ECO markets and distributes local organic produce from 40 farmers to more than 150 customers, including grocery stores, food cooperatives, buying clubs, restaurants, school food-service providers, and colleges and universities. By pooling diverse harvests from farmers in several regions of North Carolina, they are able to meet the demand for a steady stream of high-quality local, organic, seasonal food choices throughout the year. They enable participating organic growers to profitably sell their products and support efforts to improve production and packaging techniques. They collaborate with customers and tailor production to the local market demand. They also educate the public about the benefits of buying local, organic produce.

 **Baltimore Food Hub in Baltimore, Maryland**, is a close-to-home example of a major food hub to be opened in 2016. It is being built on an old city water pumping station. The first phase of the project will include a kitchen incubator, a working farm, a classroom, and a produce market. Money for the \$5.7 million first phase of the project is coming from a combination of private grants and state and federal funds. The \$10.6 million second phase will include a canning facility and renovation of the historic buildings with Historic Tax Credits, which will provide another 30,000 square feet of space to be used for offices, more markets, and additional food production space. The hub is projected to create about 100 jobs. See Appendix 20 for more information on the Baltimore Food Hub.

## **Policy 7: *Promote local food processing and invest in food processing infrastructure.***

Food processing is critical to building a sustainable local food system and increasing economic development opportunities. Even minimal processing of foods, such as washing and chopping vegetables, adds value and enables producers to sell their products for a higher price. Food processing activities create jobs, allow increased utilization of raw products, and create less waste. It also has an economic multiplier impact on the local community, where more money is available to spend locally.

Local farmers who want to add value to their products by doing small processing, as well as other small value-added producers who want to start a business in the County, have difficulty pursuing their endeavors due to lack of required infrastructure.<sup>217</sup> There is a great need for basic food processing infrastructure in the County, which is essential to augment the economic impact of the local food production.

### **Strategies:**

-  Promote value-added processing, and lift barriers for production, distribution, and sales of value-added products by revisiting existing regulations.
-  Convert the underutilized Cheltenham farmers' market/auction facility into a shared-use food processing and distribution facility, which may include space for training/workshops, cold storage, washing/chopping, small-scale slaughtering, packaging, and a commercial kitchen.
-  Provide funding support to local farmers to purchase mobile food processing facilities, freezers, and coolers.
-  Establish a community kitchen incubator. Many people who are willing to operate small-scale food processing businesses in the County cannot find commercial kitchens for production and end up going to neighboring counties; a loss of economic development opportunity.
-  Rent existing commercial kitchens in government facilities to small value-added food processors, and promote healthy cooking.
-  Ensure that food processing facilities should be permitted in all industrial zones as well as in agricultural and commercial zones, depending on their type.
-  Expand the locations where small-scale, value-added food production is permitted.
-  Get Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation involved in promoting local food processing.

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<sup>217</sup> In 2014, the Food Equity Council held a listening session with existing value-added producers and others who want to start a small food processing business in the County. The testimonies revealed that due to the lack of processing facilities and/or zoning restrictions the County is losing business development and expansion opportunities.

## Learn from promising practices

- 🍎 **Vermont Food Venture Center in Hardwick**<sup>218</sup> is a food processing facility and kitchen incubator with dry/cold storage, three kitchens, processing equipment, and a loading dock. It also offers consulting, workshops, food safety certification, packaging, distribution, and delivery services.
- 🍎 **KASANA Collective in Milwaukee, Wisconsin**,<sup>219</sup> is a food processing facility that includes cooking and preparation areas as well as a cooler, freezer, dry storage areas, a dishwashing room, and a loading dock. Independent business owners rent out the work areas at an hourly rate and share the production space. Participants create their own products, host their own events, and market through KASANA Collective's retail space and marketing campaigns.
- 🍎 **Montgomery County, Maryland's kitchen incubator project**<sup>220</sup> envisioned as a way to help entrepreneurs take advantage of the growing demand for artisan food and the expanding buy-local movement. The kitchen incubator will provide equipment and workspace, technical and business training, and help companies gain access to new markets. This facility is expected to foster the growth of small businesses and provide new workforce opportunities for residents.



<sup>218</sup> [www.hardwickagriculture.org/for-food-businesses/vermont-food-venture-center](http://www.hardwickagriculture.org/for-food-businesses/vermont-food-venture-center)

<sup>219</sup> [www.kasana-mke.com/collective-kitchen/](http://www.kasana-mke.com/collective-kitchen/)

<sup>220</sup> [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov)

## **Policy 8: Increase sale of quality, healthy fresh foods at existing food retail outlets, and decrease unhealthy options.**

One of the major findings of this research study is that there are more than enough supermarkets in the study area, but access to healthy food is still a problem due to lack of quality and uneven distribution of supermarkets. Providing access to healthy food for all cannot be accomplished by opening new supermarkets. One of the easiest, quickest, and least expensive ways to accomplish this goal is to increase the healthy foods sold at existing food retail outlets.

Developing criteria for healthy foods and establishing minimum standards for stores to carry them can significantly increase availability of healthy foods in all neighborhoods and positively impact health outcomes. Similarly, foods served at restaurants and carry-out places can be improved by reducing unhealthy options and adding healthier items to the menus. Many of the strategies listed below may be implemented by developing partnerships with food retail outlets, providing incentives, educating customers, and using regulatory tools.

### **Strategies:**

-  Encourage supermarkets to stock a certain amount of fresh fruits and vegetables and whole foods, and limit the amount of sugar-added drinks and items with high-sodium and saturated fat.
-  Launch a “healthy small markets” program to encourage small markets to carry healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, especially in underserved communities. Display the County’s “healthy eating” logo on the entrance door of these stores, and include them in the healthy foods directory.
-  Partner with food retailers to promote healthy foods at supermarkets and small markets by:
  -  Placing healthy food options at store entrances and other high visibility areas
  -  Selling ready-to-eat and pre-cut fruits and vegetables
  -  Creating promotional shelf space designated for healthy food items
  -  Stocking healthy options, such as fresh fruit, nuts, and 100 percent fruit juice, at check-out aisles
  -  Posting and distributing promotional materials about healthy eating
  -  Advertising healthy food options in their circulars
-  Require all vending machines and concession stands in schools and government owned/operated facilities to carry mostly healthy foods and drinks. Limit sale of sugary soft drinks, snacks with high sodium or sugar, and high calorie foods with saturated fat at these places.
-  Create a healthy carry-out program to increase healthy food items on the menus and/or use healthier ingredients at carry-out places. Display the County’s “healthy eating” logo on the entrance door of these stores. Discourage large portions of inexpensive high-calorie foods.
-  Launch a “healthy menu” campaign to encourage both sit-down and fast food restaurants to include healthy menu options, reduce portion sizes, and establish a maximum calorie limit for entrees.
-  Discourage self-service sugary drink machines, free refills, and oversize sugary drinks at restaurants and carry-out places.
-  Provide tax incentives to food retail outlets that carry healthy food items in underserved communities.



## Learn from promising practices

 **Philadelphia's Healthy Corner Store initiative** is a successful model for increasing the availability of healthy food in corner stores. Initiated in 2004 as a pilot project by The Food Trust and expanded later with the involvement of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative builds relationships with store owners and



asks them to make gradual changes with support and training. With this assistance, store owners are willing to sell healthy products and believe these changes can be sustainable and profitable. Each store in the Healthy Corner Store Network added a minimum of four new products with at



least two healthy products in at least two food categories including: fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, lean meats, and whole grains. Through the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, stores in the network have received marketing materials, training, and, in some cases, equipment to transform the businesses into health-promoting food retailers.<sup>221</sup>

 **Baltimore Healthy Carryout (BHC) Project** was created to address concerns regarding low-income African Americans in Baltimore consuming a significant portion of their calories from carryout facilities or restaurants. These establishments typically provide foods high in calories, sugar, fat, and sodium. BHC staff worked closely with restaurant owners to implement changes to incorporate more healthy foods into their menus gradually over time. By holding discussions with community members, BHC staff members were able to gauge desired healthy foods. These discussions guided the restaurant owners toward culturally and seasonally acceptable side options. The project addressed concerns about potential profit loss by helping owners with promotion through the use of more durable signs and aesthetically-improved menu boards and posters that highlighted healthy food choices.<sup>222</sup>

 **Louisville, Kentucky's Healthy in a Hurry Corner Store initiative**<sup>223</sup> addresses the lack of fresh produce and vegetables in low-income areas. YMCA partnered with the Center for Healthy Equity and the Louisville Department of Public Health and Wellness to leverage Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant funding to provide store owners refrigeration, signage, marketing, start-up inventory, and ongoing technical assistance. Store owners are making a commitment to hire community members in the neighborhood to assist with produce management.

<sup>221</sup> The Food Trust, Philadelphia's Healthy Corner Store Initiative, 2010-2012. [thefoodtrust.org](http://thefoodtrust.org)

<sup>222</sup> Baltimore Healthy Carryout Project. Health Matters in VC, Promising Practices. [www.healthmattersinvc.org](http://www.healthmattersinvc.org)

<sup>223</sup> YMCA of Greater Louisville, Healthy in a Hurry Cornerstores. [www.ymcalsouthern.org](http://www.ymcalsouthern.org)

 **King County/Seattle, Washington**, is using a dynamic approach to increase healthy food choices by incorporating healthy foods into existing stores. Encouraged by Seattle Public Housing Authority, High Point community members surveyed their neighbors on if they would buy fresh produce at the local Walgreens if it were offered. The survey came back indicating a strong demand for produce, and within a week, fruits and vegetables were for sale at Walgreens. High demand for the new options has recently prompted the store to purchase a refrigerated display for the produce, and double their weekly produce deliveries from once to twice per week.<sup>224</sup>

 **In Southern California, the Blue Zones Project**<sup>225</sup> initiated by Healthways, a well-being improvement company in partnership with Beach Cities Health District, is working with restaurants and grocery stores throughout the Beach Cities to give customers more options to make healthier choices. The Blue Zones Project is a communitywide approach to creating healthier and more productive citizens. Participating restaurants and grocery stores display a Blue Zones decal.



 **Baker County, Florida, Healthy Choice Restaurant Program (HCRP)** was initiated by the Baker County Health Department to promote and provide healthy food choices for the county residents. The goal of the program was to reduce the rise of overweight and obesity among children. Fifteen restaurants participated in HCRP. They offered menu options, including smaller portion sizes (take half home), heart-healthy alternatives, grilled versus fried, and low-fat and low-calorie substitutions. Participating restaurants received table tents, placemats, crayons, window decals, and menu stickers to promote healthy alternatives. They were also advertised in local newspapers.<sup>226</sup>

 **Good Fit Meals program in Idaho** was developed as a result of a strategic partnership of the Central District Health Department (CDHD) and Treasure Valley area McDonald's to market healthy meal options and promote balanced, active lifestyles to Idaho McDonald's customers. The CDHD nutritionists identify wholesome and balanced meal choices for the McDonald's Good Fit Meals menu. Each meal must serve to increase daily intake of nuts, seeds, beans, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy servings and meet the maximum calorie, fat, and sodium requirements.<sup>227</sup>

 **The Smart Meal Seal program in Colorado** is designed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to improve the eating habits of individuals who frequently dine out. The Smart Meal™ Seal program uses point-of-purchase labeling combined with outreach and education to market/promote healthier menu options in restaurants, and the selection of healthier options by restaurant customers. Smart Meal Seal was adopted in all kinds of restaurants located in communities across Colorado, including two large, national chains, one of which is McDonalds; one international ski resort; and several, small, single-location restaurants. The program's easily recognizable decals, referred to as "seals," are displayed on front entrance doors of restaurants and placed on menus next to approved items. The intervention was effective in McDonald's restaurants in increasing

<sup>224</sup> Healthy Kids Healthy Communities Case Examples: Healthy Corner Stores and "Healthy Foods Here" in Seattle in Let's Move! Blog. [www.letsmove.gov/blog](http://www.letsmove.gov/blog)

<sup>225</sup> Beach Cities Health District. [www.bchd.org](http://www.bchd.org)

<sup>226</sup> National Association of County and City Health Officials, Model Practice Database.

<sup>227</sup> Central District Health Department. [www.cdhc.idaho.gov](http://www.cdhc.idaho.gov)

sales of Smart Meal and other healthier food options and decreasing sales of non-Smart Meal items.<sup>228</sup>

 **Change the Future West Virginia**<sup>229</sup> is an initiative of the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department funded by the CDC Community Transformation grant. Change the Future WV assists convenience stores in carrying fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices to improve the access and affordability to the impoverished people and encourages grocery stores to host healthy checkout aisles that promote healthy options. Participating stores sign agreements and receive signage and displays to promote making the healthy choice the easy choice. Additionally, the initiative develops contacts with produce distributors willing to sell smaller portions to convenience stores at wholesale prices.<sup>230</sup>

 **Solano County, California**, requires 50 percent of food and beverages sold through vending machines on county property to meet nutrition standards. Healthier items must be priced less than or equivalent to items that do not meet the standards. Healthier items also must be placed in the top third of the vending machine to increase visibility. In addition, marketing of unhealthy food items on or around the vending machine is prohibited.<sup>231</sup>



<sup>228</sup> The Center for Training and Research Translation. [www.centertrt.org](http://www.centertrt.org)

<sup>229</sup> National Association of County and City Health Officials, Model Practice Database.

<sup>230</sup> [www.changethefuture.wv.gov](http://www.changethefuture.wv.gov)

<sup>231</sup> [www.cspinet.org](http://www.cspinet.org)

## Policy 9: Encourage alternative food retail models to improve healthy food access.

The food retail environment has an influence on the eating habits of the community and thus affects health outcomes. The easily accessible food retail stores in a given neighborhood are usually convenience stores and gas station stores, where healthy food options are none or scarce. Supermarkets are the conventional places to shop for healthier food. However, supermarkets are usually located in shopping centers and away from residential areas, thus making physical access inconvenient, especially for those who do not drive. To ensure equitable access to healthy food, alternative food retail models should be explored and made available in neighborhoods. Alternative models include nontraditional forms of food retail that make healthy food access more convenient by bringing fresh nutritious food to residents in underserved communities.

### Strategies:

-  Allow and promote mobile healthy food markets, particularly in underserved communities. A mobile food market can be a cart, truck, bus, or any other vehicle and must carry only fresh fruits and vegetables and other essential healthy food items. A mobile food market provides the most convenient access to healthy food. Bringing healthy food to the doorsteps of elderly and physically challenged people, who cannot travel to food stores as well as busy people who do not have time to shop, helps increase healthy eating.
-  Establish an indoor, daily food market that operates year-round and is close to a Metro station. This market may have producer and non-producer vendors, but all food vendors must sell mostly healthy food items. Explore the suitability of the County-owned land in Suitland for such a market.
-  Partner with a supermarket retailer to pilot an innovative grocery store model that provides smaller size stores in addition to their regular stores. Smaller stores should be located in residential neighborhoods where operation of large supermarkets is not feasible. These smaller stores may be the size of a large convenience store, but they would primarily carry healthy foods of the same quality, variety, and price as larger supermarkets of the same retailer.
-  Allow and promote healthy prepared food trucks to provide healthy food options to those who prefer not to cook.
-  Encourage the establishment and expansion of food co-ops in the underserved neighborhoods by providing financing and development incentives and business training to residents.
-  Increase food shopping alternatives on-line and by phone for residents who have difficulty traveling to grocery stores.
  -  Encourage grocery stores to provide home delivery service. Provide vouchers to seniors and disabled residents to cover delivery cost.
  -  In collaboration with the Memorial Library System and M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation, initiate a program to help low-income residents and seniors to order and receive groceries at libraries and community centers using public computers. Develop a partnership with supermarkets to make weekly free deliveries to these locations.
-  Create an interactive on-line database as well as a phone app to locate healthy food outlets.



Photo by Deniz Selman

## Learn from promising practices

 **The Arcadia Mobile Market in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area**<sup>232</sup> is a farm stand-on-wheels that distributes local, sustainably produced food for affordable prices to underserved communities. It had one stop in Prince George's County in 2014 at Thomas Stone Elementary School in Mount Rainier. Arcadia Mobile Market accepts federal food assistance benefits and doubles them through a "Bonus Bucks" program and provides educational resources for food preparation.



Photo by Yona Sipos

 **New York City Green Carts**<sup>233</sup> are mobile food carts that offer fresh produce in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy foods. A Green Cart only sells fresh fruits and vegetables.

 **Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia,**<sup>234</sup> **Lexington Market in Baltimore,**<sup>235</sup> and **Eastern Market in Washington, D.C.,**<sup>236</sup> are all indoor year-round markets with multiple producer and non-producer vendors selling fresh produce, meat, dairy products, and other food items. These markets not only provide affordable healthy food to local residents but also serve as regional destinations that attract locals and tourists alike.



 **Migros supermarkets in Turkey**<sup>237,238</sup> have five size categories:

-  **Migros Jet** is the smallest "grab and go" neighborhood market that offers minimum selection of the most basic food items.
-  **M (One M) Migros** supermarkets are located in residential neighborhoods and carry basic groceries and a limited number of non-food products.
-  **MM (Two M) Migros** stores are located on main arterials and offer a wider range of non-food articles besides the basic groceries.
-  **MMM (Three M) Migros** stores are located on major intersections or shopping centers and carry a larger product spectrum ranging from stationery to textile products, electric household appliances to bakeries, books, and cosmetics.
-  **5M Migros** stores are hypermarkets located usually in provincial or resort towns that offer the widest selection.



<sup>232</sup> <http://arcadiafood.org/programs/mobile-market>

<sup>233</sup> [www.nyc.gov/greencarts](http://www.nyc.gov/greencarts)

<sup>234</sup> <http://readingterminalmarket.org>

<sup>235</sup> [www.facebook.com/LexingtonMarket](http://www.facebook.com/LexingtonMarket)

<sup>236</sup> [www.facebook.com/EasternMarketDC](http://www.facebook.com/EasternMarketDC)

<sup>237</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migros\\_Türk](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migros_Türk)

<sup>238</sup> Up to the 1970s, Migros also operated mobile food trucks serving many neighborhoods in Istanbul.

 **Wal-Mart**<sup>239</sup> in the U.S.A. has a similar model, but not all types exist everywhere:

-  **Wal-Mart Supercenters** are hypermarkets with an average 187,000 square feet, selling 142,000 items.
-  **Wal-Mart Discount Stores** are discount department stores with an average 107,000 square feet selling 120,000 items.
-  **Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market** is a chain of grocery stores that average 42,000 square feet, offering 29,000 items.
-  **Wal-Mart Express** is a chain of smaller discount stores with an average 15,000 square feet, offering a range of services from groceries to check cashing and gasoline service.
-  **Wal-Mart on Campus convenience stores** are 2,500 square feet and located on or near college campuses.

 **Food trucks in Boston** help activate neighborhoods and create a new and vibrant industry across the city. The City of Boston amended the city code to streamline and expedite the permitting process and make it easier to

launch food truck businesses. In 2011, the City of Boston held a Food Truck Challenge competition to inspire interest in mobile food vending and encourage small entrepreneurs to participate in a healthy food conversation. In a three-round competition, residents voted on their favorite vendor proposals based on menu, logo, and name, and a “celebrity” panel of judges evaluated each food truck concept for its



dietary health, reasonableness of pricing, environmental sustainability, uniqueness, and community engagement. The winners received technical assistance, permitting guidance, and assistance applying for low-interest loans from the city to set up their mobile vending operations. Food trucks operating on public property or street right-of-ways are required to sell healthy menu items and abide the Rethink Your Drink campaign.<sup>240</sup>

 **The Oklahoma Food Cooperative** is running an Internet-based buying club. It is a producer- and consumer-owned cooperative with 200 producer members selling more than 6,000 items to 3,800 co-op members. Members order using an Internet portal, farmers bring their products to a central drop-off location, and volunteers, who are compensated with coupons redeemable for goods sold through the co-op, distribute the food monthly across Oklahoma using 48 distribution routes.<sup>241</sup>

 **Baltimore’s Baltimarket virtual supermarket program** allows residents, especially in neighborhoods with limited food options, to access healthy foods at supermarket prices by ordering groceries on-line for delivery with no registration or delivery fees.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>239</sup> [www.walmart.com](http://www.walmart.com); “Walmart Now Has Six Types of Stores.” 24/7 Wall St., March 22, 2014; and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walmart>

<sup>240</sup> City of Boston web site: [www.cityofboston.gov](http://www.cityofboston.gov) and “The Food Truck Challenge” Edible Boston at [www.edibleboston.com/the-boston-challenge](http://www.edibleboston.com/the-boston-challenge)

<sup>241</sup> USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Moving Food Along the Value Chain: Innovations in Regional Food Distribution, March 2012, pp.27-38.

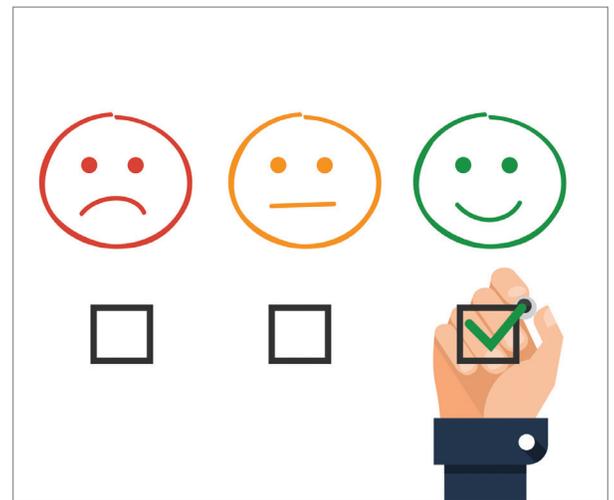
<sup>242</sup> [www.baltimarket.org/virtual-supermarket/](http://www.baltimarket.org/virtual-supermarket/)

## Policy 10: *Ensure good quality food, a safe and clean environment, and excellent customer service at supermarkets.*

One of the major findings of this research study is the dissatisfaction of residents with the majority of supermarkets in the study area. On multiple occasions, the residents complained about the poor quality of food, unpleasant environment, and poor customer service at local supermarkets. They also mentioned their willingness to work together with the government and to ensure better supermarket quality. There are more than enough supermarkets in the study area. Increasing the quality of existing supermarkets to meet the needs of residents is easier and more feasible than bringing in new ones.

### Strategies:

-  Partner with civic and neighborhood organizations to recruit volunteers to be “eyes” of the community and to do routine quality checks, similar to “mystery shoppers,” and report the results to the County.
-  Create a quality rating system similar to Zagat that includes three categories: food, store environment, and customer service. Set standards for all three, and ask the community volunteers to rate (poor, fair, or good) each category. Post the ratings of each store on the entrance door and the list of store ratings on the County web site.
-  Encourage supermarkets to provide customer service training to all employees. Use workforce development programs to ensure that supermarkets develop a qualified staff.
-  Encourage chain supermarkets to provide the same quality of food at all stores, and avoid geographic inequalities.
-  Create communication channels between customers and supermarkets.
-  Provide tax incentives to supermarkets to improve store environment.



### *Learn from promising practices:*

-  **South Carolina Food Grades<sup>190</sup>** is a rating system for restaurants, delis, school cafeterias, grocery stores, retail meat markets, bakeries, and seafood markets. The Health Department inspectors give points to these establishments for sanitation and food safety. Points are converted into Grades A, B, and C, which correspond to “acceptable to very good,” “marginal to acceptable,” and “poor to marginal,” respectively. All establishments are required to post their most recent rating signs at their facility.

<sup>190</sup> South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. [www.scdhec.gov](http://www.scdhec.gov)

## **Policy 11: Launch a “mini healthy neighborhood grocery store” initiative to make healthy foods accessible within residential neighborhoods.**

“Mini healthy neighborhood grocery store” is a different concept than healthy corner stores. These are new grocery stores as infill development within existing residential areas or part of new subdivisions. These stores should be seen as amenities, such as a playground or open space in each neighborhood. A playground serves only a certain population group, but these stores serve the whole population, because everybody eats. A grocery store within walking distance inside a subdivision is a concept of neo-traditional neighborhood design. It is something that will increase the quality of life in many ways. The nearest store to where people live will sell healthy food; people will get exercise walking to the store and socialize more; and jobs will be created within the neighborhood, which is ideal to those without cars who otherwise cannot get a job. One little store may make a big impact on the economy, environment, community, and public health.

### **Strategies:**

-  Allow mini grocery stores that sell healthy foods within residential neighborhoods where there are no grocery stores either due to zoning or market conditions.
-  Consider zoning incentives that would encourage the provision of land for mini grocery stores in areas at least one mile from the nearest grocery store.
-  Use tax credit incentives to attract and support mini healthy neighborhood grocery stores.
-  Require that 80 percent of the products sold at these stores be food items and that at least 20 percent of food items be fresh fruits and vegetables.
-  Encourage these stores to carry locally grown produce, and connect them with local farmers.
-  Limit sales of food items with low-nutritious value at these stores.
-  Encourage smaller size markets of the innovative grocery store model (see Policy 9 page 144) to locate in residential neighborhoods as mini healthy neighborhood grocery stores.
-  Encourage co-ops to operate in the neighborhoods as mini stores.
-  In mid- to high-rise residential buildings, encourage grocery stores to be on the ground level.



### *Learn from promising practices:*

 **Village Market in Portland, Oregon**, is a small healthy neighborhood grocery store in the 854-unit New Columbia development. The Housing Authority of Portland, now called Home Forward, replaced a housing project of New Columbia with a livable, walkable mix-income neighborhood, which includes parks, a school, and retail space. Planners at Home Forward reached out to the nonprofit Village Gardens, which runs a community garden program and co-operates an organic farm, to open a healthy neighborhood store. Village Garden engaged the community in the planning of the Village Market, which is now operating in this neighborhood more than a mile away from the nearest supermarket. Village Market carries affordable fresh produce, some of which come from Village Garden's youth farm, freshly made healthy sandwiches, and other healthy foods. The store carries home-country favorites for immigrant clientele and foods approved by the federal nutrition program WIC.<sup>243</sup>

 **The Food Retail Expansion to Support Health, or FRESH, Program in New York City** facilitates the development of stores selling a full range of food products with an emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, and other perishable goods. Stores that benefit from the program must be located in an eligible underserved area and must provide a minimum of 6,000 square feet of retail space; at least 50 percent of retail space for food products intended for home preparation, consumption, and utilization; at least 30 percent of retail space for perishable goods that may include dairy, fresh produce, fresh meats, poultry, fish, and frozen foods; and at least 500 square feet of retail space for fresh produce. The program includes financial incentives (real estate tax reductions, sales tax exemption, and mortgage recording tax deferral), zoning incentives (additional development rights in mixed residential development and reduction in required parking), and other incentives (loan and grant financing through the New York Healthy Food & Healthy Communities Fund and energy efficiency benefits through programs offered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority).<sup>244</sup>

 **State of Michigan** provides property tax incentives up to 10 years for retail food establishments that expand, improve, or open in underserved areas. To qualify, stores must offer USDA-inspected meat and poultry products, fresh fruits and vegetables, and dairy products. At least 75 percent of the property must be used to sell items typically sold in full-service food stores.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>243</sup> "An emerging convenience store mode; holds community at its core," in Edible Portland, 2013.

<sup>244</sup> New York City Department of City Planning and New York City Economic Development Corporation.

<sup>245</sup> State of Michigan, Public Act 231 of 2008.

## Policy 12: Looking through an equity lens, rethinking zoning with food and health in mind to make access to healthy food easier.

Zoning is an important policy tool to address inequities associated with food retail environment and high diet-related disease rates in underserved communities. Local governments often use zoning for protecting and promoting public health. Zoning may promote better access to fresh, nutritious foods and decrease availability and appeal of unhealthy foods, which potentially improve health outcomes. The Zoning Ordinance rewrite process is an opportunity for the County to evaluate existing regulations and make necessary changes to provide equitable access to healthy food for everybody.

### Strategies:

-  Define different types of food retail outlets (which are now all lumped together under “food and beverage stores”), reevaluate the zones where these uses are permitted, and make necessary adjustments to ensure an equitable distribution of healthy food retail outlets in the County, so that every neighborhood has an equitable access to healthy food.
-  Consider creating a floating grocery store zone and/or permit small-scale healthy food retailers in all residential zones. (See Policy 11 on page 148.)
-  Promote mixed-use neighborhoods where food retail and residential uses are within close proximity to one another, and encourage medium- to high-density residential buildings to have food retail outlets within the same building.
-  Create “Healthy Food Zones” by prohibiting food retail outlets that carry unhealthy snacks and foods within a certain distance of schools and playgrounds.
-  Limit drive-through fast food restaurants and concentration of fast food and carry out places that carry primarily unhealthy food options.
-  Make necessary changes to permit conventional and innovative agricultural activities, including food production and processing and sales of local produce, in all rural and appropriate urban areas.
-  Consider the policy recommendation and strategies on zoning in *Urban Agriculture: A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George’s County*:<sup>246</sup>

**Policy:** Amend the Zoning Ordinance to accommodate urban agriculture uses and activities, and remove, reduce, and/or loosen zoning barriers to urban agriculture.

### Strategies:

-  Add a definition of “urban agriculture” to the Zoning Ordinance.
-  Create a floating “Urban Agriculture” (UA) zone for entrepreneurial urban farms.
-  Add an “urban agriculture” use and subcategories—based on urban agriculture types and activities—to the Use Table.
-  Allow the urban agriculture use in all zones and in all tiers, provided that different rules may apply to different types and in different zones.
  -  Permit backyard chickens (only egg-laying hens) and other poultry in all zones with certain restrictions.
  -  Permit apiaries (honeybees only) in all zones with certain restrictions.
  -  Permit small farm animals, particularly goats, in most residential and mixed-use zones and all commercial and industrial zones with certain restrictions.
  -  Permit seafood production (aquaculture and aquaponics) in most residential and mixed-use zones and all commercial and industrial zones.
  -  Permit composting activity in all zones with certain restrictions.
  -  Allow on-site food processing on urban farms and, to a certain extent, in community gardens.
  -  Allow on-site sales at urban farms, community gardens, and market gardens.
  -  Allow farmers’ markets on private property.
  -  Allow use of commercial and industrial buildings, particularly warehouses, for urban agricultural activity.
  -  Allow rooftop gardens and farms.
  -  Allow vertical farms.
  -  Allow structures required for innovative growing techniques, such as hoop houses, aquaponics, and aeroponics.

<sup>246</sup> [www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban\\_Agriculture.htm](http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban_Agriculture.htm), p. 113.

## Learn from promising practices

-  **In Wisconsin**, the state law requires that all municipalities with 12,500 or more people adopt zoning rules that ensure mixed use neighborhoods where grocery stores, butcher shops, bakeries, restaurants (but no drive-thru), cafes, coffee shops, and neighborhood bars and pubs are within walkable distance.<sup>247</sup>
-  **Portland, Oregon**, establishes a “neighborhood commercial zone” that encourages small-scale retail and service uses like coffee shops and drug stores within residential areas.<sup>248</sup>
-  **Detroit, Michigan**, prohibits fast food restaurants and carry-out places within 500 feet of any school,<sup>249</sup> and the **City of Arden Hills, Minnesota**, prohibits fast food restaurants within 400 feet of any public, private, and parochial school; church; public recreation area; or any residentially zoned property.<sup>250</sup>
-  **San Francisco, California**, does not permit fast food restaurants in certain neighborhoods; **Berkeley, California**, limits the number of fast food restaurants and carry-out places in one commercial district; and **Bainbridge Island, Washington**, has density limitation to certain types of take-out restaurants.<sup>251</sup> **Los Angeles, California**, does not permit the development of stand-alone fast food restaurants within a half-mile of an existing establishment in targeted neighborhoods.<sup>252</sup> **Concord, Massachusetts**, has an outright ban on all drive-in or fast food restaurants.<sup>253</sup>
-  **Kansas City, Missouri’s** zoning code allows the on-site sale of food and/or horticultural produce grown in residential zoning districts. This includes produce grown in home and community gardens.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>247</sup> The Comprehensive Planning Law for Wisconsin, Chapter 66.1001. The University of Wisconsin Extension Program created a model “Traditional Neighborhood Design” ordinance that municipalities can adapt to their particular situation.

<sup>248</sup> Heather Wooten, Ian McLaughlin, Lisa Chen, Christine Fry, Catherine Mongeon, and Samantha Graff, “Zoning and Licensing to Regulate the Retail Environment and Achieve Public Health Goals.” Duke Forum for Law & Social Change Vol. 5:65, 2013, p.84.

<sup>249</sup> Detroit, Michigan, Municipal Code § 61-12-91 (2008).

<sup>250</sup> Arden Hills, Minn., Municipal Code § 1325.04(1)(A) (2006).

<sup>251</sup> ICMA, Community Health and Food Access: The Local Government Role, pp. 20-21.

<sup>252</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Division of Community Health, A Practitioner’s Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease, 2013, p. 23.

<sup>253</sup> Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Concord, MA, Section 4.7.1.

<sup>254</sup> K. Neuner, S. Kelly, and S. Raja, Planning to Eat? Innovative Local Government Plans and Policies to Build Healthy Food Systems in the United States, 2011, pp.18-19.

### Policy 13: *Improve transportation options to healthy food outlets.*

For residents without cars or access to reliable and affordable public transportation that connects them to healthy food outlets, physical access becomes a significant barrier to healthy eating. Improving transportation options to and from such food outlets as supermarkets and farmers' markets increases a community's access to healthy foods. The cost of providing public transportation services most likely will offset the increased spending on healthcare and shortened lifespan of residents due to eating unhealthy foods. Providing pedestrian and bicycle friendly safe routes to connect residential neighborhoods to food retail stores not only enables access to healthy food but also promotes physical activity while contributing to overall neighborhood safety and revitalization.

#### Strategies:

-  Design bus routes to facilitate access to supermarkets, farmers' markets, and other healthy food destinations.
-  Increase frequency of buses, especially on the weekends. Arrange bus schedules to accommodate the needs of consumers, and coordinate with farmers' market schedules.
-  In partnership with supermarkets, develop safe, affordable, and convenient shuttle services to supermarkets for residents, especially for elderly and disabled, who do not have transportation alternatives.
-  Create safe routes to healthy food markets by ensuring pedestrian and bicycle safety. Provide necessary infrastructure such as sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and foot and bike paths that connect neighborhoods to food retail stores.
-  Educate people about existing transportation services, such as Call-A-Bus.
-  Promote involvement of faith-based organizations in providing transportation to grocery stores and farmers' markets.



Photo courtesy of Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation

### *Learn from promising practices:*

-  **In Rock Island County, Illinois**, the University of Illinois Extension offers a monthly free bus shuttle to and from two grocery stores. The bus pickups and drop-offs residents at seven locations, including apartment complexes, churches, and a school. While on the bus, an Extension educator talks about food, nutrition, wellness, and saving money. The shuttle is funded through the USDA SNAP education program grant and Two Rivers YMCA.<sup>255</sup>
-  **Molina Healthcare in California** provides a free Neighborhood Shuttle in several communities around the state. Shuttles operate in underserved communities to provide access to healthcare facilities as well as grocery stores where fresh fruits and vegetables are sold. The shuttle program enabled Molina to build community relationships and made a difference in the lives of many people, especially senior citizens.<sup>256</sup>
-  **In Austin, Texas**, the Texas Capital Metro (the local transit) and the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Council started a “Grocery Bus” line. The purpose was to provide improved food access to residents of the primarily low-income, Latino Eastside. The bus route was designed to run at regular intervals seven days a week, 12 hours a day, and to link the community with two major supermarkets just north and south of the area. It costs passengers 50 cents to ride and has helped Capital Metro improve its public image.<sup>257</sup>
-  **In Prince George’s County, Maryland**, Megamart Supermarket provides free rides for those purchasing at least \$50 worth of groceries.



<sup>255</sup> University of Illinois Extension, 100 Years investing in you, 2014 and Quad-City Times, February 11, 2014.

<sup>256</sup> Kathleen O’Guin, “Access to Transportation is Essential to Good Healthcare Outcomes.” [www.ctaa.org](http://www.ctaa.org)

<sup>257</sup> Columbus Health Department, Improving Access to Healthy Food: A Community Planning Tool, November 2005, p.40.

## Policy 14: *Make healthy food affordable.*

In general, healthy food is expensive, and unhealthy food is cheap. For many people it is not possible to afford buying healthy food even if they want to eat it. Most of the people who suffer from diet-related chronic diseases are low-income residents. This is a prime example of inequity in healthy food access. There are many creative ways to make healthy food affordable. The County government can guide residents to access healthy and affordable food.

### Strategies:

-  Encourage and support establishment of food co-ops and food buying clubs.
-  Encourage supermarkets to sell imperfectly shaped but fresh produce at a reduced price at a designated place in the produce department.
-  Teach people how to shop for healthy food with a limited budget. Provide information and sample shopping lists on the County web site.
-  Help start food recovery and community gleaning<sup>258</sup> programs; find donors and volunteers and connect them with low-income residents.
-  Create fruit orchards in public parks, and plant fruit and nut trees and other edible landscaping in public spaces, including streets. Encourage public to harvest and eat them.
-  Encourage people to grow, preserve, and cook their own food. Advertise available programs that teach people these skills.
-  Encourage foraging<sup>259</sup> for wild food not only in wilderness but also in residents' backyards. Educate people about native edible plants and how and when to forage.
-  Provide information on the County web site about resources in the County where residents can get fresh fruits and vegetables at discounted prices and connect people to resources.
-  Prepare a guidebook for residents on how to access affordable healthy food.
-  Consider policy recommendation in *Urban Agriculture: A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George's County* about establishing community gardens in all neighborhoods and strategies on how to do it.<sup>260</sup>



Photos by Lincoln Smith

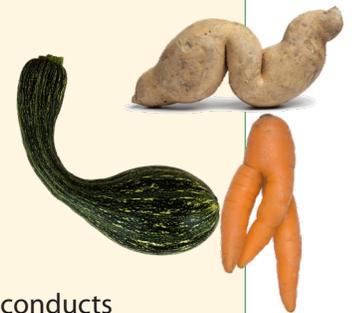
<sup>258</sup> Gleaning is simply the act of collecting excess fresh foods from farms, gardens, farmers' markets, grocers, restaurants, state/County fairs, or any other sources in order to provide it to those in need. See USDA Let's Glean! United We Serve Toolkit.

<sup>259</sup> Foraging is searching for wild food resources. Many edible plants, such as dandelions, exist in people's yards and are considered weeds. In fact, they are nutritious and delicious food.

<sup>260</sup> [www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban\\_Agriculture.htm](http://www.pgplanning.org/Resources/Publications/Urban_Agriculture.htm), pp. 99..

### Learn from promising practices:

-  **The Merc Co-op in Lawrence, Kansas,**<sup>261</sup> is a consumer-owned retail food cooperative with close to 7,000 members that offers a reliable source of healthy, local, organic foods and sustainable products at reasonable prices. The MercShare program provides scholarships for the cost of a share to those who demonstrate financial hardship.
-  **Annie's Buying Club in Florida** makes organic produce affordable for everyone. Instead of shopping individually, food members combine their purchasing power to buy good food at drastically discounted prices.<sup>262</sup>
-  **Hungry Harvest is a Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area** company that recovers discarded fresh produce—based on imperfect appearance or failed marketing logistics—from local farmers and delivers it to the homes of CSA members. For every share a member buys, it donates a matching share to a local food bank, homeless shelter, or family in need. One of the supplier farms is located in Prince George's County. Delivery areas in the County include Hyattsville, Mt. Rainer, Brentwood, College Park, University Park, and University of Maryland campus.<sup>263</sup>
-  **In Canada, "No Name Naturally Imperfect" campaign** by Loblaw Companies Ltd., Canada's food and pharmacy leader and the largest retailer, enables ugly and disfigured fruit and vegetables sold at three supermarket chains at a 30 percent discount. The campaign has a three-pronged purpose: Lowering the cost of healthy food options for customers, improving revenue returns for struggling farmers, and combating food waste.<sup>264</sup>
-  **The Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network** is a nonprofit organization that conducts gleaning activities in the National Capital Region to harvest food from fields no longer commercially viable. Volunteers pick, sort, and deliver the fresh produce to food banks, churches, and other partners. Annually, they provide more than eight million pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to hungry people throughout the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area.<sup>265</sup>
-  **City and County of Honolulu**, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, published a guidebook, *Food: Too Good to Waste*, that includes information on food waste; tips on smart food shopping, storage, preparation, and eating; recipes for leftovers; tools and resources. They invited restaurants to participate in this project, and those who participated provided recipes and coupons and distributed the guidebook at their restaurants.<sup>266</sup>



<sup>261</sup> [themerc.coop](http://themerc.coop).

<sup>262</sup> [www.anniesbuyingclub.com](http://www.anniesbuyingclub.com).

<sup>263</sup> [www.hungryharvest.net](http://www.hungryharvest.net).

<sup>264</sup> "Canada's Largest Retailer To Sell Ugly Produce AT Low Prices To Cut Food Waste." Climate Progress, March 17, 2015. <http://thinkprogress.org>.

<sup>265</sup> [www.midatlanticgleaningnetwork.org](http://www.midatlanticgleaningnetwork.org).

<sup>266</sup> City & County of Honolulu Department of Environmental Services. [www.opala.org](http://www.opala.org).

## Policy 15: *Improve the quality of school meals.*

Although Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) is following the federal nutrition guidelines for school meals, there is certainly room for improvement. Nutrition is only one factor to measure the quality of school meals. There are many other factors, such as where the food comes from, how it is grown or prepared, how it tastes, and how it is presented to the students. Improving each factor a little bit considerably improves the overall quality of school meals.

### Strategies:

- 🥕 Exceed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 guidelines.
  - 🥬 Work to limit sugars, for example, by encouraging alternative breakfast programs to cut added sugars from offerings and by limiting a la carte and vending machine options.
  - 🥬 Encourage students to exceed requirements for fruits and vegetables.
- 🥕 Make healthy food attractive to students by improving how it tastes. Be creative in developing tastier recipes; add herbs and spices.
- 🥕 Work with school food task forces in developing strategies related to improving the quality of school meals. (See Policy 16 "Policy 16: Ensure that school cafeterias promote healthy and positive eating experiences." on page 158.)
- 🥕 Engage students in school food decisions by having taste tests of new, high quality recipes and fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 🥕 Establish a vegetable farm and an orchard for PGCPS to teach students hands-on experience with healthy food production. Serve the produce grown by students in school cafeterias.
- 🥕 Introduce or pilot salad bars into PGCPS. Incorporate school garden produce into salad bars so students can eat what they grow.
- 🥕 Offer healthy snack options between classes. Supply only healthy snacks and drinks in vending machines.
- 🥕 Apply for USDA funds to improve kitchen facilities. Pilot scratch cooking in schools.
- 🥕 Increase purchasing of local foods from Maryland and surrounding states.
  - 🥬 Apply for USDA Farm to School Grants.<sup>267</sup>
  - 🥬 Hire a coordinator to connect local farmers with school distributor, for example from FoodCorps.<sup>268</sup>
  - 🥬 Pilot regularly scheduled Farm Fresh Fridays (or "Maryland Meals").
  - 🥬 Track impacts on local economic development.
- 🥕 Ensure that free and reduced-price meals (F.A.R.M.) for eligible students in magnet schools can access special nutrition programs (such as alternative breakfasts) even when the school F.A.R.M. percentages are lowered due to enrollment of students from other neighborhoods.
  - 🥬 Consider only counting students from a school's neighborhood when calculating F.A.R.M. enrollment rates for access to nutrition programs.



<sup>267</sup> Farm to School Grant Program is to assist eligible entities in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school-grant-program>

<sup>268</sup> <https://foodcorps.org>

### *Learn from promising practices:*

-  **San Francisco Unified School District** held pilot programs so students could try new healthy products under consideration. The students gave input on which foods were most appealing.<sup>269</sup>
-  **John M. Sexton Elementary School in Florida** replaced a la carte items with healthy options chosen only by the students and found no loss in revenue.<sup>270</sup>
-  **New York City School Salad Bar Initiative** aims to have a salad bar in every public school by 2015.<sup>271</sup>
-  **Memphis City School District**<sup>272</sup> is scratch cooking school meals for approximately 110,000 students.
-  **Bibb County, Georgia** built a centralized kitchen that provides meals made from healthy ingredients using little sugar, salt, and fat and no preservatives. Menu items include “harvest of the month” items and healthy options without sacrificing taste, diversity, or appeal.<sup>273</sup>
-  **Richland One School District in South Carolina** rejected a soft drink contract and restricted on-campus vending machines, resulting in a decrease in a la carte sales but an overall increase in school lunch participation, leading to additional revenues.<sup>274</sup>
-  **Portland, Maine, Public Schools** offer “Farm Fresh Fridays,” featuring local fruits and vegetables coordinated by a FoodCorps service member.<sup>275</sup>
-  **Los Angeles Unified School District**, the nation’s second-largest school district, made a policy change in 2011 to support local farmers and businesses. Within two years, it increased its local purchases of fruit and vegetables from 9 percent of its \$20 million annual produce budget to 75 percent, bailing out struggling farmers. L.A. Unified now buys locally for at least 50 percent of its overall \$125-million food budget. The shift in its food purchasing policy has boosted the local economy. The school system previously purchased items based on the lowest bid, usually from more distant suppliers. The district’s enormous volume helps them negotiate lower prices from local vendors and also saves money through cheaper transportation costs.<sup>276</sup>
-  **Great Kids Farm of the Baltimore City Public Schools**<sup>277</sup> is a 33-acre farm where students grow, harvest, process, and package vegetables that are delivered to Baltimore City Schools for students to eat in school cafeterias for lunch.

<sup>269</sup> California Project LEAN, Case Studies: Eliminating Electrolyte Replacement Beverages in California Public Schools, 2010.

<sup>270</sup> Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Wellness Stories. [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org)

<sup>271</sup> Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City. [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov)

<sup>272</sup> “Farm-to-fork: Memphis City Schools nutritionist’s initiative takes fresh approach to healthful meals.” The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, October 20, 2011. [www.commercialappeal.com](http://www.commercialappeal.com)

<sup>273</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-Division of Community Health, A Practitioner’s Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease, 2013, p. 19.

<sup>274</sup> Center for Ecoliteracy, “Rethinking School Lunch: A Planning framework from the Center of Ecoliteracy.” Second Edition, pp. 40-41. [www.ecoliteracy.org](http://www.ecoliteracy.org)

<sup>275</sup> Portland Public Schools news, “Portland schools committed to more local foods.” September 22, 2014. [www.portlandschools.org](http://www.portlandschools.org)

<sup>276</sup> Los Angeles Times, November 24, 2013.

<sup>277</sup> [www.baltimorecityschools.org/greatkidsfarm](http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/greatkidsfarm)

## Policy 16: *Ensure that school cafeterias promote healthy and positive eating experiences.*

Eating in the school cafeteria should not be a chore but fun. The lunch period should not be considered as time taken away from education. On the contrary, it can be used to teach life skills and healthy eating in a creative, fun way. Healthy eating habits should be demonstrated and exercised in the school cafeteria.

### Strategies:

- 🥕 Meet the federal regulation to offer unrestricted access to free drinking water at lunch in the cafeteria.
  - 🍃 All new or rebuilt schools should include water fountains and water bottle refill stations in the cafeteria.
  - 🍃 Other schools should come up with alternative ways to provide drinking water.
- 🥕 Find creative ways to extend lunch period.
- 🥕 Pilot recess before lunch, and include time to wash hands before eating.
- 🥕 Make sure students wash their hands before meals.
- 🥕 Empower students to contribute to a more positive cafeteria environment.
- 🥕 Following the Smarter Lunchroom Movement,<sup>278</sup> explore no-cost or low-cost changes in the lunchroom that can encourage students to choose healthier foods. These changes may include:
  - 🍃 Displaying fruits in attractive baskets
  - 🍃 Giving entrees creative/descriptive age-targeted names
  - 🍃 Placing white milk in the front of the cooler
- 🥕 Conduct smarter lunchroom assessments using the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition's<sup>279</sup> Lunchroom Self-Assessment Score Card.
- 🥕 Minimize trash going to landfills, and recover food by separating waste into recyclables, compostables, food for donation, and trash.



<sup>278</sup> <http://smarterlunchrooms.org>

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

### **Learn from promising practices:**

-  **Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland,<sup>280</sup> and Richmond Public Schools, Virginia,<sup>281</sup>** are finding creative ways to meet the federal requirement for unrestricted access to free drinking water at lunch. While Montgomery County provides eight-ounce bottled water, Richmond uses Igloo coolers.
-  **Rock Creek Forest Elementary in Montgomery County, Maryland,** is building a water bottle refill station into their new cafeteria.<sup>282</sup>
-  **Arundel High School, in Anne Arundel County, Maryland,** rearranged their timetable for a 50 minute, structured lunch period.<sup>283</sup>
-  **Central School, Montana,** experienced dramatic shifts in student behavior after changing its schedule. As part of an effort to create a more healthful environment in the school, having recess before lunch enabled students to eat more and waste less, and become less restless and more attentive. While discipline problems decreased, due to increased attentiveness, 10 minutes of instructional time per class was gained.<sup>284</sup> Snack and soda machines were eliminated, lunch menus changed, and microwaves and hot water dispensers installed to give students more options for lunch.
-  **Forest Glen Elementary** added five minutes to each lunch session so students could use the restrooms and wash their hands before lunch.<sup>285</sup>
-  **Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools<sup>286</sup>** organized a research study where students investigated and graded New Orleans Public School food and cafeterias and made 12 recommendations.<sup>287</sup>
-  **Meigs Local Schools in Ohio** focused on making fruits and vegetables more appealing to students by placing whole fruits in colorful baskets, placing them in two different locations, and having cafeteria workers verbally prompting students to choose fruits and vegetables. All schools observed an increase in fresh fruit selection and a decrease in waste.<sup>288</sup>
-  **At Chesterbrook Elementary School in McLean, Virginia,** every student learns how to separate waste into categories like recyclables, food to be donated, upcycling bins, and general trash. The school's Eco Team, run by sixth graders, ensures their fellow students are putting waste into the correct bin. The team then collects, weighs, categorizes, and places the food to be donated into separate refrigerators provided by the Food Bus, a non-profit organization that works with schools to donate food that would otherwise go to waste.<sup>289</sup>

<sup>280</sup> Real Food for Kids Montgomery (RFKM) E-News, October 29, 2015. [www.realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org/](http://www.realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org/)

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Richmond Public School FNS Director

<sup>282</sup> RFKM E-News, November 25, 2014. [www.realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org](http://www.realfoodforkidsmontgomery.org)

<sup>283</sup> "Longer lunch, more options." Baltimore Sun, February 3, 2008.

<sup>284</sup> "Research *Before* Lunch Can Make Happier, Healthier Kids." Education World.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools, is a youth organizing and leadership development organization that uses participatory education and action research to build organizing and leadership skills of New Orleans youth.

<sup>287</sup> Kids Rethink New Orleans Schools, *Time to Rethink School Lunch*, 2011.

<sup>288</sup> Ohio Smarter Lunchrooms Movement, *Smarter Lunchrooms: Ohio Project Summary*, 2013-2014.

<sup>289</sup> Creative Solutions to Ending School Food Waste. USDA Blog, August 26, 2014.

## **Policy 17: *Develop food literacy in the school community.***

Creating healthy communities starts with raising healthy children. Feeding kids with healthy food is one of the most important actions to achieve this goal. Creating awareness for healthy eating and food-health connection in schools, not only among students but also teachers, staff, and parents, is imperative for having healthy future generations. Developing good eating habits at an early age has rewarding consequences later in life. Family involvement in school meals is a must. Parents should be able to know and have a say about what their kids are eating. Food and nutrition should become important subjects to teach not only in the classroom but also with hands-on implementation in daily life. It is important to educate students and their families and involve them in school food decision making process. Having their buy-in in advance increases the success rate.

### **Strategies:**

-  Develop school food task forces at each school, including school administration, food nutrition professionals, teachers, students, and parents.
-  Send home educational materials about nutrition to help parents learn and/or teach their children about healthy eating.
-  Offer nutrition seminars and cooking lessons to parents.
-  Incorporate food related activities (such as small lectures, cooking demonstrations, and exhibits) in all events involving parents.
-  Show food-related movies, and have food movie nights for parents and children.
-  Serve healthy foods and drinks in all school events where food is served.
-  Ensure up-to-date nutrition information about school meals is available on-line.
-  Post manufacturer product labels and ingredients on-line for school meals and Smart Snacks.
-  Develop school food training workshops for principals, teachers, staff, and food service personnel.
-  Incorporate more nutrition and food system education as well as culinary skill building across the school curriculum.
  -  Invite guest educators and chefs to the schools to do fun, interactive food-related activities such as hands-on cooking opportunities.
  -  Devote one week in each grade to nutrition education.
  -  Educate students about food, starting with what they like to eat. Have students do research on the whole food journey, nutrition information, and health implications of foods so they can make educated decisions about what to eat.
  -  Integrate food into all subjects and programs, including science, math, history, English, and art.
    -  Involve students in multimedia art projects to create beautiful and engaging food images, including sculptures using real fruits and vegetables, and display them in the cafeterias and hallways. Hold a food-related art show and competition between classes or schools.
    -  Have debate teams incorporate healthy eating as a topic. Debate this topic between schools.
-  Develop educational urban farms where students can work and learn about agriculture, food, and nutrition as well as grow what they eat.
-  Establish extracurricular garden clubs and cooking clubs in each school.
-  Develop student health councils.
-  Utilize cafeterias and school gardens as part of the curriculum.

### *Learn from promising practices:*

-  **Farm to School Youth Leadership Curriculum in Minnesota** allows students to participate in all aspects of school lunch, including menu evaluation, partnering with food service staff, talking to farmers, and sourcing local foods.<sup>290</sup>
-  **Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia** posts manufacturer labels with ingredients on-line.<sup>291</sup>
-  **Memphis City Public Schools in Tennessee** involves students in any change process from the beginning. In developing new menus and testing recipes, Bridge Builders, a group of diverse students from across the district, provides early feedback, so when healthier options are introduced, there is a good chance students will like them.<sup>292</sup>
-  **The Lamphere School District in Michigan**<sup>293</sup> established an after-school cooking club in all schools to increase nutritional awareness in students and their families. Students, parents, and staff volunteers join together after school each month to participate.
-  **Sycamore Community Schools in Cincinnati, Ohio**, involved the student health council in transition to healthier food options. The council and communication with parents helped pave the way for the acceptance of healthier options.<sup>294</sup>



Photos by Viviana Lindo



<sup>290</sup> Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, “New Farm to School curriculum puts high school students in charge of tapping into healthy local foods.” Press Release, March 4, 2014. [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org)

<sup>291</sup> <http://www.fcps.edu>

<sup>292</sup> Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, “Healthy School Program: Memphis, Tennessee. Healthier School Meals Success Story,” April 2013. [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org)

<sup>293</sup> [www.lamphere.k12.mi.us](http://www.lamphere.k12.mi.us).

<sup>294</sup> “Sycamore Community Schools Pave the Way.” Alliance for a Healthier Generation, Wellness Story, August 4, 2014. [www.healthiergeneration.org](http://www.healthiergeneration.org)

## ***Policy 18: Eliminate hunger and food insecurity in the County by ensuring access to affordable, sufficient, and healthy food for all people all the time.***

There is a significant number of food-insecure households in the nation's wealthiest African American-majority County located in the nation's wealthiest state. Eliminating hunger and providing food security to all residents should be the top priority of the County. While providing food security, utmost attention should be given to the provision of culturally appropriate, affordable, nutritious food for all. To achieve this goal, the County should explore available public and private resources, apply for grants, and utilize federal programs.

### **Strategies:**

-  Increase participation in federal nutrition assistance programs.
  -  Partner with community organizations to provide support in applying to the programs, especially for women and seniors.
  -  Increase outreach activities, and actively recruit food-insecure people in a variety of venues.
-  Fund the Prince George's County's "SNAP to Health" initiative,<sup>295</sup> and implement it as a strategy to improve nutrition for SNAP recipients.
-  Apply to the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant program to develop local strategies to increase purchasing of fruits and vegetables among SNAP participants.
-  Encourage and authorize more retailers to accept SNAP and WIC.
-  Encourage USDA to pilot grocery stores or mobile and pop-up markets in the County that only offer WIC approved foods but are available to all residents.
-  Create an annually updated, central list of current information on all programs, initiatives, and services related to food security.
  -  Offer the list in multiple languages.
  -  Post an annually updated list on-line.
  -  Distribute this list once a year to all relevant sites, ideally in pamphlet form.
-  Continue to increase participation in school meals, especially school breakfast.
-  Expand acceptance of SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance programs at all farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations, and supermarkets.
-  Expand the Maryland Market Money program that doubles federal nutrition benefits to all farmers' markets.
-  Encourage and support sliding scale Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares.
-  Ensure that every community in the County has regular access to food pantries with extended hours.
-  Encourage food pantries to offer mostly healthy foods.
  -  Increase local produce donations to food bank and food pantries by building farmer-food bank relationships.
  -  Encourage the food bank and food pantries to not accept "junk food" donations, including candies, sweets, and sugar-sweetened beverages.

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<sup>295</sup> SNAP to Health program was established in 2014 to support SNAP/EBT acceptance and processing at farmers' markets in the County to increase the accessibility of healthy food options for SNAP recipients. See Appendix 17 on page A-59 for SNAP to Health legislation (CB-37-2014).

🥬 Offer and promote more whole grains and low sugar, low sodium foods without added trans fats and with limited saturated fats at food pantries.

🥬 Encourage pantry participants to take mostly healthy foods.

🥕 Expand mobile food pantries in the County.

🥕 Start a food recovery program to divert safe surplus foods from landfills and redistribute to food insecure residents.

🥬 Encourage food processing and distribution companies, grocery stores, restaurants, institutions, and other places where cooked and uncooked food may be wasted to donate surplus food.

🥬 Redistribute through food pantries and community kitchens and as a possible resource for food-related businesses.

🥬 Pilot a grocery store that sells deeply discounted recovered foods, available only for food assistance recipients, as a bridging program to help people move toward self-sufficiency.

🥬 Promote gleaning programs at local farms.

🥕 Encourage and support residents to grow their own food as a way to supplement food budgets.

🥬 Promote gardening in backyards, patios, windowsills, and community gardens.

🥬 Offer free plots and seeds to federal nutrition assistance participants at community gardens.

🥬 Prioritize youth developing skills in food production.

🥬 Legalize backyard chickens.

🥕 Encourage and support residents gaining skills in cooking and food preservation.

🥬 Develop community kitchens for residents to gain cooking and food-related skills in group settings.

🥬 Offer programs specifically for youth to develop these skills.

🥕 Promote University of Maryland Extension's education programs on growing, preserving, and cooking food.



### **Learn from promising practices:**

-  **DC Central Kitchen**<sup>296</sup> reduces hunger through recycling food (that would otherwise be wasted), training unemployed adults for culinary careers, serving healthy school meals, and rebuilding an urban food system through social enterprise.
-  **Farming 4 Hunger**<sup>297</sup> is a not-for-profit in Southern Maryland (although not yet in Prince George's County) working with farmers and partners to grow and distribute healthy fresh fruits and vegetables to food banks and pantries.
-  **Ontario, Canada** offers a provincewide nonrefundable 25 percent tax credit for farmers based on the fair market value of agricultural products that they donate to local food banks and community meal programs.<sup>298</sup>
-  **Tri-County Health Department, Colorado WIC Community Gardens** is an initiative in Greenwood Village, Colorado, for WIC recipients to participate in community gardening close to their homes. The program supplies donated seeds, plants, and tools to participants.<sup>299</sup>
-  **In Vermont, the "Seed to Market" Youth Program** is an initiative of the Northfield Farmers' Market to encourage young people to grow and sell their own produce at the market.<sup>300</sup>
-  **GrowNYC's Youthmarket in New York City** is a network of urban farm stands operated by neighborhood youth and supplied by local farmers, brings fresh fruits and vegetables to communities throughout the city. GrowNYC purchases produce from farmers and trains young people from underserved areas of the city to operate a farm stand in their neighborhood as their own small business. Through Youthmarket, families have increased access to farm fresh food; youth in these areas have earned money and learned small-business skills; and farmers in the New York City region are achieving higher revenue through access to underserved markets.<sup>301</sup>
-  **Urban Agriculture Community-Based Research Experience (U-ACRE)** is a program at the California State University, Fullerton. U-ACRE partners undergraduate students with local communities to develop sustainable urban agriculture to achieve food security and provide families healthier food options. U-ACRE is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.<sup>302</sup>
-  **Baltimore's Baltimarket virtual supermarket program** allows residents, especially in neighborhoods with limited food options, to access healthy foods at supermarket prices by ordering groceries on-line for delivery with no registration or delivery fees.<sup>303</sup>

<sup>296</sup> [www.dccentralkitchen.org](http://www.dccentralkitchen.org)

<sup>297</sup> [www.farming4hunger.com](http://www.farming4hunger.com)

<sup>298</sup> "Bill 36-Tax credit for farmers." Ontario Association of Food Banks. [www.oafb.ca](http://www.oafb.ca)

<sup>299</sup> Tri-County Health Department. [www.tchd.org](http://www.tchd.org)

<sup>300</sup> "Seed to Market Youth Program Encourages Kids to Grow and Sell." The Northfield News, June 5, 2014.

<sup>301</sup> Youthmarket Farm Stands: Linking Farms to Communities. GrowNYC. [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org)

<sup>302</sup> U-ACRE, California State University, Fullerton. <http://sustainability.fullerton.edu/U-ACRE>

<sup>303</sup> [www.baltimarket.org/virtual-supermarket](http://www.baltimarket.org/virtual-supermarket)

- 🍏 **Quest Food Exchange, British Columbia**, is a not-for-profit food exchange program offering access to affordable and healthy food choices to marginalized individuals as they transition themselves toward self-sufficiency.<sup>304</sup>
- 🍏 **The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program in Washington, D.C.**,<sup>305</sup> was launched in 2012 by DC Greens in collaboration with Unity Health Care and Wholesome Wave.<sup>306</sup> Since then, more than 200 D.C. residents who are at risk due diet-related diseases have received prescriptions from their doctors for free farmers' market produce. These prescriptions can be filled at participating "farmacies," expanding access to affordable nutrition.
- 🍏 **Food Recovery Network**, founded by the University of Maryland students, is a national nonprofit that recovers food from college campuses and donates to food-insecure people. (See page 101 for more details).



<sup>304</sup> [www.questoutreach.org](http://www.questoutreach.org)

<sup>305</sup> Fruit and Vegetable Prescription. DC Greens. <http://dcgreens.org/fvr>

<sup>306</sup> Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program. Wholesome Wave. [www.wholesomewave.org](http://www.wholesomewave.org)