

STAFF REPORT

TO: City Council  
 VIA: Cathy Ball, P.E., Executive Director  
 FROM: Joey Robison, Executive Assistant  
 SUBJECT: Food Policy Action Plan Update

DATE: February 10, 2015

Summary Statement:

The City of Asheville continues to make progress on the action items identified in the City of Asheville Food Action Plan that was adopted in 2013.

Review:

On January 22, 2013, Asheville City Council passed a resolution establishing the City of Asheville’s Food Action Plan in support of the Asheville Buncombe Food Policy agenda. The Food Policy Action Plan included 14 specific areas to review or take action on to support the shared goals of the City of Asheville and the Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council.

Since its adoption, City staff has made – and continues to make – significant progress on the action items identified in the plan as shown below. An update was given to the Planning and Economic Development Committee in January 2015.

<b>Council Approved Action Item</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Update</b>
Utilize the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) and Animal Ordinance as a tool to support food policy goals by amending the UDO as needed to remove barriers to local food production and distribution. For example, but not limited to, priorities such as community gardens, urban agriculture, and use of mobile markets in residentially zoned districts under certain circumstances such as farmers markets.	Complete	Ordinance No. 4233 (also known as the Agricultural Amendment), adopted on September 24, 2013, amended chapter 7 of the UDO to clarify and modify regulations addressing agriculture and increase flexibility for agricultural uses. Changes included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowing agricultural structures (i.e. small barns/storage buildings, greenhouses) on residentially zoned properties with no home structure</li> <li>• Allowances for farm stands in residentially zoned areas</li> </ul> Existing City code allows fowl (§3-3-50) on urban lots with a permit and not less than 50 feet away from neighboring households. Livestock are permitted to be used for temporary ground clearing with a permit.
Optimize permitting and regulatory services for farmers markets.	Complete	In Spring 2013 the fees for farmers markets were lowered and the fee approval process was shortened to three days.

<p>Prioritize partnering to find a long term permanent location for the Asheville City Market.</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>The City extended the terms of the partnership with ASAP to allow use of the conference rooms in Public Works to serve as an Indoor City Market.</p> <p>The City has renewed the MOU with ASAP for continued use of the outdoor parking lot for the regular City Market for the spring, summer and fall seasons.</p>
<p>Pursue establishing local food purchasing policies for the City of Asheville through clarity on existing state legislation as well as state enabling legislation where needed.</p>	<p>No progress</p>	<p>No progress at this time. Not currently identified on the Council legislative agenda.</p>
<p>Seek partnerships to incorporate regional food and beverage options into the U.S. Cellular Center concessions, as well as city-run events.</p>	<p>Ongoing assessment/evaluation</p>	<p>Current USCC local offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 local breweries which represents 78% of sales</li> <li>• 1 local cider company</li> <li>• Serving The Hop Ice Cream for 100% of ice cream sales</li> <li>• The Hop Ice Creams provides the product for 100% of organic lemonade sales</li> </ul> <p>USCC was already contracted with a food service provider when the action plan was adopted. That contract expires June 30th. USCC staff intends to put out an RFP in February for food service designed to provide an opportunity for local options. This may result in a cost increase, so Council may see this issue in the spring with the option for more local products at an increase in underwriting.</p>
<p>Create a public private partnership for implementing a citywide curbside composting program that complements trash and recycling services. A successful partnership would improve regional economic development and provide compost regionally to support healthy ecological soil systems.</p>	<p>Study in process</p>	<p>A compost feasibility study with Buncombe County is currently being conducted, with results expected in the spring of 2015. Next steps and timeline will depend on the results of the feasibility study.</p>

<p>Include use of edible landscaping as a priority for public property such as parks, greenways and/or right of ways. In support of this, foster relationships with strong community partners who wish to access edible landscaping and/or use underutilized public land for food production.</p>	<p>Ongoing assessment</p>	<p>The City does not have an active landscaping program in City parks. Due to resource constraints, minimal maintenance occurs and minimum requirements are met with low-maintenance native plants. New plantings are mainly achieved through partnerships with community groups. Some of these partners include edibles in their landscape plans.</p> <p>While species selection for new or replacement plantings is determined in large part by soil type and conditions, edible plant options such as service berry trees and blueberry bushes have been both considered and planted more often since the Food Action Plan was adopted.</p>
<p>Encourage partnerships for food production that supports organic and permaculture principles by identifying arable underutilized city-owned land for lease or sale. Pursue methods to make information about such land available to the public.</p>	<p>Complete/ Ongoing</p>	<p>Because City-owned land is programmed for existing and/or future municipal uses, and because agriculture requires specific conditions (such as a water source and amended soil), there are limited sites that are attractive for food production in the City’s portfolio. The City’s current lease portfolio supports the following leases of City-owned property to benefit food production and promote food access:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing MOU for City real property at DSD/Public Works parking lot for City Market farmer's market</li> <li>• Second year agreement in place for indoor City space at DSD/Public Works for City Market Indoor Winter market</li> <li>• Ongoing lease of City real property at Hardesty Lane for 10 Acres organic Vegetable production, currently with Balsam Gardens.</li> <li>• Ongoing lease of City real property at Hardesty Lane for Danny's Dumpster Industrial Compost</li> </ul> <p>City staff met with Buncombe County Cooperative Extension in 2014 to explore partnership opportunities. The Cooperative Extension’s interest is in education, small farm business services, and potentially hosting a demonstration garden on City property near the Nature Center. They do not have the capacity / mission to act as a land manager (i.e. managing city community gardens, or city farm leases.)</p>
<p>Update the city recommended plant list for developers to include edible plants and remove exotic and invasive species.</p>	<p>In process</p>	<p>SACEE and the Tree Commission updated this list of recommendations provided to developers if they inquire to meet UDO landscaping design requirements. Staff is currently working with the Tree Commission on another update to make the list more user-friendly.</p>

Include safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections between residential neighborhoods and community gardens, food banks, grocery stores and farmers markets as a priority when evaluating transportation projects.	Ongoing	
Include achieving food policy goals as a priority when allocating Community Development Block Grants.	Annual application process	Proposals are welcome and will be considered.
Support Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council efforts to set baselines and metrics for achieving food policy goals. Play an active role in providing access to existing city data when needed.	In process	City staff is working with the Asheville Buncombe Food Policy Council to include existing City data on Buncombe County's Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) online indicators dashboard in the area of Healthy Food Goals.
Encourage food distribution by engaging underserved communities who live in food deserts. Support community efforts by co-designing incentives that establish neighborhood based markets that provide healthy food.	Ongoing	City staff has been doing outreach to the many urban food and gardening efforts in the area to review opportunities for partnerships. Staff is currently in discussion with the West End Clingman Area Neighborhood Association about the development of a pilot community garden on the City-owned transit facility property on West Haywood.
Incorporate food policy goals into education programs for city staff and the general public.	Ongoing	Educational summer programming at City community centers was provided to 120 youth in summer 2013.

Pros:

- Significant progress has been made in multiple departments on those action items that require no additional resources.
- The City is in the process of identifying what the City's role should be in supporting the Food Policy Council.

Cons:

- While the City has park property, we have not identified partners to provide materials and maintain the edibles in parks.

Fiscal Impact

Many of the recommendations in the plan are based upon making resources that we currently have available, such as information about the number of community market we have permitted. One exception is adding edibles or community gardens on City Property.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that City Council provide feedback on progress and direction.

Attachments

- 1) Resolution No. 13-17