FOOD ACCESS
PLANNING GUIDE

A resource for planners and community food advocates to ensure all Minnesota communities have reliable access to healthy, safe, affordable food

Minnesota
FOOD CHARTER
For Our Healthy Future

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NEED HELP?

Order the *Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide* toolkit at mnfoodcharter.com/planningguide to help engage planners and advocates in this work.

HOW TO USE THE FOOD ACCESS PLANNING GUIDE

The well-being of residents is vital to the long-term sustainability and prosperity of communities. Regions thrive when residents can be active and healthy. That's why we need policies and plans that create environments where the healthy choice is the easy choice for all.

THE GUIDE CONTAINS TWO PARTS:

LEARN

HELPFUL RESOURCES
and information to bridge the knowledge gap between planners and food advocates

ACT

SAMPLE LANGUAGE
addressing numerous facets of healthy food access that communities can include in comprehensive plans and zoning codes

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THE GUIDE IS OFFERED AS AN OPEN RESOURCE AND AN IDEA MENU

Note that the information in this guide, while extensive, is not exhaustive. There are many other strategies a local or regional unit of government can use to improve access to healthy foods.

OPEN RESOURCE
Any content in this Guide may be used without citing the source. Use the suggested language verbatim, or adapt it in any way to fit a local context.

IDEA MENU
The Guide offers an extensive range of policies and potential implementation strategies. Focus on the policy areas that make sense for your community.

PLANNERS + ADVOCATES
PARTNERS FOR CHANGE

Comprehensive plans are a great tool for communities to develop a vision and plan for their future, in partnership with their community planner. Plans don't need to be limited by the way things have always been done; there is opportunity for creativity and new ways of thinking, including an emphasis on healthy food. We know that in Minnesota our health outcomes related to diet and equitable access to affordable, healthy food need to improve. State statutes also clearly identify health improvement as a primary outcome and purpose of planning. That's why including food access issues in comprehensive plans makes good sense.

WHY WE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION

In Minnesota, we face serious issues related to food and health:

- Nearly 900,000 Minnesota residents live in lower-income communities with insufficient grocery store access. This grocery gap is fourth worst in the nation and disproportionately affects Minnesotans living in rural communities and tribal nations.[1]
- Rates of obesity and diet-related diseases and the resulting costs to society demonstrate the impact that these inequities have on the health and prosperity of our state; Minnesota incurs $2.8 billion in obesity-related healthcare costs per year.[2]
- Investing in healthy food infrastructure and agriculture could yield $2.9 billion per year for a state like Minnesota.[3]

Furthermore, some of the systems we have developed to raise and provide food for a large population have had unintended consequences on the health of people, landscapes, and regional economies. Fortunately, there's a lot we can do at local and regional level to positively impact these issues.

WHAT PLANNING CAN DO TO PROMOTE HEALTH

Local planning and zoning policies can reduce or reinforce structural barriers that prevent our food supply from being as healthy, equitable, affordable, and resilient as we would like it to be. Education, engagement, collaboration, and action towards policy change that promote greater access to healthy foods can significantly reduce these barriers.

Planners (and the elected/appointed officials they report to) can make and implement long-term decisions for the design of communities and regions to improve healthy food access, food skills of community members, and a region's food infrastructure. By including food, equity and health-related policy and systems changes in comprehensive plans and zoning codes, communities across Minnesota can establish:

- Affordable, safe, and reliable transportation to food sources
- Support for small- and medium-sized food and farm enterprises
- Zoning that supports healthy food infrastructure
- Access to and preservation of land for food production
- Development of community food assets (such as community gardens, pollinator-friendly habitats, food hubs, and farmers' markets)

"For everyone to have access to healthy food, we need to focus on the economic, social, and environmental conditions that promote health."

Ed Ehlinger, *MD, MSPH, Minnesota Commissioner of Health*

THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

When local and regional governments want to include healthy food-related policies in their comprehensive plans, partnership is a critical component of success. Local stakeholders have a lot of expertise and understand the needs and priorities of their community. They can help select specific policy strategies as comprehensive plans are in development and can be there to help implement them.

For community partners who care about healthy food access, planners are ideal partners. They are positioned to create meaningful policy and systems change that respond to stakeholder needs and priorities. Using effective engagement processes during comprehensive plan development and review phases, planners, elected officials, and community partners can jointly create comprehensive plans that benefit the entire community.

This Guide bridges the knowledge gap between planners who work for local and regional government agencies and healthy food advocates, providing tools and information to increase access to healthy food for all our state's communities. It contains stories, proven policy and systems change strategies, resources, and sample language for use in comprehensive plans for townships, small towns, cities, and regions.

Food is a basic need. Planners have a vital role to play in ensuring access to healthy food.

[1] www.healthyfoodaccess.org/resources/library/food-for-every-child-the-need-for-more-supermarkets-in-minnesota

[2] www.health.state.mn.us/cdrr/obesity/pdfdocs/obesityplan20090112.pdf

[3] fairfoodnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Michigan20PercentShift_FullReport.pdf

Our state is stronger when communities provide everyone with the same access to opportunities for health, security, prosperity, and quality of life.

EQUITY all people—regardless of socioeconomic status, geography, race, ethnicity, gender, or immigration status— have access to a food system that is fair and just.

HEALTH EQUITY reaching the highest level of health possible for all people, with focused, ongoing efforts to address inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and elimination of health disparities.

NEED HELP?

The Minnesota Food Charter Health Equity Guide offers easy-to-use resources for effective community engagement and efforts that advance health equity.
mnfoodcharter.com/resources/

EQUITY + ACCESS
HEALTHY, SAFE FOOD FOR ALL

Shared definitions and concepts are an important part of bridging the knowledge gap between planners and healthy food advocates. Shared definitions and concepts help establish common ground and explain critical connections between comprehensive planning, equity, and healthy food access.

WHY SHOULD COMPREHENSIVE PLANS ADDRESS HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS?

In Minnesota, state and local governments and regional planning agencies now recognize the important role that comprehensive planning plays in creating a level playing field for all Minnesotans. Equity can be embedded in a community's plans for its built environment[1] (like plans for land use, transportation infrastructure, community amenities and services, and housing) and economic development.

Planning professionals, healthy food advocates, and elected officials can partner on long-term planning and policy initiatives at local and regional levels, creating healthy food environments and a robust food infrastructure. These efforts can go a long way in reducing rates of preventable diseases, improving health, fostering community and economic development, and achieving equity for everyone.

For example, many communities need to make specific improvements to ensure people have reliable access to affordable, healthy food, while also nurturing a robust infrastructure for the growing, aggregating, and processing of this food. Planners can assess existing food access disparities, shape the food environment of communities, and facilitate healthy eating.

WHAT IS EQUITY IMPORTANT?

Inequity is a core characteristic of our food supply, worldwide and in nearby communities. At a global scale, millions starve while food is wasted elsewhere. In Minnesota, many people face inequities when it comes to food and health, including older adults, rural communities, specific cultural populations, and low-income residents. Addressing equity is paramount to addressing food access issues and is a key way in which our state will make progress in creating a food system that works for all Minnesotans. That's why equity and health equity are important concepts for creating healthy, prosperous communities.

WHAT IS HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS?

According to the American Planning Association, the availability of healthy and unhealthy foods in a community is fundamentally driven by a number of factors:

- Proximity of food outlets to schools and residential areas
- Prevalence and types of food outlets available in neighborhoods
- The presence of food and nutrition programs in a community
- Local policy and regulatory framework (e.g. food policy councils, food charters, school food policy, local plan-making, zoning regulations, design regulations, and other standards)

Reliable access to affordable, healthy food is a fundamental factor in the prevalence of diet-related diseases. By putting health and equity at the center of comprehensive planning, communities can do a lot to ensure healthy food access for all.

"Health is the cornerstone of a thriving, prosperous community. Well-being and prosperity should equitability reach all members of a community."

Ellen Pillsbury, AICP
Minnesota Department of Health

[1]The built environment includes transportation infrastructure, land use and development patterns, and urban features in places where we work, live, learn, and play.

FOOD 101
FOR PLANNERS

Feeding a population requires a complex system at multiple scales, from globally traded commodities to a community or backyard garden. No matter the size, infrastructure (including physical, socioeconomic, ecological, and policy components) plays a key role in shaping how food is grown, distributed, produced, eaten, and discarded.

A food system that provides equitable access to healthy food and supports the health of individuals and communities is based, in part, on decisions made by local government that determine the design of the built environment and the process and priorities for resource allocation—both of which influence the creation and governance of certain aspects of our food system.

The intersection of planning with food system development can focus on everything from farmland preservation to agricultural practices to economic development to housing to healthy food access. Planners are well-positioned to make positive contributions to ensuring a robust, resilient food system; in fact, they play a critical, unique role in our long-term health.

Across the nation, there's growing interest in food—where it comes from; how it's grown; how it's prepared, processed, and distributed; how we dispose of food waste; and the intrinsic fairness and impacts of how our food system is designed. There's also increasing attention to how food can be an engine for better health, impact creative design of public spaces, increase cultural and social capital, and foster economic development. Communities nationwide are experimenting with innovative strategies to build community food assets, strengthen the food infrastructure that serves regional markets, and restore small- and medium-scale farm-related enterprises.

Food system advocates, planners, elected officials and scholars increasingly recognize that the food system is deeply connected to the health of individuals, communities, economies, and the environment. The food system itself is tied to other systems, such as water, transportation, housing, land use, and energy. These systems are governed by institutions that manage resource allocation and determine who participates in decision-making.

WHAT IS THE FOOD SYSTEM?

All elements of the food system are shaped by policies, decisions, activities, knowledge, resources, groups, relationships, sectors, and organizational structures.

WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER?
Minnesota's leaders in health, agriculture, hunger, and nutrition worked together with thousands of Minnesotans to create the Minnesota Food Charter. Developed through a broad-based public process, the Food Charter offers a shared roadmap for providing all Minnesotans with reliable access to healthy, affordable, and safe food in the places they work, learn, live, and play. We believe this access will reduce the risk and cost of obesity and diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease; conserve state resources; and boost economic prosperity.

Through the Food Charter's public engagement process, thousands of Minnesotans said they want healthy, prosperous communities and to leave a legacy of health and equity for future generations. The Food Charter outlines 99 strategies that communities can implement to improve food access. The Food Charter is intended to guide planning, decision-making, and collaboration for agencies, organizations, policymakers, and public and private entities across the state. The Food Access Planning Guide is branded as a Minnesota Food Charter document, recognizing that local governments and planning agencies have an important role in promoting healthy food access. The proposed policies and strategies contained in this Guide reflect specific strategies recommended in the Food Charter.

Funders, state agencies, and leadership in many sectors and communities are working together across Minnesota to implement numerous Food Charter strategies. These efforts address environmental quality, economic development, and community health.

"With many communities updating comprehensive plans in coming years, it's a great time for planners and healthy food advocates to design communities that prioritize healthy food access."

Cara Letofsky
Metropolitan Council Member and Food Access Planning Guide Advisory Committee Co-Chair

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Minnesota Food Charter
mnfoodcharter.com/the-charter/

Seeding the City: Land Use Policies
www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/seeding-city

An Introduction to Land Use Policies
www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/intro-food-system-activists

The Changemaker's Guide
www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/changemakers-guide

Metropolitan Food Systems Plan (Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan area)
www.cityoffargo.com/attachments/42a3f0b9-b197-4cb3-b292-5e48584be620/Food%20Systems%20Plan_Final%20November%202013.pdf

Preserving Minnesota's Farmland
www.flaginc.org/publication/preserving-minnesotas-agricultural-land-proposed-policy-solutions/

Model Healthy Food System Resolution
www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/_pdf/projects/FPN/Ordinances_Model_Policies/ModelHealthyFoodSystemResolution.pdf

Grocery Store Attraction Strategies
www.policylink.org/find-resources/library/grocery-store-attraction-strategies-a-resource-guide-for-community-activists-and-local-governments

Planning a Healthy, Sustainable Food System
planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/nationalcenters/health/pdf/apapchfoodsystemplanning.pdf

Food Systems Planning Resources
www.psrc.org/about/advisory/regional-food-policy-council/

PLANNING 101 FOR FOOD ADVOCATES

Planning is the decision-making process in which community goals and objectives are established, existing resources and conditions analyzed, strategies developed, investments targeted, and development controls enacted to achieve these goals and objectives. Minnesota law identifies the need to plan to "...ensure a safer, more pleasant and more economical environment for residential, commercial, industrial and public activities, to preserve agricultural lands, and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare."[1]

The state of Minnesota grants local governments (cities, counties, and townships) the authority to regulate land use through the Municipal Planning Act. This act permits local government to regulate land use with three tools:

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN (OFTEN SHORTENED TO 'COMP PLAN'): a community's vision for the future and the goals, policies, and strategies that will be used to achieve that vision. It guides the administration of the zoning and subdivision ordinances.

ZONING ORDINANCE: regulates the use of land and the design, size, and operation of buildings.

SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE: regulates design, character, and size of streets, blocks and neighborhoods, and provision of basic infrastructure in a safe and responsible way.

Ideally, all three tools would be used in harmony to protect the health, safety, and welfare of a community; however, only local governments within the Twin Cities seven-county Metropolitan Council jurisdiction are required to adopt comprehensive plans. Communities in Greater Minnesota may choose to do so, and many do.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS CAN HELP

- Create opportunity for residents to participate in guiding a community's future.
- Identify issues, stay ahead of trends, and accommodate change.
- Ensure that growth makes the community better, not just bigger.
- Foster sustainable and equitable economic development.
- Provide an opportunity to consider future implications of today's decisions.
- Protect property rights and values.
- Enable other public and private agencies to plan their activities in harmony with local.
- Provide plans for transportation, housing, parks, public facilities, and public investment and budgets.
- Preserve important natural resources, agricultural land, and other open lands.

WANT TO FIND A COMP PLAN?

HERE'S HOW

1. Use an internet search engine, listing the name of the township, city, county, or region, accompanied by the term 'comprehensive plan.'
2. Visit your local unit of government's website. Plans are typically housed under 'Community Development' or the 'Planning Department' page. There, you'll find the comprehensive plan, plus other small area plans (e.g. specific to a neighborhood) and systems plans (e.g. transportation or housing plans).
3. You can also contact your local or regional unit of government and ask them to connect you with their planning department staff, who can instruct you on where to find it.

[1] www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=462.351

PLANNING IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION

Every ten years, the Metropolitan Council creates a regional comprehensive plan to shape the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area's future growth and guide land use, transportation, water, housing, and parks/open space regional systems. The current plan is called "Thrive MSP 2040."

Local governments within the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area are also required to update their comprehensive plans every ten years. To ensure consistency and coordination with the regional plan and to ensure minimum planning requirements as outlined by state law are met, local governments are required to submit comprehensive plans for review by the Metropolitan Council. To aid in this process, the Metropolitan Council provides guidance and technical assistance to local planners via its Local Planning Handbook.

PLANNING IN GREATER MINNESOTA

Although not required, local governments in Greater Minnesota have comprehensive plans or are active in community planning. There is wide variation among rural communities on frequency of plan updates, plan content, and inclusion of themes such as equity, food access, active living, and health.

There are ten regional development commissions (RDCs) across Greater Minnesota, created by the legislature. They assist communities with planning and technical assistance in Greater Minnesota.

In addition to these RDCs, there are also eight Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). MPOs are federally funded and mandated transportation planning bodies for urban regions with more than 50,000 people.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

League of Minnesota Cities Resources
Comprehensive Planning, Land Use, and City-Owned Land
Planning and Zoning 101
Zoning Guide for Cities
www.lmc.org/page/1/LandUseMaterials.jsp

Metropolitan Council Local Planning Handbook
www.metrocouncil.org/Handbook.aspx

Minnesota Statute Chapter 473, Metropolitan Government
www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=473&view=chapter

Minnesota Statute Chapter 462, Planning, Zoning
www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=462

American Planning Association - MN Chapter
www.planningmn.org

Urban Land Institute - MN
www.minnesota.uli.org

Association of Minnesota Counties
www.mncounties.org/

Minnesota Association of Development Organizations
www.mnado.org

Minnesota Association of Townships
www.mntownships.org/

Transportation Planning Organizations
www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/program/mpordcatp.html

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN PLANNING?

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN INFLUENCING YOUR COMMUNITY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Contact your local government's planning office. Volunteer to serve on an advisory or review committee for its comprehensive planning process.
2. Contact your local government's Health Advisory Board to learn how you can engage with comprehensive planning. Every Minnesota county has a Community Health Improvement Plan. Ask about it!
3. Check mnfoodcharter.com/planningguide to see where the nearest local or regional food policy council is located. Get involved!
4. Volunteer to serve on your local government Planning Commission, Comp Plan Steering Committee, or other boards and commissions.

STEP BY STEP WHO DOES WHAT

The process of updating a community's comprehensive plan, "offers a critical opportunity to shape local development patterns for decades into the future, creating healthier and more sustainable neighborhoods for all residents. But planners often face competing needs and priorities: other issues that may take center stage include job growth, business interests," and local leaders' own personal platforms and interests.

Health, equity and food advocates must be vigilant to ensure that public health goals are not only introduced at the start but carried through a process of planning and negotiation that can span years.

This tool explains the steps, people, and processes involved in providing content and input into a comprehensive plan. Planners, health department staff, community advocates, and other partners can advance a healthy food access agenda by following these steps.

COMMUNITY VISIONING

OBJECTIVE: Lay the foundation for the comprehensive plan by establishing a vision statement, goals, and outcomes that reflect community health priorities.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

- Educate community members and decision-makers on the links between planning decisions and food, health, and equity
- Work with elected officials and other powerbrokers (business leaders, city manager's office, associations, etc.) and educate them about the importance of healthy food access policies
- Organize residents to participate in community meetings, providing training on message development and public speaking
- Organize workshops and presentations for key decision-makers on land use policy and food, health, and equity
- Package and disseminate data documenting and/or supporting local health concerns

PLANNERS

EXPERTS/ CONSULTANTS

- Learn about the relationship between the built environment and health
- Host and attend community meetings and workshops on creating healthy food access policies
- Conduct meaningful, multipronged outreach to keep residents informed about community meetings and other opportunities to provide input
- Through community engagement efforts identify shared community vision, outcomes, and principles that will guide the comprehensive plan and its implementation

FUNDERS

- Support public events, advertising, inclusion of diverse voices, and other community engagement efforts

FORMATION OF REVIEW COMMITTEE

OBJECTIVE: Ensure a diverse team of community representatives to provide input and oversight.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

- Identify and recruit advocates (e.g., neighborhood, health, housing, schools, etc.) with diverse experiences and perspectives and commitment to serve

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

- Meet with planners to shape the function and composition of the review committee
- Serve on the review committee to ensure direct, long-term representation of health concerns
- Bring in experts/ consultations and other speakers for study sessions to establish common knowledge base on key issues

PLANNERS

- Tap health and equity stakeholders with both technical and community expertise

EXPERTS/ CONSULTANTS

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

OBJECTIVE: Document baseline health, equity, and built environment data in a way that informs policy development and can be measured and evaluated over time.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

EXPERTS/ CONSULTANTS

PLANNERS

- Provide/interpret relevant health data (e.g., maps correlating health outcomes with neighborhood conditions)
- Coordinate data-driven briefings for councils or commissions, reporting on the community's current health status and relevant policy options and/or educate elected and appointed officials and staff one-on-one
- Conduct community health assessments, walkability and bikeability audits, community food assessments and/or other analyses to inform policy priorities

NEED HELP?

Here's a helpful resource for effective engagement strategies and using an equity lens for comprehensive planning.
ulpdx.org/programs/advocacy-and-civic-engagement/advocacy-and-public-policy/publication_archive/

POLICY DRAFTING

OBJECTIVE: Provide, refine, and secure comprehensive and implementation-oriented health policy language.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

EXPERTS/ CONSULTANTS

PLANNERS

- Write policies that explicitly link to implementation steps (e.g., "adopt zoning definitions that protect and promote farmers' markets to increase access to healthy food") and/or provide benchmarks and standards ("75 percent of households will live within 1/2 mile of a famers' market, grocery store, or other healthy food retail option")
- Write policies that prioritize underserved communities and those with disproportionately worse health outcomes
- Provide model/best practice ideas to support health goals
- Work with health dept. staff, and community-based advocates to tailor model language to suit local context

DRAFT REVIEW

OBJECTIVE: Ensure that plan language reflects community vision and priority health and equity issues.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

- Ask planners what type of comments would be most helpful (some may appreciate policy language; others may prefer comments that identify issues but let planners figure out how to draft the actual policy)
- Write comment letters that include both strengths and opportunities for improvement—acknowledgment good language, and identify where community health needs are reflected and addressed.
- Meet with planners and share comments with them before making comments public

PLANNERS

- Release plan drafts and be transparent with stakeholders on decision-making process and edits made

FUNDERS

- Support health-based policy analysis (e.g., health impact assessment) that can strengthen draft plan review and commenting

PLAN ADOPTION

OBJECTIVE: Ensure city council/ county board adopts plan language

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

- Consider possible opponents in advance, and identify strategies for addressing their concerns
- If threats emerge, meet with elected officials and other powerbrokers (business leaders, city manager's office, city associations, labor) and educate them about the importance of supporting strong health policies
- Frame health goals in a way that supports adversarial powerbroker's perspective and culture; look for appealing "co-benefits"

PLANNERS

- Engage interdisciplinary support from healthy food advocates to get plan approval adopted

IMPLEMENTATION

OBJECTIVE: Translate health vision into on-the-ground change.

COMMUNITY-BASED ADVOCATES

HEALTH DEPT STAFF

- Partner with funders to initiate and sustain programs and implementing policies (e.g., zoning codes, design quidelines, area/specific plans) in support of goals outlined in the comprehensive plan
- Continue to educate elected officials and other decision-makers about the goals of the plan and the steps needed to achieve its vision

PLANNERS

- Work with experts/consultants to ensure that community planning documents (e.g., zoning codes, roadway/transportation plans) are updated to conform to new comprehensive plan goals and policies

EXPERTS/ CONSULTANTS

FUNDERS

ADAPTED FROM www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/documents/Roadmap_step-by-step-for-web.jpg

Planning is intended to improve peoples' lives. What better way to fulfill this purpose than policies and plans that improve health and increase access to healthy food?

Miguel Goebel
Midtown Farmers Market Manager and Food Access Planning Guide Advisory Committee Co-Chair

HOW DO WE DO IT?
HEALTHY PLANNING CASE STUDIES

Communities across Minnesota are working in partnership to leave a legacy of health for future generations. Using the comprehensive planning process and effective partnerships between units of government and community members, these efforts seek to create healthy food environments and support local economies that produce and provide these healthy foods. To help you think about what you can do, here are some examples of people who have put health, food, and equity at the center of comprehensive planning.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING *in rural* MINNESOTA

In northeastern Minnesota, the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) worked in partnership with Healthy Northland (a seven-county healthy lifestyle coalition), the University of Minnesota Extension, and University of Minnesota Duluth to conduct and evaluate comprehensive planning processes that emphasize health and equity. One of these planning processes was used by the communities of Breitung Township and nearby Tower, two Iron Range communities, to engage community members in charting a shared future of health.

Committed to leaving a legacy of good health for future generations, these communities used health data and social determinants to include health in their comprehensive plans. The planning process relied on community input, collaboration with public health, and education about the social determinants of health. The partners held community visioning sessions and conducted surveys to understand the current landscape, needs, and long-term goals of this rural township and town.

"In this process, we confirmed that people in rural northeastern Minnesota understand that healthy food and access to healthy food are an important components of health. Community members embraced the idea of including health as a consideration in all their policies and welcomed the chance to write it into their comprehensive plans," says Betsy Johnson, University of Minnesota Extension.

Tower and Breitung now have comprehensive plans with policies that promote and support food access and agricultural assets, including the preserving the local grocery store, food shelf, farmers markets, and community gardens. All of these plans reflect Minnesota Food Charter strategies.

PLANNING *to* THRIVE

When the Metropolitan Council adopted its current plan for the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area in 2014, it forged a new approach for regional planning in the 21st century. Thrive MSP 2040 lays out, in considerable detail, five desired outcomes (Stewardship, Prosperity, Equity, Livability, and Sustainability) and three guiding principles (Integration, Collaboration, and Accountability) that will shape planning decisions in the region for the next 30 years.

This approach sets a different tone for comprehensive planning, focusing on outcomes and principles gleaned from a community visioning process.

"The most effective, transparent, and accountable plans are those that are designed around specific goals and which progress is regularly measured and reported."

Eric Weiss, AICP
Planner and Project Manager
at the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross
and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Thrive MSP 2040 explicitly addresses food-related issues in its discussions of outcomes. For example, in the Prosperity section, it recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural land, which "creates economic opportunity for a variety of residents, ranging from farmers growing crops on century-old family farms to new Americans bringing their farming experience into small-scale local food production serving farmers markets." And in the section on Sustainability, the plan commits to promoting healthy communities by, among other things, encouraging, "policies and investments that improve access to safe and healthy food."

FARMLAND *for the* FUTURE

Dakota County, in the southeastern corner of the Twin Cities metro area, has a long tradition of farming. But in the latter half of the 20th century, land devoted to agriculture in the county dropped by nearly a third, much of it lost to residential and commercial development in the 1980s and '90s. In an effort to stem this farmland attrition, Dakota County established the Farmland and Natural Areas Program (FNAP) in 2002.

The first such program to be adopted by a Minnesota county, FNAP allowed the county to purchase permanent agricultural conservation easements from farmers, initially using funds from a $20 million bond referendum. Although landowners participating in the program retain the right to use, rent, transfer or sell their land, its use for purposes other than agriculture is prohibited. Since the program's inception, the county has purchased 68 agricultural easements, preventing any future development of nearly 8,000 acres of farmland and associated natural areas.

FNAP was able to protect two farms that produce local food in Dakota County and has made land values more affordable for new and immigrant farmers. In addition to preserving farmland for future generations, the acquisition of easements under FNAP has also reduced the value of the land, making it more affordable to new or immigrant farmers.

"Through active engagement and a strategic approach to comprehensive planning, local governments can work together to sustain our quality of life and support agricultural production, both of which contribute to healthy communities."

Al Singer, *Manager of Dakota County's Farmland and Natural Areas Program.*

ACT
POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Comprehensive plans embody the values and priorities of local governments and establish the policy foundations for pursuing those priorities. The Minnesota Food Charter Food Access Planning Guide provides planners and their partners with the resources and language they need to develop comprehensive plans that support access to healthy food.

Incorporating food access policies into local comprehensive plans provides an important tool for improving the health and well-being of all Minnesota communities.

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There is no one way to organize a comprehensive plan or to include food access and equity language into a plan. We recommend four possible approaches.

Local communities are encouraged to consider which approach is best for their particular needs, given existing practice, the comprehensive plan layout and function, community interest, and political will. Here's how you can use this section:

The issue areas addressed in the second section of the *Food Access Planning Guide* reflect key strategies in the Minnesota Food Charter. They were selected using the following criteria:

1. IMPACT
The overall impact on how many Minnesotans have access healthy food. *What is the potential for scaling up strategies in each issue area?*

2. NEED
The capability to address inequities faced by certain populations. *What is the potential for reaching low-income populations, people of color, Native Americans, seniors, and youth?*

1. **TYPICAL PLANNING ELEMENTS.** Use the most common planning chapters - housing, land use, transportation, economic development, etc - to address food access issues. This approach highlights the comprehensive nature of food access issues and may be a format most people are accustomed to.

2. **CREATE A NEW CHAPTER,** either in a new Food Access chapter or in a broader cross-cutting chapter focused on community health or sustainability. For jurisdictions in the Twin Cities metro area, the Metropolitan Council's Local Planning Handbook suggests putting health-related and environmental policies in a chapter titled "Resilience," which would be an appropriate home for healthy food access policies.

3. **VALUES BASED APPROACH.** Much like Thrive MSP 2040, a plan can be organized around a set of community values and principles as a means of building community consensus and having a mission- and vision-driven plan. In this case food access should be attributed to aligned values.

4. **USE A COMBINATION OF THESE OPTIONS.** Reference food-related policies within traditional comprehensive plan chapters, and create a stand-alone health or food chapter. We recommend this approach because it builds ownership across different departments of local government while also offering a dedicated plan section in which more food-specific detail is provided.

HOW TO USE THE ICONS IN THIS SECTION

Use the icons at the top of each topic section for guidance on which chapters may be a best fit. For example, farmland preservation policies could be located in the vision, land use, economic development. and/or implementation chapters.

- VISION
- LAND USE
- TRANSPORTATION
- WATER + UTILITIES
- PARKS + TRAILS
- HOUSING
- ENVIRONMENT
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- IMPLEMENTATION

3. INFLUENCE

The likelihood that the strategy area will leverage other actions and interventions that would not otherwise occur. *Is it an area that currently lacks information, sources of advocacy, and/or political will?*

4. MARKET FEASIBLITY

The economic viability of the strategies in the strategy area. *Can it lead to strong, long-term, sustainable economic outcomes through public-private initiatives or a private sector response to public interventions?*

5. COMMUNITY INTEREST

The expressed interest and enthusiasm of individuals and organizations working on food issues. *Was it identified as a key area of interest by Food Access Planning Guide survey respondents?*

LAND USE

GOAL STATEMENT

Use land use guidance and regulations to improve local households' proximity to healthy food and support food-related businesses and activities.

OVERVIEW

Local government sets the parameters for how development occurs. The pattern, type, density, and characteristics of development are all heavily shaped by zoning ordinances and other local government regulations. Other sections of this Guide encourage review of local land use regulations for a number of purposes, such as to support a development pattern that reduces the distance between households and food stores, to encourage food businesses, to allow for food production activities, and to preserve farmland.

Many communities developed during the last few decades were designed for a household with two parents, children, and cars. This resulted in large suburban areas of large-lot, single-family homes, and neighborhood goods and services located in widely spaced retail areas. There was less emphasis on new, dense housing development in urban centers. This development pattern can consume large swaths of land (including agricultural land); food retailers can thus end up quite a distance from residential areas, making access difficult without a car.

Many urban, suburban, and rural communities are reconfiguring these development patterns. Communities are now:

- Reducing lot sizes in new residential subdivisions
- Reducing the amount of unused land and parking areas surrounding commercial areas
- Clustering multi-family housing around areas well served by commercial goods and services, including food stores and transit
- Reconsidering the long-term wisdom and impacts of permanent elimination of agricultural lands

All of these actions bring food physically closer to households. These actions and policies result in a development pattern that is supportive of existing and potential transit, while preserving farmland and natural spaces and improving environmental sustainability. This approach is also fiscally sustainable, as a more compact development pattern means there are enough taxpayers to support the cost of maintaining roads and utilities over the long run.

Land use regulations also affect the development of local and regional food supplies in their degree of flexibility and support for food- and farm-related activities. Community gardens, farmers' markets, food- and farm-focused enterprise zones, and commercial kitchens are just some of the options that require a supportive regulatory framework. Regulations can also have an important impact on the relative ease of establishing a farmer's market or opening a farm stand.

LAND USE SAMPLE LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support development patterns that preserve agricultural land, and decrease the distance between households and retail food options.

- Adopt policies that support infill development and redevelopment over greenfield development
- Analyze existing retail patterns to determine where to locate new commercial areas
- Encourage and zone for higher-density or mixed-use housing near transit lines and commercial areas
- Consider minimum density requirements for new residential and mixed-use projects and other types of development
- Employ an approach to planning processes that treats health equity, healthy food access, and food systems development as primary considerations when making major land use decisions such as zoning, transportation planning, climate action plans, and other policy changes

POLICY II

[Local government] will review, and simplify or remove its regulation of food- and farm-related land uses, in order to improve the variety and availability of healthy food outlets.

- Review and update regulations governing backyard gardening, community gardens, and urban farming to foster an expansion of food production in the community
- Review and update regulations governing food processing businesses—such as commercial kitchens, flash freezing businesses, and small scale home kitchen businesses—to increase business growth
- Review and update regulations concerning food outlets, such as grocery stores, small food stores, farmers' markets, seasonal food stands, and farm trucks to support growth in the types and number of food outlets throughout the community and their hours and locations

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- While development patterns and pressures are different in urban, suburban, and small town settings, increasing development intensity has similar benefits in terms of supporting retail, making more efficient use of public infrastructure, and saving farmland at the periphery of the developed area.
- New home builders tend to stay in their comfort zones when laying out new developments. Cities and counties may need to stand their ground—and be patient—in order to achieve the development patterns they want.
- Retail market analysis may be helpful in determining how close neighborhood commercial districts can be located to each other and still be healthy and viable, given the population size of an area.

"The Cass Clay County Food Systems Advisory Commission was established by our regional planning agency to increase access to healthy food, foster economic development, and support food production. At Metro COG, we connect planning and health."

Adam Altenburg, *Community Transportation Analyst, Metro COG*

HOUSING

GOAL STATEMENT

Increase food production and access to healthy food and meals in residential settings

OVERVIEW

One's home serves essential needs that go well beyond shelter. Ideally, it also provides identity, rootedness, and a sense of comfort and safety. Housing goals in local comprehensive plans are generally intended to support a diverse population with a broad range of housing options that address different layers of needs. Therefore, communities should offer:

- Ownership and rental housing
- Single-family houses, townhomes, apartments, and condominiums
- Housing of different sizes to accommodate singles to large families
- Housing that is affordable to people of diverse means
- Housing that includes supportive services for people with various needs, including seniors, low-income households, and the homeless

In any of these housing contexts, raising food is an option many residents wish to exercise. Local governments can encourage and support this integration of healthy food into residential environments. Areas particularly deserving of support are incorporation of gardens and animals into diverse residential settings, habitats helpful for beneficial insects, and provision of healthy food and meals. There are established practices and intriguing experiments in these domains.

Residential Cluster Development, or open space development, is a planning technique that can be used in new single- and multi-family developments that minimizes development impacts by positioning building and other improvements in a manner that preserves open space to its fullest extent. That open space can be used for agriculture, gardens, and natural habitat.

Many communities have established more flexible regulations for keeping animals such as bees, chickens, and goats on residential properties, which opens new food production options for residents. Local government has a lead responsibility in determining what is possible in this area and under what circumstances.

Integrating healthy meals into multi-family settings can build community, help residents learn about nutrition, and meet practical needs. Local policies can foster improved access to healthy foods by supporting congregate dining and healthy meals in multi-family settings such as homeless shelters, supportive housing facilities, and housing for seniors.

HOUSING SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support practices that integrate healthy food in residential settings.

- Partner with others to foster gardening practices and a local gardening culture.
- Revise local regulations as needed to maintain flexibility for garden locations and support backyard composting.
- Partner with gardening clubs and others to facilitate testing soils for contamination.
- Encourage single-family subdivisions and multi-family development models that incorporate community gardens.
- Integrate community gardens into public housing developments and create incentives for community gardens in affordable housing developments that receive public assistance.
- Encourage edible and pollinator-friendly landscapes on residential properties.
- Support a diversity of efforts to make fresh food and healthy meals available at multi-family properties.
- Expand options for keeping animals such as bees, chickens, and goats, as appropriate for the size and location of the property, along with the accessory structures they require.
- Build and encourage partnerships that work to expand residential access to healthy food.
- Use a food system lens when planning housing developments to inform site layout, landscape design, and residential amenities.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Integrating community gardens and nearby small farms into housing developments is proven means to build a more robust local food supply.
- Testing of soils for contaminants is an important step to establish new gardens in some locations; some plants will absorb poisonous heavy metals in soil.
- Accommodating housing growth in ways that use less land can preserve farmland that provides healthy food to nearby communities for years to come.
- Private homeowner and townhome associations may restrict residents from gardening or planting trees on their property.

TRANSPORTATION

Photo by Dan Kraker / Minnesota Public Radio News. © 2015 Minnesota Public Radio. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

GOAL STATEMENT

Improve access to healthy foods by enhancing transportation systems and infrastructure for transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.

OVERVIEW

Transportation is a core element in local government comprehensive plans (for Twin Cities metropolitan local governments, it is a required chapter). Planning for future development requires integrated thinking about transportation and land use. This includes integrating where people live, work, shop, learn, spend time, and obtain food; considering the benefits of concentrating development near transit service; and considerations of traffic congestion.

At a community scale, transportation infrastructure has important implications for healthy food access. It determines how easily consumers can get to healthy, diverse, and affordable sources of food. There are many communities where transit options are limited, and places that offer healthy food options are far apart.

Long drives to healthy food sources—and associated transportation access and costs—are a deterrent to obtaining healthy foods and maintaining a nutritious diet. Lacking a personal vehicle compounds these issues; the growth of suburban and rural poverty means low-income households are increasingly located in communities where transit service is weak or absent.

Improving connections to food sources encompasses a diverse range of strategies. These include increasing the variety of public and private transportation options which can bring people to food sources and improvements to the delivery of food to stores or households. Strengthening bicycle and pedestrian networks and infrastructure can also improve access to sources of healthy food for some households.

SNAPSHOT

Residents of Duluth's Lincoln Park neighborhood now have a city bus specially outfitted with bins to hold grocery bags. Residents can use this new expresss bus route to quickly reach a full-service grocery store. At last, they now have easier access to healthy food.

www.healthyduluth.org

TRANSPORTATION SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support strategies and innovations that improve the flexibility, mobility, and affordability of connecting people to healthy food.

- Support transit service improvements to better connect people to commercial areas with healthy food sources.
- Pursue opportunities to add specially-equipped, grocery-friendly transit service that operates on weekend and off-peak hours and connects directly to stores selling healthy food, and/or farmers markets.
- Provide inter-city bus service in areas of greater Minnesota in places where grocery stores are far apart.
- Review local policies to reduce or eliminate any impediments to the use of taxi and car-sharing services.
- Encourage car-sharing accommodations in multi-family developments.
- Collaborate with regional economic development agencies on efforts to improve food distribution infrastructure.
- Support innovative practices such as mobile food markets and mobile food pantries/food shelves that can bring food closer to under-resourced customers.
- Undertake a systematic assessment of the bicycle and pedestrian routes that connect consumers to healthy food sources, and address deficiencies through physical improvements to bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- Adopt site design standards for food stores that provide safe and convenient pedestrian access to the front door and bicycle parking.
- Adopt a Complete Streets policy that specifically highlights the importance of multi-modal connections to food resources and food retail.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Active Living by Design
www.activelivingbydesign.org

National Complete Streets Coalition
www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Investments in maintenance and improvement of transportation and transit infrastructure have broad economic development benefits and can be planned with healthy food access in mind.
- Grocery stores can be difficult to reach on foot or by bike if they are surrounded by parking lots and busy streets; lack adequate sidewalks and traffic-controlled crosswalks; or are sited on the outskirts of a community. Local governments can require stores to provide improved accommodations for people on foot or bicycle. Local governments can also develop pedestrian and bike-friendly options, such as footbridges over major thoroughfares, to help shoppers safely reach food sources.
- Private business models such as taxi services, Car2Go, and ZipCar are expanding the flexibility of the transportation system and lowering costs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL STATEMENT

Support food-related businesses and initiatives that advance the development of local and regional economies.

OVERVIEW

Economic development has two components—*economic competitiveness* and *economic growth*. Economic competitiveness concerns the positioning of a community or region to attract economic activity that might otherwise go elsewhere. Economic growth refers to increasing overall economic activity and wealth. Planning for either component can incorporate measures to enhance healthy food access.

Economic competitiveness. Food- and farm-related business development can enhance the economic competitiveness of a community or region. Minnesota's longstanding strength in the food sector is represented by the renown of names such as General Mills, Land O'Lakes, and the Honeycrisp apple, as well as regionally-focused endeavors like craft breweries. Given that much of our food comes from other states and countries, there is significant potential to improve economic competitiveness by nurturing the growth of food-oriented businesses in Minnesota, growing, and processing the food we eat closer to home. Fostering food-related amenities such as agritourism, restaurants, wineries, and food products grown and processed regionally can all enhance a community's economic competitiveness.

Ecological considerations also matter to our state's long-term competitiveness. A proactive economic development strategy means paying attention to and improving the quality of the soil, water, and biological resources that support food production, pollinator health, and mitigation of climate change impacts.

Economic growth. Improving access to healthy food is also an economic growth strategy. Lowering the cost of food and bringing food closer to the consumer are strategies that can free up financial resources for other purposes. Improved food access also results in improvements to community health, which saves societal resources and increases productivity.

Workforce development is an important priority statewide. Supporting food-related businesses and

> "For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life."
>
> **Metropolitan Council,** *Thrive MSP 2040*

entrepreneurial activity can grow the local economy by building skills and connecting people to a productive livelihood, while also increasing the availability of healthy food for communities. Culturally specific, food-related businesses can serve as an important economic entry point for new immigrant entrepreneurs and their customer bases.

Economic growth is most powerful when it builds economic capacity in communities of greatest need. Improving healthy food access in under-resourced communities gives children and youth a greater opportunity to learn and grow, ultimately contributing to a productive, vibrant local economy.

Local governments may provide business support or advance economic development initiatives directly through their community or economic development departments. Alternatively, such services may be undertaken by a local community development authority or economic development authority, which may have a governance relationship with a city or county. Other partners such as banks, credit unions, chambers of commerce, and philanthropic institutions can also play critical roles in advancing economic development objectives.

It may be evident from this discussion that many recommended strategies in this Guide serve multiple purposes. Strategies, for example, that advance healthy food access, increase food production, or foster innovation in food processing, can also generally contribute to local and state economic development. Rather than replicate such strategies here, this section highlights additional economic development strategies that have not been noted elsewhere.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will pursue activities that both improve healthy food access and advance economic development.

- Review and refine ordinances to allow for new food, beverage, and farm-related enterprises.
- Highlight a community or region's food culture as a community branding strategy.
- Support agritourism efforts as a means of enhancing income streams for small farmers and producers.
- Purchase healthy foods from local food businesses when catering events, meetings, and other gatherings.
- Review local ordinances to ensure that they don't unduly restrict sidewalk and rooftop dining.
- Establish a Food Policy Council with a strong focus on improving the food economy.
- Partner with local education and training institutions to develop workforce skills and to promote workforce training.
- Partner with neighboring communities to pursue a regional food marketing strategy.
- Support the development of living-wage jobs so that community members can afford to purchase healthy food and support local businesses.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Nurturing food-related startups and small- and mid-sized businesses helps to cultivate current and future economic strength in the food sector.
- A regional approach may be necessary to make true progress. Communities should collaborate on broader economic development initiatives with neighboring communities and jurisdictions.
- Income is the greatest indicator of one's health. A community should focus on ensuring that healthy food is available and accessible to all its residents while also building an economy that provides households with the wages they need to purchase healthy food. This includes increasing living wage jobs in food and non-food related industries.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

GOAL STATEMENT

Increase farmland preservation to maintain capacity of local food production

OVERVIEW

Providing healthy food to communities requires adequate farmland to grow agricultural products. Although Minnesota has a proud farming tradition, the state has lost farms and farmlands for some time; half of the state's farm acreage has disappeared since 1950. The loss from the 1980s to the present is especially pronounced in the Twin Cities' seven-county metropolitan area.

Encroaching development has taken a severe toll on farmland. When land becomes viable for housing or commercial development, the value of the land rises. The resulting increase in property taxes reduces the profitability of farming, which can motivate farmers to sell their land. Nearby housing also raises compatibility issues. New residents may not anticipate the odors and noise that are part of farming operations, and community opposition to a farm can mount.

In 1967, Minnesota adopted the Green Acres Law, which provides for keeping property taxes low and deferring assessments on farmland whose property value has increased due to its development potential. Since then, additional state laws have been enacted to protect farmland in various ways. These statutes provide farmers with property tax credits and other incentives for keeping their land in agricultural use, exempt farms from being considered a nuisance if their operations follow generally acceptable practices, and enable local governments to create designated agricultural preserves.

Local government has a critical role to play in farmland preservation. It can deter farmland conversion through zoning by a) assigning property to an Agricultural Zoning District, which limits or prohibits nonagricultural development from occurring, and b) capping the allowed density of new development at a very low level, making redevelopment too costly. Local government can establish agricultural preserves, which farmers can opt into in exchange for property tax benefits. Furthermore, local government authority over extension of local roads and utilities can be used to encourage development in appropriate locations while discouraging it in agricultural areas.

Because local controls are subject to change in the face of development proposals and with shifts in priorities of the governing body, local governments may choose to pursue longer-term mechanisms for protecting agricultural land. A city or county government can purchase an agricultural conservation easement on agricultural land from the land owner or a farmland conservation organization. The easement permanently restricts the use of the land to agriculture. Local government can also establish a transfer of development rights (TDR) program, whereby the right to develop the agricultural land is permanently foregone in exchange for a right to develop other land at a greater density than its zoning would normally allow.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will adopt and implement policies, regulations, and other local controls that support farmland preservation.

- Understand and raise awareness of all programs intended to preserve farmland, including agricultural preserve programs and right-to-farm laws.
- Use available tools, including agricultural preserve areas, agricultural zoning, and density regulations, to steer new development away from prime farmland and active agricultural areas.
- Guide and zone prime farmland differently from developable land, or use a conservation design approach in subdivision regulations.
- Use regulatory tools and clear goal statements to intensify housing and commercial development in appropriate locations.
- Seek input of local farmers in planning and zoning matters, and the establishment of agricultural preservation programs.

POLICY II

[Local government] will support the farming of food crops for nearby consumption.

- Emphasize the farming of food crops in urban fringe areas, possibly through the creation of "small farm" agricultural districts.
- Consider use of business finance and technical assistance to support new food crop farms and farmers in urban fringe areas.
- Open up new opportunities for agricultural production and processing through zoning modifications that reduce or eliminate barriers for food crop farms, such as allowing on-farm processing of products raised on the farm or allowing accessory structures such as high tunnels.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Preserving Minnesota's Agricultural Land: Propose Policy Solutions (Farmers Legal Action Group, 2012
www.flaginc.org/publication/preserving-minnesotas-agricultural-land-proposed-policy-solutions/)

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Cities and counties share responsibility for establishing and administering agricultural preservation policies and programs, but many of these activities are defined by state enabling legislation. The state can take a number of actions that would strengthen the context for farmland preservation—including simplifying the existing statutes and authorizing programs that would require mitigations when agricultural land is lost.
- Minnesota's population is projected to grow by another half million by 2032, mostly in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. This underscores the importance of higher-density development, which has the effect of preserving agricultural land, even where new developments are far from agricultural land.
- In metropolitan fringe areas, growing food crops suitable for nearby consumption provides more benefits than growing commodity crops. Land use regulation, tax policy, and subsidy programs can prioritize small- and mid-sized family farms near metropolitan areas to promote appropriate food production.
- Farming is a business with unpredictable inputs and slim margins. Supporting the economic viability of farming, especially by offering support to new farmers, goes hand-in-hand with protecting farmland.
- Solar energy installations can take up large areas of prime farmland if land use guidance does not explicitly direct it to other areas.
- The increasing average age of farmers and a frequent lack of succession plans adds to the difficulty of farm preservation.

FOOD PRODUCTION

URBAN FARMS + COMMUNITY GARDENS

GOAL STATEMENT

Support increased local food production in forms compatible with surrounding development.

OVERVIEW

Growing food is a practical and empowering activity for many individuals and families. It can increase the proportion of healthy food in one's diets, reduce grocery costs, and give people more control over how their food is grown (the use of fertilizers and pesticides, for example).

The presence of a farm or garden in a developed area can provide healthy food grown nearby, while demonstrating the process of food production to urban residents who may not otherwise have had such exposure. It can improve public health, put underutilized or vacant spaces to productive use, and improve the variety and resilience of the local food infrastructure.

Local food production can take many forms and scales. Fruits and vegetables may be grown in the ground, in greenhouses or containers, on rooftops, or in aquaponic structures (which may also be used to raise aquatic species such as fish). The scope of production may range from backyard vegetable gardening to growing fruits and vegetables in a nearby community garden to establishing urban farming enterprises on acres of land. Food may be grown for personal consumption, for 'gleaning' by the public, or for sale to customers or distributors.

Local governments can foster and facilitate this rich array of food production activities. But they also have a responsibility to ensure that food production, like any other personal or business activity, is compatible with neighboring residences or businesses. Food production in a developed area has a different impact on neighboring properties than farm agriculture does in a rural community. When local government manages these effects through regulation and other mechanisms, other residents and property owners develop a deeper sense of confidence that they can co-exist with food production activities. A further role of local government is to protect public health—promoting practices such as testing soil for lead contamination, and discouraging over-application of agricultural chemicals that may harm human, landscape, animal, and pollinator health.

This Guide distinguishes between **Urban Farming** as an activity that is the primary use of a property and generally produces food for commercial purposes, and **Community Gardening**, in which food is grown primarily for one's own consumption on a shared plot of land away from one's home.

"With careful planning and zoning, urban agriculture can be successfully and seamlessly integrated into urban environments."

Seeding the City *ChangeLab Solutions, 2012*

URBAN FARMS

Urban farming brings agriculture into a developed setting, whether in a small town or a large metropolitan area. Vegetables, fruits, row crops, and animals may be cultivated. This food is sold or distributed as a business or philanthropic enterprise.

Because of the price of developed land, it typically takes outside funding (private, public, or both) to establish an urban farm. Often, these farms pursue social, health, and environmental goals beyond food production. Urban farms may educate community members about growing food or provide job opportunities for local youth. They may also conduct research on crop varieties or growing methods.

Urban farming involves structures, materials, and processes that can potentially impact the surrounding community, such as:

- Use of odorous manures and chemical inputs for food production that impact human and environmental health
- Piles of materials, including compost, mulch, and manure
- Runoff of soils, fertilizers, and agricultural chemicals into storm sewers and gutters
- Stress on local water supply
- Use of large machinery such as tractors, tillers, and generators
- Presence of water tanks, composting infrastructure, greenhouses, outbuildings, or other structures

Some farm structures are integral and important to the agricultural process. Greenhouses, hoop houses, and cold frames extend the growing season—an attribute that can be of great value in Minnesota's cold climate. Because urban farming can generate important benefits and adverse impacts, local government has important responsibilities in supporting urban farms and managing their impacts.

Supporting urban farms can take many forms—such as reviewing local zoning to ensure that it allows for urban farming in appropriate locations; offering financial support and water access; and making publicly owned property available to farming efforts.

Managing impacts of urban farms requires attention to:

- Where they belong (which zoning districts)
- How they are developed (structures, material piles, site layout, and access)
- How they operate (noise, chemical use, runoff)

Some communities have addressed these layers of concerns through the adoption of comprehensive regulatory tools. An **Urban Agriculture Zoning Ordinance** defines urban agriculture in the city zoning code as an allowed principal use in certain zoning districts, and specifies the conditions that will pertain to the property and activity.

Communities can adopt a **Comprehensive Farm Review**—a structured review process that comes into play when a farming operation exceeds a certain size. This requires the business owner to submit a physical and operational plan for the farm for review by city staff. Reviewers should include staff in all relevant departments such as zoning, health, business permitting, and public works. The farm plan must meet clearly defined standards related to screening, maintenance, fencing, landscaping, lighting, materials, and structures.

Regulations such as those above show support for urban farms by legitimizing them, and making them more acceptable to surrounding communities. They consolidate land use regulations, making it easier for prospective farmers to understand what they need to do to comply. They also mitigate adverse impacts and promote public health.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Urban Agriculture in Minnesota: A Report to the Legislature (2015)
www.mda.state.mn.us/news/~/media/Files/news/govrelations/legrpt-urbanag2016.pdf

ACT

URBAN FARMS SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] supports the establishment of urban farms in appropriate areas and will promote and expand the range of urban farming activities that are allowed.

- Review and clarify standards for boulevard gardens.
- Review city land use regulations to evaluate how they may restrict urban farms from locating in the community.
- Consider expanding types of structures allowed as part of urban farming enterprises in appropriate locations to allow urban farms to extend the growing season.
- Consider adopting a policy that provides concrete support to urban farming enterprises, using mechanisms such as business finance tools, property tax relief, or low-cost water access.
- Consider allowing agricultural projects as an appropriate use for land in the local park system.
- Follow the emergence of new forms of food production that are occurring on public lands, including food forests and planting for foraging.
- Encourage urban farms to take on outreach and education related to growing healthy food, and to partner with schools, nursing homes, food shelves, local restaurants, and nurseries as outlets for produce.

POLICY II

[Local government] will adopt regulations that establish standards for urban farming, improve compatibility with neighboring properties, and promote public health.

- Take steps to establish a stable regulatory structure for urban farms—such as an Urban Agriculture Zoning Ordinance and/or Comprehensive Farm Review—to clarify the locations that are allowed and the physical and operational conditions that must be maintained.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Our Minnesota climate means that season-extending options, such as indoor production, greenhouses, and high tunnels, are very important.
- Even structures with significant visual impact may be appropriate in certain zoning districts.
- An analysis of financial feasibility can be an important element in considering support for an urban farming initiative.
- Urban farms may need indoor space for food cleaning, sorting, packaging, and processing as well as staff bathrooms and break rooms.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

A community garden is a plot of land shared by a group of people to grow vegetables, flowers, and fruit. Smaller plots within the garden are assigned to individuals, or the entire garden is cultivated in a cooperative fashion. Generally, community gardens are developed on vacant land in a neighborhood; in parks or other public spaces; or in large, underutilized properties belonging to places of worship, corporate campuses, organizations, schools/universities, or food shelves. Produce is grown for the consumption of the gardeners and sometimes distributed to hunger-relief agencies. In recent years, there has been modest growth in using community garden plots to raise food crops for sale to local restaurants or other buyers.

Community gardens often generate avid support and participation. They provide layers of benefits, including the production of healthy food and the opportunity to garden for people who don't have such opportunities at their home. They add green space to a community, encourage active living, and provide space for social interaction.

Local governments must balance an appreciation of community gardens with their responsibility to ensure that the garden is maintained adequately, the soil is uncontaminated, and the garden site is a safe place for people to come and go. A poorly managed garden can be smelly, visually blighting, or a source of soil and chemical

runoff. Community gardens may also generate policy concerns related to the loss of the land for redevelopment, if more intensive development of the property is seen as contributing more to the community's goals or the tax base.

Local governments that value the benefits of community gardens have a number of ways to help community gardens get on more permanent footing, or to provide other types of beneficial support. Some cities have established a goal of no net loss of garden space. Others make public lands available to community gardens by lease or sale. Practical assistance can be offered, such as testing soils for contamination in potentially polluted areas, or providing access to a water supply. Some cities have even allowed connections to fire hydrants when there is no other water source.

Local governments also play an oversight role. The establishment of clear standards for community gardens can ensure that they are compatible neighbors. Ensuring good garden management may require a designated organizational entity that takes overall responsibility for garden conditions and operations.

COMMUNITY GARDENS SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY III

[Local government] will support the establishment and maintenance of community gardens throughout the community to provide residents with easy access to healthy food.

- Establish clear policy support for community gardens, while determining the appropriate balance between community gardens and land redevelopment.
- Ensure permanent sites and a "no net loss" policy for community gardening space in underserved areas. Where relocation is necessary, provide clear and early disclosure, and help gardens get established in new locations.
- Provide for community gardens in zoning regulations by defining it as an allowed use in residential zoning districts, with clear site and operational standards.
- Provide proactive support for community gardens through soil testing, water provision, or leasing publicly owned property to gardens.
- Encourage community gardens to take on outreach and education related to growing healthy food, and to partner with schools, nursing homes, food shelves, local restaurants, and nurseries as outlets for produce.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Community Garden Policy Reference Guide (Public Health Law Center, 2012)
publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/PHLC%20Community%20Garden%20Policy%20Guide%202012_0.pdf

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Community gardens need a long-term site, with access to water and tool storage, in order to reach their potential with respect to food production and community building.
- Balanced policies around community gardens demonstrate appreciation for the benefits of community gardening and the benefits of land development.
- Community gardens are often embedded in residential neighborhoods, making their responsible management more important.
- Requiring a responsible party, and adopting site and operational standards for community gardens, builds support for community gardens from neighbors, mitigates impacts, and promotes public health.
- More park and recreation departments are recognizing that community gardening is an active form of recreation and a valid use of some public park land.

FOOD AGGREGATION + PROCESSING + DISTRIBUTION

GOAL STATEMENT

Facilitate and support the development of small- and mid-sized processors of healthy food.

OVERVIEW

Aggregators, processors, and distributors occupy the middle of the food supply chain, between food growers and consumers. Amassing raw agricultural products and ingredients from various sources, these intermediaries manufacture, package, and distribute food products. At one time, food was commonly aggregated, processed, and distributed at local and regional scales. Today, much of our food processing is carried out on a large scale by national and global corporations, many miles from the origin of the food and many miles from the consumer.

A food infrastructure with robust local and regionally-scaled supply chains offers many benefits:

- Expanded business opportunities and jobs in local communities
- Increased circulation of dollars in local economies from purchasing locally made products
- Greater fresh food supply in communities
- More resilient food supply with multiple sources and scales
- Greater social and environmental sustainability

Local government policies and programs can play an important role in supporting the growth of food processing and distribution businesses, such as innovative, network-based approaches in Minnesota. (See link to "The Status of Food Hubs in Minnesota" on the next page.) These efforts currently occur mostly at regional or state levels.

There is increased consumer interest in healthy, minimally-processed food. Small- and mid-sized processors often create food products that fit this description. These businesses often source ingredients from particular farms where milk or meat is produced or fruits and vegetables are grown. A tight relationship between food processing businesses and their suppliers provides a benefit to all parties. Suppliers have a dependable buyer. The food ingredients they supply are of known quality. And consumer confidence is increased in the quality of the foods they purchase.

The food supply chain can also evolve to meet specific needs of ethnic communities. These groups are often seeking food products that represent cultural comfort foods, deliver familiar flavors, or are consistent with dietary requirements or prohibitions.

Small- and medium-scaled aggregators, processors, and distributors require investment, development, and support to respond to consumer interests and provide an economic engine for Minnesota communities. Access to technical support and financing are often critical for such businesses to launch and succeed.

Co-location of businesses, or food incubator setups, are another way of supporting the development and growth of food related businesses. This approach can mean shared space and customer bases; there is also synergy between these businesses and farms that supply their raw ingredients.

Another variation of co-location is the shared-use kitchen. This kind of space serves as an affordable location for food production entrepreneurs and caterers, who use the kitchen in scheduled shifts to can, freeze, and prepare food in batches large enough to sell.

Communities have re-purposed institutional kitchens, allowing local food processors to avoid the high cost of opening a private commercial kitchen while enjoying access to a licensed facility. These kitchens may also rent space for community organizations and events.

FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support the development of local food-processing businesses.

- Develop or expand business grant and loan programs to help with start-up and capital costs.
- Work to clarify and streamline business-licensing processes for food-processing businesses.
- Ensure that there are reliable educational opportunities for food-processing entrepreneurs to learn about food safety.
- Review local zoning restrictions on food-processing businesses to determine whether additional locational flexibility can be provided under appropriate conditions.
- Take steps to reduce barriers to business creation by people of color and other low-resourced communities.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Because start-up costs can be high and profit margins slim for food processing entrepreneurs, business development support is critical.
- Processing food involves food safety regulation at the federal, state, and local levels. Both business owners and local health departments must learn about safety requirements and work together to facilitate safe food production.
- Many food-processing entrepreneurs are members of immigrant groups, such as halal meat producers. Relationships between these businesses, local governments, and community members, as well as a mutual willingness to learn, need to be nurtured in order to promote success.
- University Extension services can be a good resource for food processing businesses.
- Often zoning codes confine food processing uses to industrial districts. However, small-scale facilities can be compatible in neighborhood commercial districts, particularly when they offer some product for sale at the front of the store.
- Local government actions related to business development and support may be carried out through a city or county department, or a public authority such as a Community Development Authority, Economic Development Authority, or Port Authority.
- Given our state's short growing season, frozen and canned foods are an important component of the local food system and food economy.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

The Status of Food Hubs in Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 2015)
www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/docs/4aff7b81-e4c7-4c4f-a10b-c387e442cc9e.pdf

HEALTHY RETAIL

GOAL STATEMENT

Expand reliable access to food retail options that offer safe, affordable, healthy food.

OVERVIEW

An important aspect of improving access to healthy foods is simply bringing healthy food products closer to where people live. Unfortunately, the reality for many urban neighborhoods and small towns is that there are no convenient places to buy a broad range of healthy groceries. Areas like this are sometimes designated "food opportunity zones" (also referred to by some as 'food deserts').

A hierarchy of strategies can be pursued to bring healthy food closer to households that need it. Underserved communities will generally prefer the option that provides the greatest benefits in terms of affordability, variety, and quality. A supermarket opening in an underserved area is a clear win. But a consumer market not large enough to financially support a traditional supermarket might be able to attract a smaller-format grocery store (such as an Aldi store), an ethnic market, or a food co-op. Even communities with food retail options limited to corner stores, gas station convenience stores, or pharmacies may be able to upgrade the product mix to include fresh and healthy foods. And a new farmer's market, commercial space in a food hub or commercial kitchen, and CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) drop-off sites can also play a limited role in expanding food options.

Each of these strategies can address important needs. Consideration of the specific economic and real estate market and retail context of a particular community is extremely important for determining the best strategy for improving its grocery and food environment.

GROCERY STORES

There is no more direct way to improve a neighborhood's or small town's access to healthy food than to open a grocery store. Convenient access to a grocery store improves the health of nearby communities, making for better lives and reduced medical costs. A grocery store can serve as a retail anchor that strengthens a surrounding business district and attracts new retail businesses. And it can make a notable difference in attracting residents to the community and retaining existing residents.

But attracting a grocery store to an underserved area is a complex endeavor. Because grocery stores are low-margin businesses, financial success is highly sensitive to factors such as competition, income and demographics, ease of access by mass transit users, bicyclists, and pedestrians, perceptions (right or wrong) of safety, and the strength of the distribution network. These factors play out very differently in the two areas of our state that are especially needy—underserved urban neighborhoods and underserved areas of Greater Minnesota.

A lot of attention is being given to this issue across the country. In Minnesota, the Good Food Access Fund initiative is pursuing legislation that would provide capital, financing, and technical assistance for retail grocery and other point-of-sale development to ensure that all of the state's communities have access to retail settings that sell affordable, healthy food.

From a local government perspective, attracting a grocery store represents an asset-building strategy in a needy area. The relevant expertise often present in the staff of local government can make it a valued partner in working through the complexities of a local grocery store initiative.

GROCERY STORES SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will partner in efforts to bring a new grocery store business to the community/underserved location.

- Play an active role in a coalition that includes community, health, economic development, community financing, and/or food organizations who share the goal of this policy, with a focus on building community awareness and taking collaborative action on a well-informed strategy.
- With the coalition, devote time to understanding the intricacies and challenges of establishing a grocery store in the target area.
- Contribute to the research needed for establishing realistic expectations and an appropriate strategy.
- Modify zoning codes that may restrict or not permit grocery stores, particularly in neighborhood commercial districts near residential uses.
- Streamline the permitting process for development of grocery stores and other stores selling healthy food in identified high-need areas.
- Consider proactive steps that can build toward attracting a grocery store developer/business owner—such as assessing potential business locations, identifying and building relationships with potential retailers, gathering consumer data that a grocery store operator may need to consider a store opening, and offering public financial support and other incentives.
- Build relationships with people working on this issue at the state-wide level to take advantage of resources they can offer and learn about potential changes and improvements.

POLICY II

[Local government] will identify mechanisms for supporting existing grocery stores, while encouraging upgrades in the prominence and marketing of the healthy foods they offer.

- Consider strategies similar to the Small Food Market strategies (discussed on the next page), to help existing stores upgrade the prominence and attractiveness of their healthy food offerings.
- Consider extending local government financial support for existing store expansion, remodeling, or equipment upgrades.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Strong partnerships between local government and other stakeholders and advocates are important for bringing needed energy to the complex issues of attracting a grocery store and make for stronger customer support after opening.
- Because of its many benefits to the public, the development of a grocery store can justify public financial support, but only where the store will generate sufficient sales to cover operating expenses.
- Small towns and rural regions of Minnesota are particularly vulnerable. Many already lack adequate access to grocery stores. Furthermore, many small town grocers will retire in the next five years; over 70% of them report having no succession plan in place.
- Industry-specific market research may be needed to assess the viability of, and need for, a new grocery store in a given location.
- Grocery store experience is hard-won. An experienced owner or manager of a successful store in a comparable location might be a good candidate for opening a store locally.

SMALL FOOD MARKETS

Some neighborhoods or small towns lack the convenience of having a traditional full-service grocery store nearby. In these locations, people make use of other options, such as convenience stores, ethnic markets, corner stores, pharmacies, or gas stations. In many cases these businesses stock a wide assortment of snack foods and packaged staple foods, but a much smaller array of food that is healthy and fresh. This can have a big impact on the diets and health of the people who depend on these stores.

The product mix stocked in small food markets is not accidental. Healthier food choices may be in lower demand than the typical products that convenience stores carry, and they may have lower profit margins. Storing, stocking, and displaying perishable foods require different equipment and merchandising skills than products with long shelf lives do. Without some support and coaching, it can be easy for well-intentioned store owners to fail in efforts to stock fresh food.

> "Convenience stores can be leaders in supplying communities with healthy options that also support local food businesses."
>
> **Lonnie McQuirter**
> *Owner,*
> *36LYN Refuel Station*

A number of initiatives in recent years have shown success in adding healthy and fresh food choices to small food stores. Sometimes called "corner store initiatives," most have been focused on limited-resource urban neighborhoods, although elements of these programs seem adaptable to other settings. They use a partnership approach, building ongoing relationships with interested store owners and bringing them the resources and training needed to add healthy and fresh foods step by step. They also offer market makeovers—physical improvements that include adding new equipment, moving healthy food products to more prominent locations in the store, and providing attractive display materials.

Ideally, such initiatives also add a community partnership dimension, which can include advertising the store improvements in the town or neighborhood, or doing more general food and health education with neighborhood residents to promote the benefits of healthy foods. Communities can even be directly involved in making store upgrades. In Los Angeles, local youth leaders are engaged in making the physical changes in stores, and then serve as health advocates who raise awareness through presentations, videos, and other forms of media.

Most programs nationally have been led by nonprofit organizations with missions related to food access or community health. In Minnesota, there are prominent programs led by local governments and funded by the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). There are also retailers that are taking the initiative in this area.

Some local governments have experimented with adding a requirement, as a condition of store licensing, that storeowners stock a certain amount of fresh food. If not paired with other programmatic elements, however, this can simply result in potatoes sitting on a lower shelf in the back of the store. As such, a "carrot approach" may be more appropriate than a "stick approach." Upgrades in equipment and displays, training in produce management, and community partnerships make a big difference in outcomes.

SMALL FOOD MARKETS SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY III

[Local government] will play a proactive partnership role in efforts to support the efforts of small food stores to sell more healthy and fresh foods.

- Build constructive relationships with store owners, to foster improvements in healthy food offerings, as well as extending general assistance in business planning and technical support.
- Play a full partnership role in a coalition of civic, health-oriented, community organizations, and individuals who are interested in a small food store initiative.
- With the coalition, devote time to understanding the best practices for healthy food makeovers in small food stores.
- Offer funding to purchase equipment and merchandising options that provide appealing displays of healthy options.
- Consider the provision of financial or technical support to small food store businesses.
- Stay informed on corner store initiatives in peer cities and on emerging statewide initiatives and resources.
- Pursue relationships with small food store owners or convenience store chains outside of the community, who demonstrate a commitment to providing affordable, healthy food, and who may be willing to establish a store in a community.
- Consider a staple foods ordinance, which would require small food stores to sell a certain amount of basic food items including fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, and dairy products.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Simply expecting small food stores to start stocking healthy and fresh food products is not effective in the long run. If the new food products don't benefit the business financially, they are not likely to be maintained over time. Step-by-step changes and ongoing support are critical.
- Effective training likely requires the engagement of a knowledgeable and energetic grocery store consultant.
- Fresh foods may require an innovative supply chain. Traditional suppliers for small food stores may require purchases of produce in large quantities that don't work for these stores.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Healthier Corner Stores: Positive Impacts, Profitable Changes (The Food Trust)
thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/healthier-corner-stores-positive-impacts-and-profitable-changes.original.pdf

POLLINATORS

ACT

GOAL STATEMENT

Support the health of pollinators through improvements to municipal practices and communication with local residents and businesses.

OVERVIEW

Declining populations of pollinators have raised concern nationally and in Minnesota. Beekeepers are on the front line of this attrition, seeing more frequent collapses of their honeybee colonies.

Pollinators such as bees, butterflies, birds, bats, moths, and other insects facilitate pollen transfer and reproduction of a wide variety of fruits, nuts, vegetables, animal forages, fiber crops, and native plants. This is a critical ecological role, and it is crucial for the production of food for humans. Many of the fruits and vegetables we eat could not be grown in the absence of insect pollinators.

The reduction in pollinator populations is caused by many factors, including use of agricultural chemicals and reductions in pollinator habitat.

Actions that support pollinators fall in three categories:

1. **Reducing negative impacts on pollinators.** An example is taking steps to reduce the use of pesticides that are harmful to pollinators.
2. **Improving or preserving existing pollinator habitat.** This may involve changes to mowing practices, rooting out invasive plant species, or overseeding with indigenous and pollinator-friendly seed mixes.
3. **Creating new pollinator habitat.** Areas of lawns, boulevards, and farm fringes can be converted to pollinator habitat.

Local governments can play an important role in educating their citizens about these actions. They can raise awareness of the need for pollinator-friendly practices and landscapes among landowners. And they can give people tools and resources for making such improvements.

Properties such as municipal facilities, parks, roads and road edges, drainage ditches, and utility corridors offer a tremendous opportunity to adopt practices and nurture landscapes that support pollinators. While budgets for managing public land are often very tight, changing the way land is managed does not always add significant cost. In some cases pollinator-friendly landscapes require less maintenance than grass lawns or other traditional ground covers.

Initially, local governments should expect some additional effort and expense to support these changes. Staff training will be needed to manage land differently. The good news is that changes can be made over time. Consistent small steps can add up to a big difference.

DEFINITION

Pollinator-friendly landscapes typically include a variety of native plants with nectar-rich flowers that bloom in succession throughout the growing season. Other features might include nesting habitat for pollinators or food for their offspring.

POLLINATORS SAMPLE PLAN LANGUAGE

POLICY I

[Local government] will support property owners in the establishment and expansion of pollinator-friendly landscapes.

- Use local government communication outlets to educate and encourage city residents and property owners on improving pollinator-supportive practices.
- Take steps to link people to practical how-to resources, such as the best management practices information for yards, gardens and agricultural landscapes published by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources, and University Extension Services.
- Support the growth of organizations that educate property owners and communities on pollinator-friendly practices and facilitate their adoption.
- Establish or encourage low-cost distribution of pollinator-friendly plant seeds and landscape mixes.
- Review lawn maintenance ordinances to ensure that pollinator-friendly landscapes are not prohibited or overly restricted, while distinguishing between these landscapes and overgrown or unmaintained yards.
- Modify development and subdivision ordinances and review procedures to ensure that new townhome and single-family developments do not include association provisions preventing residents from installing pollinator friendly landscapes.

POLICY II

[Local government] will review management of locally owned public land, and take steps to increase its contribution to pollinator health.

- Inventory municipal land such as parks, rights of ways, municipal facility properties, and drainage ditches to identify existing pollinator-friendly landscapes. Assess their quality for pollinator habitat and identify opportunities for adding new areas of pollinator-friendly landscape. Establish demonstration projects with signage to educate the public.
- Take progressive steps to revise property management practices to increase the land area and improve the quality of landscapes for pollinator habitat.
- Provide staff training in best management practices for the development and maintenance of pollinator-friendly landscapes.
- Adopt city practices that reduce or eliminate the use of systemic pesticides, including neonicotinoids, on publicly owned and managed land.

READ MORE ABOUT THE TOPIC

Pollinator Friendly Parks
www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/pollinator_friendly_parks_21ed_xerces_society.pdf

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Residents will need to adapt to new aesthetic approaches to landscaping, which may require a period of communication and education.
- Cities and counties can create new pollinator habitats by establishing new landscapes along roads and utilities easements they own and manage. Government maintenance staff will require training to manage these landscapes.
- New roadside landscapes must address important considerations related to maintaining driver sightlines and the accumulation of blowing trash.
- The time required to manage new landscapes matters.
- Reductions in pesticide use must be balanced against the risks to crop health from insect infestation.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOOD

AGGREGATION: The collection of food from multiple growers to generate quantities compatible with wholesale food markets.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY: The systemic practice of breeding and raising farm animals.

AQUAPONICS: A system that combines growing plants and raising aquatic animals in water.

COMMERCIAL KITCHEN: A space to prepare food for commercial uses such as a restaurant or food processing facility, which is compliant with legal requirements and has equipment to prepare food at a large scale.

COMMODITY CROP: Crops that can be grown in large quantities, stored for a long time, and easily traded.

COMMUNITY GARDEN: A single plot of land gardened collectively by a group of people or a plot of land divided into sub-plots for individual food production.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA): A farm operation supported by members, who purchase shares and receive regular deliveries of numerous food products raised by the farm.

COTTAGE FOOD OPERATION: An enterprise at a private home where specific low-risk food products are made or repackaged for sale to consumers.

DISTRIBUTION: The process of dividing up and delivering food to wholesale, retail, and institutional settings.

FARMERS MARKET: A market where numerous local vendors sell locally raised and processed food products and other items directly to consumers.

FARMSTAND: A structure that displays and sells agricultural goods.

FOOD ACCESS: The ability of a person or group of people to obtain healthy food, depending on factors such as physical access, seasonal availability, affordability, knowledge, or cultural attitudes.

FOOD BANK: An aggregation site where food is collected and distributed to hunger relief programs.

FOOD CHARTER: A document developed through a broad- based public process that expresses a clear and compelling vision for how all residents will be able to obtain healthy, affordable, and safe food.

FOOD DESERT: An area, where residents have limited or no access to healthy, affordable, and unprocessed food, including fresh produce. Often referred to as "food opportunity zones."

FOOD ENVIRONMENT: The overall community context associated with food, including places where food is distributed, purchased, prepared, or consumed—such as grocery stores, supermarkets, farmers markets, community gardens, food shelters, restaurants, schools, and worksites.

FOOD HUB: An entity that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of food sourced primarily from nearby growers to meet wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

FOOD LITERACY: The knowledge of where one's food comes from—farm to table and beyond—as well as the knowledge of how to grow, plan, purchase, preserve, and/or prepare food for eating.

FOOD MOVEMENT: A broad term describing individuals and groups taking the initiative to ensure a resilient, safe, fair, and healthy food system for all.

FOOD POLICY: Principles and guidelines related to production, distribution, and consumption of food.

FOOD POLICY COUNCILS: A group of stakeholders who examine how the food system is operating and develop recommendations that support the development of policies and programs to improve regional, state, or local food systems.

FOOD SECURITY: Consistent access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food in adequate amounts.

FOOD INNOVATION DISTRICT: An approach to land use that fosters economic benefits of food-focused businesses clustered near each other with shared resources such as markets, business incubators, and facilities for shared storage, packing, and distribution needs.

FOOD SHELF: A local resource that supplies free and/or low-cost food to residents experiencing hunger and food insecurity.

FOOD SYSTEM: Policies, decisions, activities, knowledge, resources, actors, relationships, sectors, and organizational structures that result

in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, purchasing, preparation, preservation, acquisition, consumption, and disposal of food.

FOOD TRUCK: A vehicle with facilities for cooking and selling food.

HEALTHY FOOD: A diverse selection of nutritious foods that nourish the body and promote health.

HOOP HOUSE: A plastic-covered structure large enough to grow food crops that is heated by sun and cooled by wind.

HYDROPONICS: Cultivation of plants in water, oftentimes indoors with an established system that includes timed lighting and added nutrients.

INSTITUTIONAL FOOD: Food that is prepared and served in institutional settings such as schools and hospitals. Food served in institutional settings can be prepared from scratch or industrially manufactured, lightly or heavily processed, and prepared for a large number of consumers at one time.

KITCHEN INCUBATOR: Also known as a culinary incubator, is a space available for small-scale food-related businesses, such as catering and wholesale food businesses.

LIGHT PROCESSING: Food that has undergone minimal changes to its original form and includes little to no additives or preservatives (such as rolled oats, bread flour, fresh-squeezed orange juice, cheese, or blanched and frozen fruits or vegetables).

NUTRIENT-RICH FOODS: Foods that provide a high-level of vitamins and minerals needed for a healthy, complete diet.

PROCESSED FOOD: Food that has undergone a range of processing from light to more substantial. Processed food can be frozen or shelf-stable. Highly refined, processed foods can lack substantial nutrient value.

PRODUCTION: Growing plants and raising animals intended for consumption, including fruits, vegetables, grains, meats, dairy products, and eggs.

SCALING UP (FOOD): Expanding from farmer-direct sales of small quantities of food to wholesale transactions with institutional-sized vendors.

SECTOR: A distinct subset of a market, society, industry, or economy, whose components share common characteristics (e.g. health sector).

SYSTEM: A collection of parts or components that interact with one another to function as a whole.

URBAN AGRICULTURE/FARMING: Growing food in or around a town or city; can include food crops, animal husbandry, aquaculture, and small-scale beekeeping.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS PLANNING

ACCESS TO CAPITAL: The opportunity to obtain financing (e.g. loans, grants, or investors) to support the development of an enterprise.

BUILDING CODE: Local government regulations that regulate building construction and may require permits for structures as well as electrical, mechanical, plumbing, fencing and other construction-related activities.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT: All buildings, roads, utilities, homes, fixtures, parks, and all other structures that form the physical character of a community. (APA)

CODE (CITY CODE, MUNICIPAL CODE): A set ordinances that govern and regulate a community.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT: A permit that authorizes usages not consistent with the zoning ordinance on a defined site. A public hearing is required in order to obtain a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), and approval is usually contingent on fulfillment of certain conditions by the developer. Approval of a CUP doesn't represent a change in zoning. (Greenbelt Alliance)

COMMUNITY CHARACTER: The image of a community or area as defined by factors such as its built environment, natural features and open spaces elements, type of housing, architectural style, infrastructure, and the type and quality of public facilities and services. (APA)

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: The adopted official statement of a legislative body of a local government that sets forth (in words, maps, illustrations, and/or tables) goals, policies, and guidelines intended to direct the present and future physical, social, and economic development that occurs within its planning jurisdiction and that includes unified physical design for the public and private development of land and water. (APA)

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS: Building and land standards and criteria related to design, use, and operation, required to obtain land use approval.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW: The process conducted by a jurisdiction for development standard review and official approval of applications for any of the following: 1) site development plan; 2) zoning or rezoning; 3) conditional use permit; 4) planned unit development; 5) variance; 6) final or preliminary subdivision plan; 7) annexation; 8) lot merger. (APA modified)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Efforts to improve a place's economic prosperity and quality of life through jobs creation, income growth, and tax revenue.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: A governmental entity offering programs and services that attract and grow businesses, employment, and workforces.

INCOMPATIBLE LAND USE: The proximity of one or more land uses to another use when the former is not compatible with the latter; for example, a manufacturing plant next to a single family home.

LAND USE: The occupation, utilization, and/or designated differentiation of land based on type of use. Typical land use categories of varying densities include residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, parks, open space, transportation, vacant, agriculture, and water.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS: Policies passed by elected officials or government agencies that influence behavior. including constitutions, charters, statutes, codes, ordinances, resolutions, orders, agency regulations, and proclamations.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: An umbrella term used to describe elected bodies of government at the local level. This includes township boards, city councils, and county boards of commissioners.

LOCAL PURCHASING: A financial strategy of buying goods and services from local companies.

MUNICIPAL CODE: Systematic collection or revision of laws, rules, ordinances, or regulations of a city, town, or local governmental unit

ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND STANDARDS: Formal policies or standards adopted by businesses, organizations, and government entities that address how they operate, and which may impact employees, members, volunteers, or visitors on their property

OFFICIAL CONTROLS: "official controls" or "controls" means ordinances and regulations which control the physical development of a city, county or town or any part thereof or any detail thereof and implement the general objectives of the comprehensive plan. Official controls may include ordinances establishing zoning, subdivision controls, site plan regulations, sanitary codes, building codes and official maps.

PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY DESIGN: Describes a street or area that has sufficient built environment infrastructure to support a safe and comfortable walking experience.

PLANNING: The decision-making process in which community goals and objectives are established, existing resources and conditions analyzed, strategies developed, investments targeted, and development controls enacted to achieve these goals and objectives. The purpose of planning is to further the health, safety, and welfare of people and their communities by creating beneficial, equitable, efficient, and healthy environments for present and future generations. (APA)

PLANNING COMMISSION: An advisory board, appointed by a local unit of government, which makes recommendations to this local government, regarding short- and long-range planning, planning studies, planning review, budgeting, site and building review, and zoning approvals.

PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD): A special zoning district regulating a specific parcel of land for which a development plan has been prepared with greater flexibility than the zoning code permits while still in accordance with the general purpose of the code.

POLICY: Any written plan or course of action designed to influence and determine decisions. Examples of local policies that increase access to healthy food include resolutions, local planning, zoning, licensing and use agreements, government contracts, and budgeting.

REGIONAL PLANNING: Land use and infrastructure planning at a scale larger than township, city, and often county, level. Focus of regional planning is often on issues that cannot be adequately addressed at the local level such as environmental, transportation, economic, and social needs.

REZONING: The process of changing the zoning designation for a parcel of land or collection of parcels. This may include a change in density (e.g., low density residential to medium density residential) or change in use (e.g., industrial to residential).

SETBACK: A minimum or maximum distance as required by the zoning code that must be maintained between two structures or improvements; structures and property lines, or structures and the public right-of-way.

SUBDIVISION: A larger parcel of land split into smaller parcels to facilitate a parcel of land divided from a larger area. Its purpose is to split a large tract of land into smaller ones that are easier to develop and can be developed independently of one another to increase growth and maximize the use of space.

URBAN DESIGN (COMMUNITY DESIGN): Process and product of giving form, in terms of both function and aesthetic and social beauty—to selected areas or to whole cities. It is concerned with the location, mass, and design of various community components and combines elements of urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. (APA)

VARIANCE: A zoning approval granted to waive a specific requirement of the zoning code when "practical difficulties" exist. Variances can be requested to vary from use requirements (e.g., permitting gardening in a district that does not allow it) or area requirements (e.g. allowing a chicken coop to be built beyond the property setbacks).

ZONING: The process of dividing a township, city, or county into different areas, or zones, to control and specify allowable land use; characteristics, design, mass, and setback of buildings; and mitigate potential nuisances or impacts. Zoning regulations include zoning code text, which outlines the specific regulations for the district, and the zoning map, which visually represents the various districts. It is a primary tool for implementing the comprehensive plan.

ZONING ENTITLEMENTS: descriptions of what can be built "by right" on a particular property under the current rules and regulations of the zoning code, the comprehensive plan and any other regulatory restrictions.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS EQUITY AND HEALTH

COLLECTIVE IMPACT: A commitment by a group of organizations from different sectors to solve a complex, systemic social problem by using
a common agenda, aligning their efforts, and employing common measures of success.

EQUITY: (Center for the Study of Social Policy). In the context of the food system, all communities—regardless of socioeconomic status, geography, race, ethnicity, gender, or immigration status—have access to a food system that is fair, healthy, and affordable.

HEALTH: According to the World Health Organization, a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being—not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

HEALTH DISPARITIES: Preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations. (Centers for Disease Control)

HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES: A collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into decision-making across sectors and policy areas. (Public Health Institute)

INSTITUTIONAL DECISION-MAKERS: Individuals belonging to an organization—particularly in the public, educational, and charitable realms—who administer or have significant influence over food, agriculture, and health-related outcomes.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: Conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work, and age, including housing, education, gender, access to healthcare and healthy food, safety, and security. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. (World Health Organization)

RESOURCES

LAND USE

Establishing Land Use Protections for Community Gardens
www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/communitygardenpolicies_303374_7.pdf

Establishing Land Use Protections for Farmers Markets
www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/resources__establishing20land20use20protections20for20farmers2720_final_091203.pdf

From the Ground Up: Land Use Policies to Protect and Promote Farmer's Markets
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/From_the_Ground_Up-Farmers_Markets_FINAL_20130415.pdf

League of Minnesota Cities Handbook for Minnesota Cities (Chapters 14 & 15) - http://www.lmc.org/media/document/1/chapter14.pdf?inline=true
www.lmc.org/media/document/1/chapter15.pdf?inline=true

Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Urban_Ag_SeedingTheCity_FINAL_(CLS_20120530)_20111021_0.pdf

Ten American Cities Lead the Way with Urban Agriculture Ordinances
seedstock.com/2014/05/27/10-american-cities-lead-the-way-with-urban-agriculture-ordinances/

Urban Agriculture Activity Plan
www.minneapolisparks.org/_asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf

HOUSING

A Primer on Qualified Allocation Plans: Linking Public Health and Affordable Housing
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/QAP-Primer_Public-Health_Affordable-Housing_FINAL_20150305.pdf

Under One Roof: Model Healthy Housing Policies for Comprehensive Plans
www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/under-one-roof

TRANSPORTATION

How Does Transportation Impact Health?
www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2012/10/how-does-transportation-impact-health-.html

Transportation Health Impact Assessment Toolkit
www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/transportation/hia_toolkit.htm

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Food Innovation Districts: A Economic Gardening Tool
foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/files/fid-guide.pdf

Local Food and Economic Development
www.mayorsinnovation.org/images/uploads/pdf/Food_and_Economic_Development_Brief_updated.pdf

Massachusetts Food Systems Plan
www.mapc.org/mafoodplan

Moving Food Along the Value Chain
www.redtomato.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/USDA.pdf

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

2020 Plan for Henderson County: Agriculture Element (excerpt)
www.hendersoncountync.org/planning/ccp/sections/13_ag_element.pdf

Farmland and Open Space Preservation Tools Report
www.co.washington.wi.us/departments.iml?mdl=departments.mdl&ID=PLN (Click on Farmland and Open Space Preservation Tools Report tab)

Planning for an Agricultural Future
www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/FINAL_NCP4Ag_AFT_1.pdf

Preserving Minnesota's Agricultural Land: Proposed Policy Solutions
www.flaginc.org/publication/preserving-minnesotas-agricultural-land-proposed-policy-solutions/

HEALTHY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

A Guide to Local Food System Planning for Scott County
www.scottcountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1365

A Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning
www.planning.org/publications/book/9026878/

Building Healthy Communities
uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Building-Healthy-Places-Toolkit.pdf

Counties and Local Food Systems
www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/LocalFoodSystems_1.pdf

Food Access Policy and Planning Guide (King County, WA)
www.nyc.gov/html/ddc/downloads/pdf/ActiveDesignWebinar/King%20County%20Food%20Access%20Guide.pdf

Food Policy Blueprint
livewellcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1_final-food-policy-blueprint.pdf

Growing Local Food Systems: A Case Study Series on the Role of Local Governments
foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/files/15-454_Local_Food_Systems_Case_Studies_Series-FINAL.pdf

Healthy Food, Healthy Communities
www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/HFHC_FULL_FINAL_20120110.PDF

Healthy Plan Making
planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/research/publichealth/pdf/healthyplanningreport.pdf

How to Create and Implement Healthy General Plans
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Healthy_General_Plans_Toolkit_Updated_20120517_0.pdf

Northeast Minnesota Healthy Comprehensive Plan Project
www.plannersconference.com/pdf/sessions/SHIP%20Pre%20Conf%20Local%20Food%20NE%20MN.pdf

Planning for Food Access and Community-Based Food Systems: A National Scan and Evaluation of Local Comprehensive and Sustainability Plans
planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy_resources/research/foodaccess/pdf/foodaccessreport.pdf

Planning to Eat? Innovative Local Government Plans and Policies to Build Healthy Food Systems in the United States
cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/planning_to_eat_sunybuffalo.pdf

Promoting Food Access with Comprehensive Planning and Ordinances
designforhealth.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/BCBS_ISFood_090107.pdf

South Carolina Health and Planning Toolkit
eatsmartmovemoresc.org/pdf/SCHealthyToolkit.pdf

HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL

Health on the Shelf
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health_on_the_Shelf_FINAL_20130322-web.pdf

Incentives for Change
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Incentives-for-Change-Small-Food-Stores_FINAL_20140131_2.pdf

Providing Fresh Produce in Small Food Stores
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Fresh-Produce-Distribution-Small-Food-Stores_FINAL_20140131.pdf

Licensing for Lettuce: A Guide to the Model Licensing Ordinance for Healthy Food Retailers
www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Licensing_for_Lettuce_FINAL_20130212_0.pdf

POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY HABITATS

National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators
www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/Pollinator%20Health%20Strategy%202015.pdf

Minnesota Pollinator Resources
www.dnr.state.mn.us/pollinator_resources/index.html

Creating reliable access to safe, affordable, and healthy food is an important way to ensure health for all. It requires a systemic method—one that spans the entire food supply from seed to table and beyond, with many partners, sectors, and agendas. That's why it's helpful for planners and their partners in healthy food access to adopt a comprehensive approach that includes policy, systems, and environmental changes across the food system, as well as to make equity a core feature. Deeper collaboration between planners and healthy food advocates offers great promise in supporting the health and prosperity of all communities.

We hope this Guide is used by community planners and healthy food advocates alike, together developing comprehensive plans that build health for everyone. Dog ear your favorite pages!

Eric Weiss, *Food Access Planning Guide Project Lead*
Miguel Goebel and Cara Letofsky, *Food Access Planning Guide Advisory Committee Co-Chairs*

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Cover Photo Credit (of community planning process)

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For a digital copy of the Minnesota Food Charter Food Access Planning Guide, go to: mnfoodcharter.com/planningguide

Minnesota FOOD CHARTER
For Our Healthy Future

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