



Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County

Local Food Action Plan 2020 - 2024



FOOD POLICY
COUNCIL
of Buffalo & Erie County



Buffalo and Erie County **Local Food Action Plan**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
Process & Vision.....	3
Goals, Recommended Actions, and Implementation.....	4
Introduction.....	5
What is a Food System? Why Plan for a Food System?.....	5
What is the Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council?	5
Planning Process.....	6
The Impact of COVID-19.....	6
Vision, Goals, and Recommended Actions.....	8
The Need for Action.....	8
Our Vision	8
The Plan.....	8
Agriculture	9
<i>Community Gardens</i>	10
Economic Development.....	12
Education.....	15
Environment and Climate Change.....	18
Food Access.....	20
Health	22
The Future of the Plan & Implementation.....	24
Implementation Matrix.....	25
Review.....	32
Ongoing Review	32
Five-Year Review	32
Appendices.....	33
Appendix A.....	33
Appendix B	35



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buffalo and Erie County Local Food Action Plan (BECLFAP) seeks to support and provide a framework for a local, healthy, equitable, and prosperous food system for Buffalo and Erie County.

A food system as described cannot be achieved without collaborative work from local government, businesses, organizations, and the residents of our region. THE BECLFAP represents a framework for these entities to play a role in bettering our regional food system.

This Executive Summary offers a high-level overview of the BECLFAP. We encourage you to read the chapters and appendices in full to gain a better understanding of our shared vision.

Process & Vision

The Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council (FPC) strives to build and strengthen a sustainable and just regional food system through policy recommendations, awareness, education and advocacy. The FPC seeks to accomplish these goals by providing local governments, as well as institutions and residents, information and advice about various policies and programs that support community-based food systems. These systems emphasize, strengthen, and make visible the relationships among producers, processors, distributors, and consumers of food at the local level. The economic benefits of a well-functioning community-based food system include: a well-functioning food system improves urban and rural economic growth by building linkages between producers and consumers and keeping more food dollars in the local community. The FPC can also address issues of food security; land use; access to healthy, fresh, and affordable food; procurement of locally produced food; and barriers in permitting and licensing that discourage access to and development of healthy, fresh, and affordable food retail.

The vision of adopting a Food Action Plan has long been a goal of the FPC and planning began in earnest in early 2019. The planning process was informed by current and former members of the FPC, community leaders, and local advocates. With input from community leaders and constituents, the FPC focused on six priority areas that emerged through our initial participatory efforts. Those six themes are: **Agriculture, Economic Development, Education, Environment and Climate Change, Food Access, and Health**. A subcommittee of the FPC (the working committee) focused their planning efforts within these priority areas and drafted goals and recommended actions that would best effect change within these areas.

Goals, Recommended Actions, and Implementation

The Plan is organized into six priority areas. Each priority area is then subcategorized into themes with corresponding goals, action statements, and a listing of potential partner agencies.

It is the FPC's hope that these recommended actions will serve as a guide for local governments, agencies, institutions, residents, and community groups as they take steps to improve regional food systems.

<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Economic Development</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Environment and Climate Change</i>	<i>Food Access</i>	<i>Health</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban Agriculture• Farmers Markets• Community Gardens• Farmland Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business Development• Procurement• Workforce Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consumers• Students• Elected Officials• Early Childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food & Food-Related Waste Management• Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food Availability• Food Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Food Assistance Programs• Institutional Food Policies and Purchasing

The Goals and Recommended Actions section will outline the goal statement for each section, followed by a brief statement on the category, and specific actions for each subsection.

The Future of the Plan and Implementation section contains a matrix of all goals and actions accompanied by a list of potential partner(s).

The following format is used to present Goals and Recommended Actions in this section:

PRIORITY AREA

GOAL: Indicates the overall policy direction of the section

POTENTIAL PARTNER(S): Identifies potential partner(s) for carrying actions

SUBSECTION

ACTION: Specifies how the stated objective will be accomplished

INTRODUCTION

What is a Food System? Why Plan for a Food System?

A food system is the entire food environment from seedling to waste and includes consumers, producers, processors, distributors, and retailers.

The FPC is a result of grassroots advocacy by local food system partners and was officially established in 2013. The FPC is structured to provide representation for all areas of the local food system – from consumer advocates to farmers to local governments. While there are appointed seats, many members of the FPC serve on a volunteer basis.

An action plan for the local food system provides a road map for local governments, agencies, institutions, businesses, residents, and community groups. This Plan can enable these groups to institute best practices and strive for a more sustainable and equitable food system.

What is the Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy Council?

The mission of the FPC is to advocate for a sustainable and equitable food system for the people of Buffalo and Erie County.

The FPC is committed to building a local food system that provides everyone in Erie County a fair and just opportunity for health and well-being. Achieving this goal requires focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. To that end, we are committed to fostering diverse perspectives. We recognize that individuals' perspectives are shaped by a host of factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, familial status, education, religion, legal status, military service, political affiliation, geography, and other personal and professional experiences. We know that the presence of diverse perspectives alone is not sufficient. Therefore, we also are committed to creating inclusive environments where all individuals are encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences. We believe that only through valuing our differences and similarities, and remaining vigilant in advancing equity, will we be able to maintain an equitable workplace and actively pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We commit to being continuous learners and working alongside others to cultivate equity, diversity, and inclusion.¹

The FPC acknowledges and honors traditional Indigenous territories. The lands of Erie County have traditionally belonged to the Haudenosaunee and portions of them are now known as the sovereign nations of the Seneca and Tuscarora. With this acknowledgement the FPC hopes to demonstrate our respect for indigenous peoples, both past and present, and our deep remorse for the forced removal of these tribes, among the many other wrongs inflicted upon them.

¹ Adapted from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's statement on diversity and inclusion.

PLANNING PROCESS

A survey of current and past FPC members started the planning process. The majority of respondents indicated the main purpose of the FPC is to, “shape food policy and advise the government on how to effect positive change in moving toward a just food system in Buffalo and Erie County.”

A more inclusive survey of community leaders and advocates was held at a public workshop in April 2019. The purpose of this workshop was to engage in a broad, community-focused process to guide the development of the BECLFAP and to affirm the purpose and goals of the project. Forty community leaders attended the public workshop at Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) and provided valuable input on various aspects, including unmet needs and strengths, of the Buffalo and Erie County food system. A list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

Concurrently, the FPC reviewed existing plans relevant to the BECLFAP. Local plans reviewed included the Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2012), One Region Forward – Grower Together Report (2015), and the City of Buffalo Unified Development Ordinance (2016). In addition, examples of food charters and food action plans from around the United States were reviewed and included the following:

- New Haven Food Action Plan (2013)
- Minnesota Food Charter (2014)
- City of Columbus & Franklin County (2016)
- Denver Food Action (2017)

This exercise helped to inform the content of the BECLFAP by examining best practices from existing food systems plans, examining regional priorities, and reducing any duplicative content that other local plans may have previously addressed.

Finally, the FPC began to draft goals and actions needed to achieve its main purpose – to shape food policy and contribute to a just food system. This process was conducted over several meetings and resulted in the final list of goals and recommended actions found in the Plan. The FPC intends to engage and collaborate with various stakeholders in the advancement and implementation of the Plan.

The Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the weaknesses in the local and national food system. Inefficiencies in the supply chain and panic buying resulted in empty shelves in grocery stores while delays in the arrival of seasonal workers proved difficult for farmers. At the same time, record unemployment numbers resulted in a substantial increase of food bank visits. FeedMore WNY saw a 12% increase in food pantry visits and a 57% increase in households

visiting mobile food pantries (FeedMore WNY, 2020). Seniors relying on group dining accommodations were forced to transition to meal delivery, resulting in a 60% increase in the home-delivered meals program (FeedMore WNY, 2020).

In response to the pandemic, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz announced the Erie County Business Task Force in April 2020. The Task Force was charged with developing short- and long-term policy and procedural recommendations at the local, state, and federal and helping to identify the workforce needs that businesses will have in order to succeed in the present and future COVID-19 economy. The Task Force subsequently created the Agriculture and Food Systems Subcommittee (AFSSC) to focus solely on recovery in the agriculture and food sectors.

The AFSSC was convened in June 2020 and comprised of a number of representatives from retail, wholesale, distribution, farms, and restaurants. The AFSSC compiled a list of goals and actions, many of which complement those identified in this Plan. The FPC is identified as a potential partner in a number of these actions and will engage with other partners, where feasible, to achieve these outcomes.

At the time of this Plan's adoption, the AFSSCs recommendations had not been finalized and are therefore not included in the appendices.

VISION, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The Need for Action

Equitable access to affordable, local, and healthy² food is chief among the needs of Erie County residents.

While, the Buffalo and Erie County food system does have its strengths, including the Buffalo Public School (BPS) Wellness Policy, a vibrant network of urban farms, and a growing recognition of the importance in local and accessible foods, there remains room for improvement. For example, inequitable access to healthy and local food and a lack of infrastructure to provide nutritional awareness are two examples of issues the local food system is faced with.

Our Vision

The overarching vision of this Plan is to support and advance a food system that is sustainable and equitable by providing a roadmap for both public, private, and non-profit interests to adopt and utilize. In addition to outlining goals and recommended actions, the BECLFAP includes a declaration of support which is intended as a tool for local governments, agencies, institutions, businesses, residents, and community groups to show their support and advance the goals and actions contained in this Plan.

The Plan

This Plan is intended for the people of Erie County, local governments, agencies, institutions, businesses, and community groups and aims to inform their decision-making regarding food systems best practices and/or policies. The FPC will act as a resource to these groups and offer support to the extent practicable.

The Plan reflects the six goal areas that emerged in the planning process. Each area has an overarching goal statement and identified a series of recommended actions to move towards achieving the goal.

The implementation matrix identifies potential partners for each of these goals. This list of potential partners is not intended to be comprehensive.

² Much of this Plan is based on the premise of “healthy” food, but how is that defined? Healthy is not defined only by a set of metrics outlining the nutritional value of food. Healthy food is nutritionally complete, but is also culturally-appropriate and grown locally with sustainable farming methods. Healthy food is good for people and communities.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the spine of the food system and, for purposes of this Plan, includes traditional field grow methods as well as non-traditional methods (e.g., urban, greenhouse, hydroponic, etc.). The word “producer” as used in this Plan may be used to include farmers, growers, and value-added producers. The intent of the FPC is be as inclusive as possible of all types of agriculture and producers

Please note that several entities have already completed agricultural and farmland protection plans. As it is not the intent of the FPC to duplicate their work, large-scale or “traditional” agriculture is not addressed in-depth in the BECLFAP. Please review the Erie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, resources from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County (CCE), the Sowing the Seeds for Southtowns Agribusiness report, or any number of municipal-level plans for a comprehensive examination on the state of agriculture in Erie County.

Goal: *Support and enhance agricultural programs and policies.*

Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is the growing of crops in an urban environment for commercial sales. Hydroponic and vertical growing operations can also be considered urban agriculture (if grown in urban geographies). In recent years, urban agriculture has experienced a resurgence in the City of Buffalo as the importance of accessible and healthy local food becomes paramount. Urban agricultural, while important to the food system, can often be hindered by legacy or inflexible zoning regulations/policy or lack of community awareness and mistrust.



Source: Beth Machnica

Actions

1. Promote healthy farming practices, supportive policies, and research to better foster urban agriculture and farm businesses.
2. Support policies permitting the use of vacant land for urban agriculture, and free use of publicly-owned land.

Farmers Markets



Source: Beth Machnica

Farmers markets are an important component of the local food system, offering in-season produce while strengthening community and supporting the local economy and farmers. These markets operate on a recurring basis at a regular location with multiple vendors. In addition to these traditional markets, mobile produce markets (AKA “veggie vans”) also play a vital role in the food system. Most markets require products to be local, although that definition

may vary from market to market. Many farmers markets, or certain participating vendors, accept Double Up Food Bucks, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits and provide access to fresh and local food to underserved communities.

Actions

3. Support and promote existing farmers markets while advocating for their expansion to improve access to healthy and local food.
4. Support affordability by encouraging farmers markets to accept federal and state funded nutrition incentives, such as: Double Up Food Bucks, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). (See also: Health)
5. Support and advocate for policy permitting mobile markets and veggie vans.

Community Gardens

Community gardens differ from urban agriculture in that they are community-based collaborative projects focused on small-scale agriculture. Maintenance of the garden is typically shared by participants as is the bounty of fruits and vegetables. These spaces can increase affordable and healthy food access, act as green space and reclaim vacant lots, and contribute to skill-building and a sense of community.



Source: Grassroots Garden, Facebook

Actions

6. Establish accessible, adequate gardening plots, equipment lending libraries, garden education options, and seed and seedling giveaways. (See also: Environment and Climate Change)
7. Support businesses and organizations that offer workshops and assistance in backyard and community gardening by, for example, program promotion and property leasing.

8. Support policies permitting the use of vacant land for community gardens, and free use of publicly-owned land.

Farmland Protection



Erie County has lost substantial farmland since the 1970s when urban sprawl spread concentrically outward from the City of Buffalo, encroaching into what had historically been rural farm areas. Much of the remaining farmland is now located in an outer ring of land along the County's borders. Land development, including the development of housing subdivisions and large-scale renewable energy projects, lack of succession planning, and

shrinking profit margins are all threats to farmland protection. It is important to strike a balance between these development pressures and farmland protection so that Erie County can sustain its farmlands for future generations.

Actions

9. Encourage sustainable siting of large-scale renewable energy projects so that prime farmlands are not negatively impacted. (See also: Environment)
10. Promote farmland sustainability and longevity by encouraging succession planning; farm transition planning; connecting existing farmers with young farmers; and by increasing and coordinating efforts to promote WNY as a place to farm.
11. Promote supportive policies (i.e., zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans) throughout Erie County.
12. Support efforts to strengthen connections between local farmers and markets while making sure to address cultural and economic disparities and inequity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Agriculture and food-related business should be seen as an economic engine. Producing and buying food locally can keep those dollars in the local economy and also creates a valuable employment sector. The food system economy is combined of several sectors – each of which should be enhanced and promoted by Buffalo and Erie County.

Goal: *Support efforts to develop a diverse, equitable, and sustainable food economy and promote food systems as an economic engine.*

Business Development

Challenges to food systems-related business development are multi-faceted. The regulatory environment can often be difficult to navigate for food and food-related businesses and farms. Traditional zoning ordinances divide communities into residential and commercial zones – often with the unintended consequences of creating food deserts and impeding equitable food access. The lack of market infrastructure and a profit-based model represent a major hurdle in food retailers' scalability and ability to enter certain neighborhoods.



Actions

13. Support "food system-friendly" zoning ordinances and policies to encourage: small-scale food production in communities; residential food sales; farm stands at community gardens, school gardens, urban farms, affordable housing projects, and public facilities; and adaptive reuse of vacant commercial and industrial structures for local food system uses.
14. Promote the Home Processor Exemption offered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM).
15. Encourage new and redeveloped projects to include neighborhood-scale food businesses in areas with low-food access by offering targeted financial incentives and site selection support.
16. Expand existing small business development programs to support food entrepreneurs at any level in the food system and ensure equitable access to these programs.
17. Ensure policies regulating food businesses are clear and appropriate, and assist new food entrepreneurs with navigating the permitting processes.
18. Support continued enhancement of food system infrastructure including, but not limited to, local meat processing plants, food incubators, and community kitchens.

19. Connect start-up funding sources with the food and food technology industries and support sustainable business development by advocating equitable access to capital.
20. Capitalize on available funding to support enhancement and expansion of food retail, including façade and streetscape improvements.

Procurement

The expansion of local purchasing from area farmers and producers can improve farm profitability and boost supply chain resiliency while consumers receive a fresh product that is grown nearby. Local procurement has myriad benefits including supporting local growers and providing consumers with access to healthy and local food and creating a sustainable local supply chain. The buying power of public and private institutions, businesses, and governments further compounds the importance and necessity of local food procurement and purchasing policies. Procurement should be equitable with special support for underrepresented businesses such as those owned by women and people of color.



Actions

21. Promote the adoption of a local and healthy food purchasing policy and encourage its use by municipal, county, school, and state agencies for their own operations and also for use in community benefit agreements with organizations that receive public subsidies. (See also: Health)
22. Introduce and better connect institutions with local food purchasing policies and opportunities.
23. Encourage the procurement of culturally-appropriate foods as part of local and healthy food purchasing.

Workforce Development

Succession planning in public and private institutions and businesses is a cornerstone in the sustainability of the region's workforce. The integration of agricultural and food production education, and small business development skills in schools and in workforce development programs is key to developing future farmers and food system advocates in Buffalo and Erie County. As awareness of our local food system continues to grow, careers in food production may become more attractive and should be a focus of workforce development and occupational training programs.



Actions

- 24.Support and elevate youth education and workforce development that focuses on food systems and farming, food production, and small business development.
- 25.Foster collaboration among schools that have agriculture and food programs to increase the number of students entering careers in the agriculture industries, the food system, and food justice.
- 26.Develop and enhance training programs for new farmers and farmers of color.
- 27.Support and promote food incubation programs (i.e., Providence Farm Collective).

EDUCATION

This Plan considers education for all people of Buffalo and Erie County, from consumers to elected officials. The FPC believes education on agriculture, health, and food systems should begin in early childhood and across all other age groups.

In this document, education not only means being knowledgeable about where one's food comes from, but also acknowledging the history of agriculture in the region and the important role that Indigenous, Black and Latinx farmers had, and still have in contributing to New York State's \$42 billion agriculture and food industry, and the disparities in representation that currently exist.³

Goal: *Raise general awareness about local and healthy foods, alongside the multi-cultural history of farming, by fostering education in the schools and offering learning opportunities and programs in the public and private sector and to elected representatives and public officials*

Consumers



An educated consumer is an empowered consumer. In addition to being educated on where food comes from, and the processes behind it getting to market, it is important for consumers to be aware of how food is tied to diet related diseases. These diet-related diseases are often preventable and fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable populations of society.

For purposes of this Plan, consumers are the actual, final end users of the food product. Other cohorts will be addressed in later subsections of Education.

Actions

28. Increase awareness and advocate for adequate state and federal funding for healthy food skills-related education for Double Up Food Bucks, SNAP/EBT, WIC, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the SNAP-ED Nutrition Program. (See also: Health)

³ An example of current disparities in farming is best summarized by the existence of only 139 black farmers among the 57,000 farmers in New York State.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/12/07/archives/freed-black-farmers-tilled-manhattans-soil-in-the-1600s-blacks.html>; <http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/1911-02.pdf>;
https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Race,_Ethnicity_and_Gender_Prfiles/New_York/cpd36000.pdf

29. Develop and deploy culturally appropriate public messaging campaigns to promote education on healthy eating, including how to shop for affordable healthy options and how to use those ingredients to cook nutritious meals and partner with multiple sectors to expanded community-based education on these subjects.
30. Promote and enhance existing campaigns, and launch new campaigns, to highlight the importance of supporting local foods and producers and encourage purchasing of locally produced food.
31. Advocate for education programs and policies that support chronic disease prevention treatment and education, and fresh fruit/vegetable prescription programs.
32. Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).

Students



Students are an important cohort in the future of Buffalo and Erie County's food system. Both the integration of food systems education in K-12 curricula and providing students with more agency regarding their food choices will help them to become smart and conscious adult consumers. Although, the education of students is the end-goal of this subsection, it cannot be achieved without the implementation efforts of caregivers, and

school staff.

Actions

33. Promote multidisciplinary efforts that educate youth through food production (i.e. gardening on school public and/or residential spaces), food choices (i.e. budgeting, shopping, nutrition), and food justice based community service.
34. Raise awareness of school wellness policies and their effect on school nutrition and food access.
35. Support platforms that engage students in the decision-making process on school food and food systems on a broader level.
36. Foster collaboration among schools that have agriculture and food programs to increase the number of students entering careers in the agriculture and food production industries, the food system, and food justice.
37. Promote multidisciplinary efforts that expand K-12 curricula to include education on food production (i.e. community or school gardening), food choices (i.e. budgeting, shopping, cooking, nutrition), and food justice based community service.
38. Educate youth on the minority and indigenous farming history of New York State.

39. Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).

Elected Officials

Local elected representatives have the clout and ability to affect change on our local food system. As such, ensuring these officials are equipped with the education necessary to support and adopt appropriate policy is imperative. The goals and actions in this Plan will need the support of the electorate and elected officials to be implemented.

Actions

40. Educate and engage local and state elected representatives and public officials on the importance of having a sustainable local food system.

Early Childhood

The youngest among us represent an opportunity to integrate food systems education early, and to continue that education as children progress from students to consumers. Supporting and promoting policy that bolsters equitable food access for all, including the pre-kindergarten set, is another puzzle piece in ensuring all stakeholders are equipped with the education they need to make sound and healthy food decisions.



Actions

41. Promote efforts to support breastfeeding through awareness through evidence-based strategies and appropriate local policies.
42. Encourage health care providers and health agencies to adopt and support standards and tools in their practices to promote health education and healthy behavior change.
43. Support expansion of training, continuing education credits, and incentives to early childcare providers who incorporate food skills education into their programs.
44. Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

No discussion of food systems would be complete without addressing our environment and changing climate. There is opportunity to be more resilient in all aspects of the food system, starting from seedling and ending with food and food-related waste.

Goal: Advocate for policies & programs that ensure a healthy and sustainable relationship between food production, consumption, and disposal, while aiming to improve efficiency and reduce consumption of natural resources

Food and Food-Related Waste Management

The National Resource Defense Council (NRDC) states up to 40% of the United States' food is never eaten and becomes food waste. Issues along the supply chain and cosmetic standards at retailers are among the causes of this waste. Food itself is not the only source of waste as food packaging, or food-related waste, including single-use and non-recyclable components are a waste stream of concern.



Actions

45. Build support for food waste recovery infrastructure among local leaders and large-scale food waste generators.
46. Build support for and recommend changes to policies, zoning, and health codes that support and encourage food waste recovery infrastructure and diversion.
47. Provide training, tools, and economic incentives for new and existing food businesses to develop, adopt, and implement food waste prevention plans.
48. Support municipal and county-wide purchasing policies requiring the reduction of packaging (i.e., single-use plastic).
49. Support municipal and county-wide efforts and policies to implement composting facilities.

Natural Environment



Maintaining the health of the soil, water, and air resources can only benefit the health of the local food system. To this end, climate resilient and sustainable farming practices should be pursued and supported. An early success is the Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge, a pledge urban farmers can take to demonstrate their commitment to healthy soils on their farms.

Actions

- 50. Engage local environmental organizations to encourage farmers to use farming practices and technologies that protect the health of people, animals, soil, air, and water and are sustainable.
- 51. Provide resources, support, incentives, and promotion of farmers to encourage food production methods, such as sustainable and organic practices, to increase their customer base.
- 52. Support the creation of a consumer-producer-buyer verification process to support and increase consumer purchasing of healthy and local food.
- 53. Promote the inclusion of food systems as part of climate resiliency and/or disaster mitigation planning efforts. (See also: Food Access)
- 54. Encourage sustainable siting of large-scale renewable energy projects so that prime farmlands are not negatively impacted. (See also: Agriculture)
- 55. Support, promote, and broaden participation in the Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge, especially among underserved communities.

FOOD ACCESS

Food access includes availability of culturally appropriate and affordable food sources and the ability to access these food sources (i.e., income or vehicles, access to public transportation). (See *Health* for the role of the Food Assistance Program that provides income supports).

Goal: *Advocate for policies and programs that help ensure equitable access to healthy, affordable food through increased food availability and accessibility.*

Food Availability

In the Buffalo Niagara Region, 12% of all households lack access to a grocery store due to proximity and lack of vehicle ownership⁴. In order to increase food availability, it is important to promote food retail and emergency food models that increase access, boost visibility, and are equitable (See also: Business Development).



Source: Sheila Bass

Actions

56. Advocate for zoning and land use policies to ensure appropriate support for community gardens, urban farmers, and backyard gardens.
57. Collaborate with the hunger relief network and other senior/multigenerational anti-poverty and food insecurity efforts. (See also: Health)
58. Advocate for a streamlined permitting process and support increased use of public spaces for non-permanent fresh food retail, demonstration, mobile vending, and farmers markets.
59. Engage partners and transportation organizations to explore and promote improved accessibility to healthy food retail, especially in areas where vehicle ownership is low, including the promotion of mobile and non-vehicle strategies.
60. Ensure the inclusion of tribal nations in food access work.
61. Support and help expand healthy options in corner stores, such as the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, and other small stores (i.e., create a staple food ordinance) in all neighborhoods, especially those with low food access.
62. Develop maps and other tools that highlight neighborhood assets, gaps, and opportunities for creating complete food environments in Buffalo and Erie County's low and moderate income neighborhoods (i.e., neighborhoods that are currently food deserts).
63. Support expansion and access to healthy after school and summer meals programs to reach more youth, in more public facilities, across Buffalo and Erie County.

⁴ Source: Partnership for the Public Good

64. Promote the inclusion of food systems as part of climate resiliency and/or disaster mitigation planning efforts (See also: Environment and Climate Change).

Food Accessibility



The planning and development of land and transportation networks inevitably impacts food access. The assumption that stakeholders have access to a personal vehicle results in a pattern of development that includes barriers (i.e., lack of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure) to affordable, healthy, and local food. Enhancing the transit environment so that all forms of mobility are prioritized is essential in achieving the goal of an equitable food system.

Actions

65. Assess community needs and advocate for healthy food access as an important component of local governments' overall infrastructure and public transportation planning and options for active transport.
66. Advocate for Complete Streets, including the maintenance of sidewalks, metered crosswalks, and bike paths on all roadways, but especially those that provide access to stores, hunger relief programs, farmers markets, community gardens, and other food sources.

HEALTH

Health is addressed throughout this document and includes not only the nutritional content of food, but also considers farming methods and cultural-appropriateness as they relate to food. This section builds upon this definition to outline the actions needed to ensure “healthy food” is available to residents of all communities.

Goal: *Advocate for policies and programs that help ensure healthy food is available, accessible, affordable, and acceptable for all communities.*

Food Assistance Programs

Many more residents in Buffalo and Erie County depend on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and food assistance from food banks and/or food pantries. Food assistance programs, such as SNAP, boost access to healthy and local foods for low-and-moderate income consumers and are important components of an equitable food system. However, these food assistance programs may not be secure in times of crisis as SNAP benefits are only accepted at certain locations and food banks do not have an unlimited supply of food. These programs can be expanded upon by ensuring SNAP benefits are accepted at a variety of locations, apart from supermarkets and corner stores.



Source: Friends of the Night People, Facebook

Actions

67. Research the development of a gleaning program.
68. Ensure adequate state and federal funding for healthy food skills-related education (i.e., the SNAP-ED Nutrition Program offered by CCE) for SNAP/EBT and WIC participants.
69. Support affordability by encouraging farmers markets to accept federal and state funded nutrition incentives (i.e., Double Up Foods Bucks, WIC and SNAP programs). (see also: Agriculture)
70. Support the development and regular update of a list of local food pantries and soup kitchens, including food donation safety requirements, and distribute to local food businesses and institutions to encourage donations.
71. Collaborate with the hunger relief network and other senior / multigenerational anti-poverty and food insecurity efforts. (See also: Food Access)
72. Ensure engagement of those most impacted by health disparities, including low-income, African American, Hispanic, Native American, immigrant, refugee, and other underrepresented communities, in developing and implementing culturally appropriate food assistance, education, nutrition, gardening, and cooking programs.

73. Advocate for making more resources available to hunger relief programs for obtaining and storing healthy foods, including food grown by nearby farmers and foods familiar to customers' cultures.

Institutional Food Policies and Purchasing



Source: Sarah Gatti

incorporate healthy food service guidelines in their contracts with concession vendors. Such policies have the additional benefits of supporting local producers and are economically advantageous.

The largest institutions in a food system, local governments and universities should lead by example with their purchasing and food service policies. Institutional policies should focus on purchasing more locally produced foods and offering a variety of healthy options. Food Policy Council member agency, the Erie County Department of Health, worked with the Erie County Department of Parks & Recreation to

Actions

74. Promote the adoption of a local and healthy food purchasing policy and encourage its use by municipal, county, school, and state agencies for their own operations and also for use in community benefit agreements with organizations that receive public subsidies. (See also: Economic Development)
75. Increase funding available for schools to obtain necessary facilities upgrades, kitchen equipment, or other food preparation and teaching resources.
76. Promote awareness of Buffalo and Erie County Public School Districts' Wellness Plans to ensure healthy food environments in schools.
77. Coordinate with Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) to increase farm to school and other healthy school meal efforts, including garden to cafeteria programs, by seeking opportunities to reduce regulatory barriers.

THE FUTURE OF THE PLAN & IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of any plan is essential and a valuable measure of its success. To this end, the current Food Action Plan working group will transition to a permanent committee of the FPC and will oversee the progress toward this Plan's objectives and serve as a liaison to the FPC and Food Action Plan working groups. These working groups will correspond with the six priority areas identified in this Plan and each group will endeavor to support each area's goals.

The goals and actions identified in the body of the Plan are laid out in the following implementation matrix. The matrix is formatted as follows:

PRIORITY AREA

GOAL: Indicates the overall policy direction of the section.

POTENTIAL PARTNER(S): Identifies potential partner(s) for carrying out actions. Please note these potential partner(s) are not intended to be a comprehensive list. Omissions are not intended.

SUBSECTION

ACTION: Specifies how the stated objective will be accomplished.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

AGRICULTURE		
Goal: Support and enhance agricultural programs and policies.		
Potential Partner(s): Massachusetts Avenue Project, the Tool Library, Municipal Governments, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Erie County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, New York Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, WNY Land Conservancy		
URBAN AGRICULTURE	A1	Promote healthy farming practices, supportive policies, and research to better foster urban agriculture and farm businesses.
	A2	Support policies permitting the use of vacant land for urban agriculture, and free use of publicly-owned vacant land.
FARMERS MARKETS	A3	Support and promote existing farmers markets while advocating for their expansion to improve access to healthy and local food.
	A4	Support affordability by encouraging farmers markets to accept federal and state funded nutrition incentives, such as: Double Up Food Bucks, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). (See also: Health)
	A5	Support and advocate for policy permitting mobile markets and veggie vans.
COMMUNITY GARDENS	A6	Establish accessible, adequate gardening plots, equipment-lending libraries, garden education options, and seed and seedling giveaways. (see also: Environment and Climate Change)
	A7	Support businesses and organizations that offer workshops and assistance in backyard and community gardening by, for example, program promotion and property leasing.
	A8	Support policies permitting the use of vacant land for community gardens, and free use of publicly-owned vacant land.
FARMLAND PROTECTION	A9	Encourage sustainable siting of large-scale renewable energy projects so that prime farmlands are not negatively impacted. (see also: Environment and Climate Change)
	A10	Promote farmland sustainability and longevity by encouraging succession planning; farm transition planning; connecting existing farmers with young farmers; and by increasing and coordinating efforts to promote WNY as a place to farm.
	A11	Promote supportive policies (i.e., zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans) throughout Erie County.
	A12	Support efforts to strengthen connections between local farmers and markets while making sure to address cultural and economic disparities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Support efforts to develop a diverse, equitable, and sustainable food economy and promote food systems as an economic engine.

Potential Partners: Municipalities, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT	EC13	Promote the Home Processor Exemption offered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM).
	EC14	Support "food system-friendly" zoning ordinances and policies to encourage: small-scale food production in communities; residential food sales; farm stands at community gardens, school gardens, urban farms, affordable housing projects, and public facilities; and adaptive reuse of vacant commercial and industrial structures for local food system uses.
	EC15	Encourage new and redeveloped projects to include neighborhood-scale food businesses in areas with low-food access by offering targeted financial incentives and site selection support.
	EC16	Expand existing small business development programs to support food entrepreneurs at any level in the food system and ensure equitable access to these programs.
	EC17	Ensure policies regulating food businesses are clear and appropriate, and assist new food entrepreneurs with navigating the permitting processes.
	EC18	Support continued enhancement of food system infrastructure including, but not limited to, local meat processing plants, food incubators, and community kitchens.
	EC19	Connect start-up funding sources with the food and food technology industries and support sustainable business development by advocating equitable access to capital.
	EC20	Capitalize on available funding to support enhancement and expansion of food retail, including façade and streetscape improvements.
PROCUREMENT	EC21	Promote the adoption of a local and healthy food purchasing policy and encourage its use by municipal, county, school, and state agencies for their own operations and also for use in community benefit agreements with organizations that receive public subsidies. (See also: Health)
	EC22	Introduce and better connect institutions with local food purchasing policies and opportunities.
	EC23	Encourage the procurement of culturally-appropriate foods as part of local and healthy food purchasing.
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	EC24	Support and elevate youth education and workforce development that focuses on food systems and farming, food production, and small business development
	EC25	Foster collaboration among schools that have agriculture and food programs to increase the number of students entering careers in the agriculture industries, the food system, and food justice.
	EC26	Develop and enhance training programs for new farmers of colors
	EC27	Support and promote food incubation programs (i.e., Providence Farm Collective)

EDUCATION

Goal: Raise general awareness about local and healthy foods, alongside the multi-cultural history of farming, by fostering education in the schools and offering learning opportunities and programs in the public and private sector and to elected representatives and public officials

Potential Partners: Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Group, Municipal & County Government, Local School Districts, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County

CONSUMERS	ED28	Increase awareness and advocate for adequate state and federal funding for healthy food skills-related education for Double Up Food Bucks, SNAP/EBT, WIC, and Farmers Market Nutrition Program. (See also: Health)
	ED29	Develop and deploy culturally sensitive public messaging campaigns to promote education on healthy eating, including how to shop for affordable healthy options and how to use those ingredients to cook nutritious meals and partner with multiple sectors to expanded community-based education on these subjects.
	ED30	Promote and enhance existing campaigns, and launch new campaigns, to highlight the importance of supporting local foods and producers and encourage purchasing of locally produced food.
	ED31	Advocate for education programs and policies that support chronic disease prevention treatment and education, and fresh fruit/vegetable prescription programs.
	ED32	Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).
STUDENTS	ED33	Promote multidisciplinary efforts that educate youth through food production (i.e. gardening on school public and/or residential spaces), food choices (i.e., budgeting, shopping, nutrition), and food justice based community service.
	ED34	Raise awareness of school wellness policies and their effect on school nutrition and food access.
	ED35	Support platforms that engage students in the decision-making process on school food and food systems on a broader level.
	ED36	Foster collaboration among schools that have agriculture and food programs to increase the number of students entering careers in the agriculture industries, the food system, and food justice.
	ED37	Promote multidisciplinary efforts that expand K-12 curricula to include education on food production (i.e. community or school gardening), food choices (i.e. budgeting, shopping, cooking, nutrition), and food justice based community service.
	ED38	Educate youth on the minority and indigenous farming history of New York State.
	ED39	Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).
ELECTED OFFICIALS	ED40	Educate and engage local and state elected representatives and public officials on the importance of having a sustainable local food system.

EARLY CHILDHOOD	ED41	Promote efforts to support breastfeeding through awareness through evidence-based strategies and appropriate local policies.
	ED42	Encourage health care providers and health agencies to adopt and support standards and tools in their practices to promote health education and healthy behavior change.
	ED43	Support expansion of training, continuing education credits, and incentives to early childcare providers who incorporate food skills education into their programs.
	ED44	Raise awareness on food and food-related waste (i.e., composting, waste reduction, single-use packaging).

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Goal: Advocate for policies & programs that ensure a healthy and sustainable relationship between food production, consumption and disposal; while aiming to improve efficiency and reduce consumption of natural resources

Potential Partners: Erie County Department of Environment and Planning, Erie County Bureau of Purchasing, Buffalo Waterkeeper, Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance, Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Group, WNY Restaurant Association, nursing homes and hospitals, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District

FOOD & FOOD-RELATED WASTE MANAGEMENT	ENV45	Build support for food waste recovery infrastructure among local leaders and large-scale food waste generators.
	ENV46	Build support for and recommend changes to policies, zoning, and health codes that support and encourage food waste recovery infrastructure and diversion.
	ENV47	Provide training, tools, and economic incentives for new and existing food businesses to develop, adopt, and implement food waste prevention plans.
	ENV48	Support municipal and county-wide purchasing policies requiring the reduction of packaging (i.e., single-use plastic).
	ENV49	Support municipal and county-wide efforts and policies to implement composting facilities.
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	ENV50	Engage local environmental organizations to encourage farmers to use farming practices and technologies that protect the health of people, animals, soil, air, and water and are sustainable.
	ENV51	Provide resources, support, incentives, and promotion of farmers to encourage food production methods, such as sustainable and organic practices, to increase their customer base.
	ENV52	Support the creation of a consumer-producer-buyer verification process to support and increase consumer purchasing of healthy and local food.
	ENV53	Promote the inclusion of food systems as part of climate resiliency and/or disaster mitigation planning efforts. (See also: Food Access)
	ENV54	Encourage sustainable siting of large-scale renewable energy projects so that prime farmlands are not negatively impacted. (See also: Agriculture)
	ENV55	Support, promote, and broaden participation in the Greater Buffalo Urban Growers Pledge.

FOOD ACCESS

Goal: Advocate for policies and programs that help ensure equitable access to healthy, affordable food through increased food availability and accessibility.

Potential Partners: Go Bike Buffalo, ReddyBike, NFTA, local governments, University at Buffalo, Local Farmers Markets, Retail Store Owners, Buffalo Healthy Corner Store Initiative

FOOD AVAILABILITY	F56	Advocate for zoning and land use policies to ensure appropriate support for community gardens, urban farmers, and backyard gardens.
	F57	Collaborate with the hunger relief network and other senior / multigenerational anti-poverty and food insecurity efforts. (See also: Health)
	F58	Advocate for streamlined permitting process and support increased use of public spaces for non-permanent fresh food retail, demonstration, mobile vending, and farmers markets.
	F59	Engage partners and transportation organizations to explore and promote improved accessibility to healthy food retail, especially in areas where vehicle ownership is low, including the promotion of mobile and non-vehicle strategies.
	F60	Ensure the inclusion of tribal nations in food access work.
	F61	Support and help expand healthy options in corner stores, such as the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, and other small stores (i.e., create a staple food ordinance) in all neighborhoods, especially those with low food access.
	F62	Develop maps and other tools that highlight neighborhood assets, gaps, and opportunities for creating complete food environments in Buffalo and Erie County's low and moderate income neighborhoods (i.e., prioritize neighborhoods that are currently food deserts).
	F63	Support expansion and access to healthy after school and summer meals programs to reach more youth, in more public facilities, across Buffalo and Erie County.
	F64	Promote the inclusion of food systems as part of climate resiliency and/or disaster mitigation planning efforts. (See also: Environment and Climate Change)
FOOD ACCESSIBILITY	F65	Assess community needs and advocate for healthy food access as an important component of local governments' overall infrastructure and public transportation planning and options for active transport.
	F66	Advocate for Complete Streets, including the maintenance of sidewalks, metered crosswalks, and bike paths on all roadways, but especially those that provide access to stores, hunger relief programs, farmers markets, community gardens, and other food sources.

HEALTH

Goal: Advocate for policies and programs that help ensure healthy food is available, accessible, affordable, and acceptable for all communities.

Potential Partner(s): FeedMore WNY, Erie County Senior Services, AARP, Food For All, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County, Rustbelt Harvest

FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS	H67	Research the development of a gleaning program.
	H68	Ensure adequate state and federal funding for healthy food skills-related education for SNAP/EBT and WIC participants.
	H69	Support affordability by encouraging farmers markets to accept federal and state funded nutrition incentives (i.e., WIC and SNAP programs). (see also: Agriculture)
	H70	Support the development and regular update of a list of local food pantries and soup kitchens, including food donation safety requirements, and distribute to local food businesses and institutions to encourage donations.
	H71	Collaborate with the hunger relief network and other senior / multigenerational anti-poverty and food insecurity efforts. (See also: Food Access)
	H72	Ensure engagement of those most impacted by health disparities, including low-income, African American, Hispanic, Native American, immigrant, refugee, and other underrepresented communities, in developing and implementing culturally appropriate food assistance, education, nutrition, gardening, and cooking programs.
	H73	Advocate for making more resources available to hunger relief programs for obtaining and storing healthy foods, including food grown by nearby farmers and foods familiar to customers' cultures.
INSTITUTIONAL	H74	Promote the adoption of a local and healthy food purchasing policy and encourage its use by municipal, county, school, and state agencies for their own operations and also for use in community benefit agreements with organizations that receive public subsidies. (See also: Economic Development)
	H75	Increase funding available for schools to obtain necessary facilities upgrades, kitchen equipment, or other food preparation and teaching resources.
	H76	Promote awareness of Buffalo and Erie County Public School Districts' Wellness Plans to ensure healthy food environments in schools.
	H77	Coordinate with Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) to increase farm to school and other healthy school meal efforts, including garden to cafeteria programs, by seeking opportunities to reduce regulatory barriers.

Review

ONGOING REVIEW

The Food Action Plan Committee and working groups will be working on Plan implementation regularly and progress will be discussed at monthly FPC meetings.

A detailed review of the Plan's content and implementation progress will be conducted annually. Following this annual review, the Plan will be modified if needed.

FIVE-YEAR REVIEW

Five years after initial adoption, the Plan will be reviewed and updated as required. This may include revising the goals and actions as conditions dictate and editing the Plan to remove outdated references and/or actions to have been successfully implemented.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Organizations Represented at April 2019 Public Workshop

Organizations Represented at April 2019 Public Workshop

1. Boulevard Produce
2. Braymiller Market
3. Buffalo and Erie County Food Policy (FPC)
4. Buffalo Common Council
5. Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus
6. Buffalo Public Schools Food Service
7. Cicatelli & Associates
8. Ciminelli Development
9. Erie County Department of Health
10. Farmer Pirates
11. Feedmore WNY
12. Field and Fork Network
13. Five Loaves Farm
14. FoodLink 716
15. Independent Health
16. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)
17. Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP)
18. New York State Restaurant Association
19. Partnership for the Public Good (PPG)
20. United Way of Buffalo and Erie County
21. University at Buffalo (UB)
22. Wegmans
23. Wellness Institute
24. Westminster Economic Development Initiative (WEDI)
25. White Bike

APPENDIX B

Declaration of Support

Buffalo and Erie County Local Food Action Plan

Declaration of Support

We, the undersigned, support the vision and principles of the Buffalo and Erie County Local Food Action Plan.

VISION

We envision a county in which everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food. Local farms part of the food system, from seed to table and back to soil, is environmentally regenerative, economically viable, and supports a healthy life for all members of our community.

THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE:

1. Agriculture -friendly programs and policies should be supported and enhanced.
2. Efforts to develop a diverse and sustainable food economy, and to promote food systems as an economic engine, should be supported.
3. Awareness about local, healthy foods should be fostered in schools and offering, and learning opportunities offered in the public and private sector, and to elected representatives and public officials.
4. Policies and programs that ensure health and sustainability in the food system should be advocated for.
5. Policies and programs that ensure equitable access to complete food environment should be advocated for.
6. Policies and programs that ensure healthy food is available, accessible, affordable, and acceptable for all communities should be advocated for.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

I am signing on:

- ☐ As an individual supporter
- ☐ For my organization
- ☐ For my local government
- ☐ For my institution

Name of Individual/ Org. / Gov. / Inst.: _____

Title/Position: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

I/WE WILL COMMIT TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

List the goals you support: _____

Comments: _____

Thank you for your support of the Buffalo and Erie County Local Food Action Plan!