



08/26/22

Trasy Skalski, Sustainability Coordinator
Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
95 Franklin Street
Buffalo, NY 14202

Re: Agriculture and Food Systems in the Erie County Climate Action Plan Action Items

Dear Erie County Community Climate Change Task Force;

The Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County (FPC) has reviewed the action items proposed by the Erie County Climate Action Plan Committee. We recognize the hard work involved in creating such an ambitious and important plan for the county to do its part in fighting, and mitigating the effects of, climate change. It is great to see food systems called out specifically in this work.

We offer the following comments on each of the five strategies:

- Strategy 1: Advance farmland protection and soil health
 - There is a great balance in the recommendations that stresses the importance of renewables as well as protecting farmland. Innovative ways to incorporate energy solutions with agriculture should be developed and promoted.
 - It is important to make sure that the monitoring and benchmarking of the greenhouse gas impact of our county's food system is public for transparency and educational purposes.
- Strategy 2: Protect and restore the environment and ecosystems
 - When considering the action step on smart growth and development, add in language that fosters food retail space in these communities.
 - Native plants are an important piece of the food system because they promote higher levels of participation from pollinators versus non-native species. The County should develop a policy to only use native plants on county land to boost up our local ecosystems.
- Strategy 3: Improve equitable and sustainable access to healthy and local food
 - The language that describes the strategy should be stronger in its description of food injustice. The county should describe the history of disinvestment, redlining, and racism that has created food apartheid in these neighborhoods. The county should require anti-racism training for all employees that requires them to assess the work that they are tasked with to ensure that the systems that created the conditions for these neighborhoods do not happen again.
 - The emergency food system plays an important role in providing access to food. As our community works to create more opportunities of access, there is a need to build up the infrastructure for food delivery and storage between institutions that are required to recover all edible food from the NYS Food Recovery and Recycling Act and emergency food providers.

Our mission is to advocate for an equitable and sustainable food system for the people of Buffalo and Erie County.



- Strategy 4: Promote climate change prevention, resilience, impact mitigation and reversal
 - One thing to consider is developing a way to educate consumers on the GHG impact of their food choices along with nutrition and waste. This could be creating a system to quantify the GHG impact of food choices, and making its usage a requirement throughout the county.
- Strategy 5: Advance coordination and collaboration to address regional-scale issues within agriculture and the food system
 - This would be a good place to lift up collaboration with local schools and institutions of higher education to establish programs of education on food systems and food justice, and their connection to climate change.
 - Climate change is something that will require more than just the people in the county to mitigate. The county should also seek to collaborate with other counties to build regional, state, and even international plans with our close neighbors in Canada.

Members of the Council would be happy to meet with you or your staff to offer further detail, as well as to review any parts of our *Local Food Action Plan* or our work to implement it, including how best to coordinate with your efforts. An electronic version of the Plan can be found at erie.gov/foodactionplan.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonina Simeti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Antonina Simeti
Chair, Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County

AS: djn

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