One Region Forward
Food Access and Justice
Working Team Notes
Meeting 2, May 6, 2013

Working Team Members in Attendance:
Diane Held, American Farmland Trust
Bob Watkins, Community Beer Works
Cheryl Thayer, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Erie Co.
Phil Haberstro, Wellness Institute
Lisa Tucker, Field & Fork Network
Cathy Lovejoy Maloney, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
Natalie Cook, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Niagara County
Mark Rountree, Erie Co. Department of Environment & Planning
Jen Bieber, Town of Royalton
Diane Picard, The Massachusetts Avenue Project

Facilitator: Brian Conley, UB Regional Institute
Note takers: Teresa Bosch de Celis (UB Regional Institute); Travis Norton, Cristina Delgado (UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab)

Meeting Introduction and Re-cap

Why is One Region Forward happening?
• We want to make a regional plan for sustainability to secure funding from federal sources in the future, mimicking similar efforts at the federal level

Why Food Access & Justice?
• It is an issue that has not been tackled in a comprehensive manner in our region

Working Group Process and Timeline
• Last month we established goals and today we will focus on strategies; Internally we will start constructing indicators

Discussion points, framing issues and data points from the April meeting were reviewed. Working team members made comments on these issues which are listed below:

• Have we settled on the definition of “healthy food”? (Phil Habestro [PH])
  o We would like to see the other definitions of healthy food? (Diane Held [DH])
  o The concept of “nutrient-dense” food is important to this definition (PH)
  o We should look at other definitions, for example “non-processed” food is not accurate since all foods needs some processing (Jen Bieber [JB])
  o We will circle back to you with some definitions (Brian Conley [BC])
Finalizing the Draft Goals
As a primer to the discussion on goals, an over-arching Mission Statement, adapted from our working definition of food access, was presented to the group and opened up to comments.

- That mission statement is too long; Need to make it simple and concise and remove the parts of the mission statement that are methods of achieving the goal of food access (PH)
- I agree you can stop after the word “regional” (JB)
- Well we do not want to abandon the concept of food sovereignty; This is an essential element to our work that can be easily forgotten (Diane Picard [DP])
- This is an internal mission statement which will not make its way into the formal plan. Your points are well-taken and we will refine the mission statement accordingly. (BC)

Review of Draft Goals:
The working team was presented a set of draft goals, derived through previous planning processes, during the group’s first meeting. Revisions were made to these goals according to comments received during the first meeting. These revised goals were presented to the working team. Their comments are below:

- Goal 4: Change “farmers” to the broader term “growers” (PH)
  - MAP, is not a “farmer” but it too produces food, so “growers” could work (DP)
  - I agree (DH)

- Goal 5: Replace the word “vitality” with “viability” (DH)

- Combine goals 5 and 6 to form one goal addressing the economic viability for the food system as a whole – includes food production, distribution and processing (DH)
  - The group agreed with this suggestion

- Goal 7: Does “promote careers” include education?
  - Add “promote career development and workforce training in food processing, production and distribution” (suggested by DP and DH, approved by group)

- Goal 8: This seems to be the most important goal and everything else is a strategy. Prominence needs to be brought to this goal because if local food is not important to people, whatever else we do regarding food with this plan will not matter. (BW)
  - How would you measure public awareness of the local food system? (PH)
  - We can conduct pre- and post-tests to see what people are doing, what they are eating, etc... Eventually someone must convey this to the public. (BW)

- Goal 9: I am concerned with how progress towards a healthier, more local food system can be tracked. In terms of economics, what does “healthy” mean? We need an economist to look at GDP, percent of GDP in food sectors, etc... because this is such a powerful goal. (PH)
  - We may want to add some specificity and add “regional” before “culture” (PH)
  - The wording of the goal will change and the economic trackers of healthy food will be added to the list of data requests. (BC)

- I attended a meeting (county tourism org) where Erie Co. Executive Mark Poloncarz said that county population had increased. Can you provide data to verify? (PH)
Strategizing for Alternative Futures
To acknowledge the long-term nature of this plan and that many unknowns will affect how our region looks forty years into the future, the working team engaged in an exercise to envision how different “alternative futures” would affect food access and the regional food system. The working group was asked to provide advantages, disadvantages, opportunities and challenges regarding food access specific to each of the following three general “alternative futures”: (1) Continued population decline or, “sprawl without growth”, (2) Population growth, our region grows at the same rate as the rest of the U.S., and (3) stagnant growth, our region stays about the same as it is today. This exercise is intended to help “future-proof” potential strategies for food policy suggested in the subsequent discussion.

Scenario 1: Continued Decline, Sprawl without growth

Advantages:
- Not as much sprawl pressure (Mark Rountree [MR])
- More feasible for area to be able to provide itself with food (DH)
- Less pressure from national chains; More opportunity for small businesses; less reliant on national chains (BW)
- Affordable cost of living expenses (DH)
- More affordable land (DH)
- Less people could mean less impact on the environment (PH)

Opportunities:
- Ability for small businesses to build strong networks with one another (BW)
- Increased opportunity for urban growing (DH)
- Working with less would spur more innovation and creativity (PH)
- More collaboration; more working together = more social capital (JB; PH)
- Increased labor costs could be an advantage depending on what side you are on (MR)
- People might come to work in the food sectors; join the labor force (DP; MR)

Challenges:
- Potential increase in taxes due to reduced population and revenues (MR)
- Potential limitations in public services due to decrease in tax base (MR)
- Decrease in the financial capacity of the workforce (MR)

Disadvantages:
- Smaller markets for local products (BW)
- Less population = less capital for investment in food production (PH)
- Less skilled work force (DH)
- Community decline may decrease social capital (DP)
- Less capital to support non-profits (PH)
- The services they provide to people in need may be disrupted or limited (PH)
- Higher labor costs may increase the price of food (MR)
**Scenario 2: Regional Growth, Population Increases by 50%**

**Advantages:**

- Could increase types of farms, number and diversity farmers (DH)
- Could be viewed as an area that is open for opportunities, low barriers of entry... rather than the focus on brain drain, etc. (Cathy Lovejoy Maloney [CLM])
- More people would mean more of an opportunity to plan; more federal dollars and political clout for future planning and public education (DH; MR)
- Synergies arising from increased population and improved reputation (MR)
- More opportunity to grow jobs (MR)
- Could have a lever in the schools that could translate to instilling positive food culture with youth in schools (PH)

**Opportunities:**

- Increase demand, but we don’t know what type of demand that will be ... food in general or healthy food (PH)
- Farms could get smaller which may increase the diversity of agriculture (MR)
- Niche farms could become prevalent (DH)
- Greater potential to grow new food types, culturally appropriate and healthy (DH)
- Could increase agri-tourism (DP; DH)
- Increased opportunity for colleges in the area to attract dollars and money involved in training and research (PH)
- Infill development may become more practical and may reduce pressure to sprawl (MR)

**Challenges:**

- More stress on the food systems (CLM)
- Increase the cost of food (MR)
- Increased need for farmland protection (JB)
- More competition over resources (Natalie Cook [NC])
- Inequity; less access for some more for others (NC)
- Price of food could increase (MR)
- Less of an ability to be locally self-reliant in food (DH)

**Disadvantages:**

- Greater environmental impact (BC)
- Land values would increase and threaten urban growing (DP)
- Less land for urban growing (DP)
- Gentrification (DP)
- Increased economic competition could reduce prominence of the sector (BC)

**Scenario 3: Stagnating Region, Population Stays about the Same**

**Challenges:**

“How do we grow?” And “How do we improve quality of life?” become important questions (PH)
Strategy Brainstorming Session
The working team was asked to specify and explain potential strategies that would enable the attainment of the team’s goals under a range of possible futures. To facilitate this brainstorming exercise, goals were placed into categories: (1) Food Production, (2) Economics of Food, (3) Healthy Food Culture and Education or (4) Over-arching or Other Strategies.

Food Production:

- Analysis of what policies affect food production and what may enhance production (PH)
- Protect farmland:
  - Purchase of land development rights, smart land use planning (MR, DH)
  - Town Farmland Protection Plans, Farm Bureaus (MR, DH)
- Find ways to attract new farmers and new types of farming – heavily tied to land use (DH)
- Promote environmentally-sound agricultural practices locally through tax incentives (JB)
  - Make sure that these practices are broader than just organic (JB)
  - Educating about integrated pest management (MR)
- Create connections with surrounding counties in the broader region, regional planning (BC, DH, MR)
- Remove barriers to urban growing (DP)
- Allow for more small-scale growing spaces (public spaces, schools, every neighborhood) (DP)

Economics of Food:

- Analysis of what policies affect economics (PH)
- Development of food hubs – (DP)
  - Tie this in with the broader region (beyond our two counties) (LT)
- Institutional purchasing – creating demand for local institutions to buy local food (DP)
  - Schools, universities, hospitals, prisons, etc… (DP)
- Create opportunities for farmers and small businesses to connect (JB)
- Economic methods of protecting farmland, e.g., tax incentives (LT, DH)
- Reduce systemic bottle necks that often hinder small farms from entering the market (Cheryl Thayer [CT]) Issues: Safety certifications, transportation, agglomeration, policies are unnecessarily stringent and detrimental (See Goal 5) (CT)
- Streamline the regulatory process required for small growers to get started and to enter market (CT) Possibly through a clearinghouse of policies, programs, retailers, etc… (CT)
- Reduce barriers to marketing for urban growers (DH, DP)
- Provide an opportunity for all players to meet and coordinate in order to connect food producers, marketers, retailers and processors (PH)
- Incentives to carry produce in the inner city (e.g., convenience stores) (DP)
- Ensure we are tapping into existing programs and advocating for them (Lisa Tucker [LT], DP)
- Education programs for career opportunities within the food system (CLM, LT)
- Create a global marketing plan with different groups (CLM)
- Create opportunities to increase access to food via bodegas, etc… (LT)
- Support farmer’s markets (LT)
Healthy Food Culture and Education:

- Create a culture that values healthy food (BW)
- Analysis of what policies affect culture (PH)
- Communicate the priorities around farming policies that affect people coming into a community (JB)
- Integrate Food Systems education into public schools to educate children and families (JB)
  - Youth education around a culture of food (CLM)
- Gaining a seat at the table for all these conversations going on that may affect food access (e.g., planning for Buffalo Billion) (PH)
- Find a way to do coordinated advocacy. HKHC is a good example, active in green code (DH)
- Training for new farmers and linking them to new land (See Goal 7) (DP)
- Create an awareness among teens and young adults about the breadth and complexity of food system careers (PH)
  - Do so by leveraging community colleges, science programs in research and development; Future Farmers of America programs (CLM; DH)
- Work with colleges, professional associations and get the registered dieticians in the dialogue (PH)
- Career development for food system workforce and support services (DH; DP)
- Use local media, cable access, any technology - little or no cost, social media (PH; DH)
- Map out, or outline the process required to achieve the necessary culture shift in food (LT)
- Shift from just being consumers to reconnecting with food (e.g., community kitchens) (DP). Business could be borne out of this shift in focus (DP)
- Increase growing area in urban areas for food – reconnect them to where it comes from could help shift the culture (DP)

Over-arching or Other Strategies:

- Need to address policy (PH)
- Establishment of a food policy council (Action) (DP)
- Advocate for healthy food, etc... (DP)
- Build capacity across the board (PH)
- Promote a shared vision across all strategies to have buy-in from all players (PH)
- Reduce red tape overall (JB)
- Coordinate with other One Region Forward working teams so that plans and strategies are synergistic, complementary and compatible (PH)
- Review of best practices and case studies; historical research (PH)
- Have an “infiltration strategy” so that food and public health has a seat at the table for broader programs and initiatives (PH)
- Use the food shed concept to define what is “local” in terms of food (CLM, DH)
- Engage in regional planning efforts broader than the two-county region (BC, LT, CT)
- Understand how developments within our region and nearby affect the food system (DH)
- Strategizing food access based on geography (urban, rural, suburbs, food deserts) (DP)
Next Steps and Reminders

- Review of Team Work web portal
  - Join as an online contributor, invite others to participate as a contributor
  - Give feedback on the goals online
  - Share stories and best practices
  - Review what the other working teams are doing

- Next Meeting: June 10, 2013, same place and time.
  - Keep brainstorming strategies until then