One Region Forward
Food Access and Justice
Meeting 5, September 23, 2013

Working Team Members in Attendance (sorted by break-out discussion groups):

Group A
Mike Van Der Puy, Massachusetts Ave Project
Susannah Barton, Grassroots Gardens
Sarah Jablonski, Food for All
Samina Raja, UB School of Architecture and Planning
Derek Nichols, Grassroots Gardens

Facilitators:
Travis Norton, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab
Matthew Wattles, UB Regional Institute

Group B
Lisa Tucker, Field and Fork Network
Cheryl Thayer, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Phil Haberstro, Wellness Institute
Wendy Van Every, Wellness Institute

Facilitators:
Brian Conley, UB Regional Institute
Patrick Gooch, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab

Group C
Mark Rountree, Erie County Dept. of Environment and Planning
Sean Mulligan, Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County
Mary Stottele, Wellness Institute
Charlotte MacVittie, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County

Facilitators:
Jessica Hall, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab
Cristina Delgado, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab

Note takers:
Bradshaw Hovey, UB Regional Institute/ Urban Design Project
Patrick Gooch, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab

1RF Food Access and Justice Working Team Mission statement
“We strive to make regional food production, food consumption, and the ties between them sustainable, just, and sovereign. We seek to ensure that food production remains a viable livelihood; that people have access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally acceptable food; and that the links between regional food producers and consumers are strengthened.”
**1RF Food Access and Justice Working Team Goals**
- Support food producers
- Support food consumers
- Link food producers and consumers [*Focus of today’s meeting*]

**Introductions and Agenda review**
*A brief welcome and introduction was given by Brian Conley.*

**Introducing the November Community Congress events and scenario planning for One Region Forward**
*A brief presentation was given by Dr Bradshaw Hovey. Refer to the slides posted here.*

**Follow-up discussion:**
- Haberstro: Will this be preceded by an analysis of how the existing codes affect the choices people make?
- Hovey: Until now the implicit assumptions have been that the existing municipal zoning codes are subject to change. In other words, the reality should reflect the choices that the community makes.
- Haberstro: Trying to tie the results into the political process by showing people that the idea they want to realize may need to be changed through the political process and going to local officials.
- Raja: There is a need not to constrain the process by showing people the existing zoning codes, which have not achieved the results most people want.
- Hovey: How to explain a lot of information vs. presenting visual chaos, this map is the result. This builds off of the Framework for Regional Growth of several years ago.
- Haberstro: Are there any best practice models or expert scenarios to guide the public during the exercise?
- Hovey: We have deliberated on this and concluded that it is best to fashion it as a transparent, public-driven, bottom-up process. We are giving them a set of principles derived from community input on “Regional Vision and Values” to guide them by showing how placing your chips will achieve these principles. There are some rules imposed on the game: the participants do not have to follow the principles we have provided, but if they do not, we want to know what principles they are following.
- Van Der Puy: Would it be best to have scenarios presented to the public so that they can make an informed decision?
- Hovey: that is certainly one way of doing it.
- Haberstro: What about the divide between people really aware of the problem and the issues and the public.
- Hovey: we see this as an opportunity to educate as well as learn and move this process forward.

**Re-cap and Process Overview**
*A brief presentation given by Brian Conley addressed the following topics. Refer to the slides posted here.*

- Some important reminders – big picture, reviewing notes of previous meetings,
- Refining and expanding our list of recommended action items
• Finalizing the list of Food Access and Justice Working Team strategies
• Reminder of how to keep involved on-line
• A Framing Question for Meeting 5:
  “What steps should be taken, both today and in the future, to facilitate, reinforce and enhance
  the flow of food from those who produce it to those who consume it?”

**A Closer look at regional connections between producers and citizens:**
* A presentation given by Jessica Hall addressed the following topics. Refer to the slides posted here.

- Food Access and Farm Viability - both based on linkages between farmers and consumers.
- How local food travels – a case study on a tomato grown at Intergrow and then sent to Wegmans.
- Food Regulations in Erie County and New York State.
- Explaining Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification process
- Challenges and Opportunities in getting local foods to local markets
- Food Processing and Food Wholesale in Buffalo Niagara
- Corner Stores
- Direct Marketing
- Institutional Purchasing
- Moving into possible solutions (Food Hubs, etc...)

**Follow-up discussion:**

- Haberstro: There is an article in the Atlantic Magazine on how the fast food industry can be the
  solution or a partner in consuming healthier food.
- Van Der Puy: I would like to see a clearer vision statement of the goals of this working team.
- Raja: The working team has developed a Mission Statement for this reason (see page 1).
- Haberstro: Any idea of how much food comes from our Canadian Brethren just across the bridge? I
  am aware of the trade issues, but it seems like we could get more food.
- Hall: That is something we just started looking into and will continue to research. We are aware that
  a lot of food grown in western New York is shipped to a food terminal in Toronto but are not certain
  of how much food from Canada is received in Buffalo Niagara.
- Van Der Puy: Whose job is it to market the farm, the farm business or some other entity. Is this an
  appropriate role for us to play?
- Sara: It is challenging to compete against national marketing of other foods as multiple millions are
  spent on this each year.
Proposing Actions and Actors to Build off of our Assets and Seize Opportunities

**Group A**

Getting farmers’ food to market

- Need a system for corner stores to acquire and sell locally-produced foods
  - A coalition of corner stores could provide and share information and know-how
  - Local food would need to be branded or marked at corner stores
- Create a healthy corner store program
  - Link program with local Business Associations to share knowledge and reach markets
- Establish a business incubator for food processing
  - Leverage culinary schools interested in business development
  - Reach out to the network of food kitchens
- Use existing economic development funding dollars to develop local food processing

GAP Certification

- Facilitate GAP certification for local farmers through grants and funding mechanisms
- Vary the requirements for GAP certification by the size and type of farm operation
- Subsidize costs of GAP certification for small farmers
- Disseminate information on GAP certification through the Erie Co. FPC and Cornell Coop.
  - Educate and provide farmers with opportunities to market/advertise their products
  - Educate farmers on potential ways to transport their goods to local markets
  - Educate farmers on best practices to secure financial assistance
- Develop state guidelines for procurement to support local, small-scale growers
  - Research best practices with input from the Erie Co. FPC
- Advocate for a regional food policy council with findings from best-practice research

**Group B**

Direct Marketing

- Increase the number and scope of local Community Supported Agriculture farms (CSAs)
  - Collaborate to create a “one-stop” resource where citizens can shop for a CSA
  - Encourage volunteer support for local CSA’s where CSA shares could be acquired through “Sweat Equity”, or, by working to distribute the CSA products to shareholders
  - Potential actors could include:
    - Food for All, or,
    - the Northeast Organic Farming Association, which already provides an educational resource on sustainable farming practices along with a directory of annual regional CSA fairs
  - Establish a “Freezer Share” program to support CSA members
    - CSA shares maybe too much food for some households to store, so offer rental space within freezers for CSA shareholders to store local food
- Establish local policies for food distribution
  - Collaborate to create a “one-stop” resource where citizens can shop for a CSA
• Need to educate farmers and communicate to them on funding and grant opportunities for direct marketing
• Farmers Markets
  o Should not focus too much of our efforts on expanding these destinations
    ▪ 99% of food comes from wholesaler or a grocery store, even for those who shop at Farmers Markets
  o Expand public assistance acceptance at local Farmers Markets
    ▪ “Double-Up Bucks” program for example
  o Extend public assistance programs to Farm Stands
  o Create a database of farm stands that includes their location, hours and products
• Tie SNAP benefits to purchases of products grown locally or within New York state
• Increase the amount of local food acquired by local restaurants
  o Starts with the consumer and a need to prove that the market trends have shifted towards locally-grown foods [trends will only change if profit margins are impacted]
  o Make procurement of local food products a viable option for local restaurateurs
    ▪ Competitive with the national food distribution services (US Foods, SYSCO, etc..)
• Establish a “Buy Local” campaign or event to promote locally-produced foods
• Change higher level policies to end subsidies for national and global food distribution companies

Corner Stores

• Link corner stores with actors who can help market local products to corner store patrons
  o Potential linkages could be made with Small Business Associations, Culinary, Dietetics and Nutrition programs of local higher-education institutions
• Educate local corner store owners and workers on storage of perishable local food products
• Educate local corner stores on the cultural needs of their patrons
  o Employ the assistance of Block Clubs and other neighborhood service organizations
• Establish a “Double-Up Bucks” program to increase the dollar value of public assistance benefits at local corner stores when those dollars are used to buy local, healthy foods
  o Look at Michigan’s program as a case example (Orin Hesterman)

Higher-Education Institutions

• Bring local colleges, universities and their students into the business of agriculture and food distribution
• Coordinate between colleges and disciplines to have health and wellness, agriculture, dietetics, business and culinary programs work together rather than in silos

Group C
Institutional Purchasing

• Change policy to support institutional purchasing for local, small-scale farms
  o Change policy at higher levels
• Work with the least restrictive regulations to create avenues for change
  o Policy changes at the local and institutional level
  o Limit geographic range where bids for institutional purchasing can be made
    • Set a distance threshold to define what constitutes a “local purchase”
• Pool local resources to make them eligible for Centralized Commodity Contracts (CCC’s) (Food Hubs, for example)
• Launch a “Mobile Market” to distribute local-grown products to local schools
  o Look at Troy, NY school district as a model
• Establish a collaborative partnership between local farmers, distributors and processors to meet institutional requirements for local food procurement
• Create school-purchasing cooperatives
• Advocate for better federal budgets

Presentations on break-out discussions for each group

No comments or questions from the group