A Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning: Transforming Food Environments, Facilitating Healthy Eating

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Food nourishes us, enriches our celebrations, and sustains life itself. Yet not everyone in the U.S. has access to foods that nourish. Some of us live in neighborhoods where grocery stores carry a greater variety of potato chips than vegetables, while some of us cannot afford vegetables, even when they are available. The quality of food environments in places where people live, work, and play carries significant health consequences. Through community and regional planning that examines food quality and availability systemically, planners can play a significant role in shaping the food environment of communities, and thereby facilitate healthy eating. Drawing lessons from six case studies of communities nationwide, this report outlines strategies that planners can adopt to facilitate healthy eating through community and regional food planning.
That planners have a role to play in shaping food environments is anything but a new idea for the planning profession. Beginning in the early 1900s, planners under various guises of regionalists, the City Beautiful Movement, and advocates of garden cities were discussing the role of cities and metropolitan regions and their governance and planning with regard to food (Donofrio 2007). This thread was essentially forgotten for decades. Re-emerging in the closing years of the century, planning scholars (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000) in the U.S. again began writing about planning’s role in shaping the food system. They wondered why among the essential necessities of life — water, shelter, air, and food — planners had ignored food. The omission appeared especially puzzling because the food system is inherently affected by planning actions; traditional functional areas of planning, including transportation, economic development, and environment planning significantly affect people’s ability to access food. Consider the following examples. Comprehensive plans and zoning codes regulate where food retail locates within a community. The availability of public transportation influences people’s access to these retail outlets, especially for those who do not own personal automobiles. Of course, farmland preservation, a familiar planning preoccupation, directly influences the amount of land dedicated to farming, and, consequently, to food production. Despite these and many other critical connections between planning and food, until the late 1990s, food issues were largely a “stranger to the planning field” (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000).

Community and regional food planning—and planners’ and local governments’ involvement in it—has since come a long way. As this report documents, food planners and activists, working within the local government and nonprofit sectors, are engaged in community and regional food planning to promote healthy eating through a variety of programmatic, policy, and regulatory mechanisms. The American Planning Association too is taking an active role in this area. In 2005, APA sponsored the first ever track on food systems at its annual meeting. A year later, a volunteer Food Systems Steering Committee of APA members was established to “educate planners about food systems and to integrate food systems planning within traditional areas of planning” (www.planning.org/divisions/initiatives/foodsystem.htm). More recently, APA adopted a policy guide on community and regional food planning, signaling planners’ commitment to actively engage in building and strengthening community food systems (www.planning.org/policy-guides/pdf/food.pdf). A key concern of this emerging area of community and regional food planning is the promotion of healthy eating.

Recent national trends have raised the salience of food and healthy eating as important topics. First, there is a growing public health concern over the rise in obesity. In response, a vast body of research and a number of programs to promote physical activity, and more recently to facilitate healthy eating, have emerged. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a private philanthropic foundation, for example, dedicated millions of dollars toward programmatic initiatives, such as Active Living by Design, and its offshoot, Healthy Eating by Design (a sponsor of this report), to promote environmental and systemic solutions for promoting healthy eating and reducing obesity. Second, and related to the first, is a general increase in food activism and popular consciousness about where our food comes from and what we eat. The popularity of mainstream publications such as Animal, Vegetable, Miracle (Kingsolver 2007), The Omnivore’s Dilemma (Pollan 2006) and Fast Food Nation (Schlosser 2001) illustrates this growing interest. And, finally, recent rising energy and food costs, which are making healthful foods less affordable to a wider swath of Americans, have catapulted food to the center of public debates in the country. Growing societal interests in issues of food
Chapter 1. Food, Health Eating, and Planning

In contrast to a conventional food system, a community food system—favored by food system activists—emphasizes strengthening and making visible the relationships between producers, processors, distributors, and consumers of food.

and healthy eating make Kaufman and Pothukuchi’s (2000) decade-old call to engage planners in improving the food system particularly prescient.

This PAS Report is a response to the growing interest in food and healthy eating among planners and communities nationwide. It describes how community and regional food planning can be used to facilitate healthy eating in communities. Following an introduction to community and regional food planning, this report describes survey results of planners’ opinion of and role in this emerging area of planning. Because planners learn from practice, we provide case studies of six communities that have demonstrated leadership in promoting healthy eating using innovative strategies. The report concludes with strategies that planners can use to plan and design neighborhoods, routes, and destinations to facilitate healthy eating and build healthier communities.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL FOOD PLANNING?
Community and regional food planning is concerned with improving a community’s food system. The term “food system” has been defined previously (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000) as the chain of activities and processes related to the production, processing, distribution, disposal, and eating of food. Food activists and scholars distinguish between a conventional and a community food system. Within a conventional food system, food production and processing is industrial in scale and relies on advances in bio-technology, food distribution occurs over large distances (estimates suggest food travels about 1,400 miles from the farm to the fork), disposal of food generates a significant amount of packaging waste, and consumers are removed—physically and metaphorically—from the source of their food.

In such a system, corporations and agri-businesses, and not farmers, are dominant stakeholders. Government plays a role by providing significant subsidies to corporate producers and industrial farms for the production of specific crops, known as commodities, such as soy and corn. Scholars critique the conventional food system for its negative effect on the environment and economy of communities, as well as on public health.

A symptom of a malfunctioning food system is the absence of healthful food destinations within many neighborhoods in the U.S. A phrase commonly used to describe this inadequacy is a “food desert,” or a neighborhood where few or no food stores are located. The term, originally coined in the United Kingdom, has a somewhat fluid and imprecise definition—some scholars use the phrase to refer to the absence of large supermarkets, while others use it to refer to the absence of supermarkets and smaller grocery stores. In any event, a significant body of literature is beginning to document racial and class disparities in access to particular types of food destinations, especially supermarkets (Raja et al. 2008; Mari Gallaghar Consulting and Research Group 2006). The implications of living in a food desert are many, especially for those without access to personal automobiles. Residents of food deserts may be unable to make frequent trips to distant food stores to purchase healthful foods. They may stock up on foods purchased during fewer trips, and may be less likely to purchase perishable fresh produce. If residents do buy fresh produce, the perishable nature of the food may lead to greater spoilage and wastage. Overall, limited access to healthful foods within the proximity of one’s neighborhood may act as a barrier to eating healthy foods and have an adverse health impact on residents.

In contrast to a conventional food system, a community food system—favored by food system activists—emphasizes strengthening and making visible the relationships between producers, processors, distributors, and consumers of food. A community food system has several interrelated characteristics. It is place-based. The effort to promote local and regional
Figure 1-1. Components of a community’s food system.

networks—among producers, processors, distributors, and consumers of food—is, therefore, considered desirable, and is in stark resistance to the conventional food system whose spatial scale frequently spans global proportions. A community food system promotes the use of environmentally sustainable methods for producing, processing, and distributing food. By favoring local distribution networks over global, the consumption of fossil fuel is minimized. In a similar vein, minimal packaging of food and composting of food leftovers is encouraged to reduce the impact on landfills. A community food system espouses the idea of social justice, placing at its center the concerns of marginalized groups, including migrant farm laborers, financially struggling family farmers, and underserved inner-city residents, rather than corporations and agri-businesses. And finally, and most pertinent to this report, a community food system facilitates residents’ access to healthful, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods at all times—a condition described as “food security.”

The need to re-strengthen community food systems is especially urgent in developing countries. In the absence of strong community food systems, the globalized food system defined by neoliberal policies imposed by entities such as the World Trade Organization and exploitative regulations imposed by food corporations make it difficult for developing nations to feed themselves. Scholar and activist Vandana Shiva (2000) notes that when corporations control the global food market, greater emphasis is placed on the production of fewer varieties of foods to ensure centralized control. Production of fewer varieties of crops reduces biodiversity: in Mexico, for example, about 80 percent of maize varieties are no longer available. To complicate matters, particular international trade treaties criminalize the traditional practice of seed saving and sharing by farmers in developing countries, limiting farmers’ ability to grow foods and sustain themselves economically (Shiva 2000). Shiva argues that when “global markets replace local markets, monocultures replace diversity” in food supply and place developing countries at greater risk of environmental disaster and food insecurity.

Scholars caution planners to not equate local food systems with better food systems. Born and Purcell (2006) argue that there is nothing inherent about
the local scale that makes local food systems better. Consider the following scenario. A doughnut manufacturing company is headquartered in city A; the company’s retail outlets sell locally produced doughnuts in virtually every neighborhood in city A. By purchasing doughnuts at these retail outlets, residents of city A would be able to access and eat locally produced doughnuts; yet it would be a stretch to suggest that access to this locally produced food is better than apples trucked into the city from a different region. Born and Purcell (2006) suggest that community and regional food planners should first define the desired goals of a community food system—such as access to healthful, affordable, and nutritious food—and then determine the type and scale of food system that will help to achieve the desired goals. It is often the case that locally sourced products meet many of the desired goals of community food security better than globally sourced products.
Historically, planners and local governments have had a limited interest in food systems issues and food policy. Yet, thanks to the work and advocacy by a broad coalition of food system stakeholders, including local governments and planners, communities have made considerable strides in facilitating healthy eating by strengthening their community food systems. This chapter provides an overview of current efforts to promote healthy eating through community and regional food planning, giving special attention to the role of local governments and planners in facilitating such efforts.
Local governments are involved in a wide variety of efforts to strengthen food systems to facilitate healthy eating in their communities. Many provide resources to and facilitate the work of community food organizations, while others take a more active stance by establishing local and state food policy councils. In a few model cases, local governments have begun to explore the use of planning and regulatory mechanisms for promoting food security and facilitating healthy eating. For the sake of discussion, we classify these diverse approaches as programmatic, policy, and planning/regulatory efforts. This classification is not intended to be prescriptive, but it is intended as a heuristic device to organize and present the range of food-related efforts that are fast emerging.

Programmatic efforts refer to focused, often site-specific, programs, such as farmers’ markets or summer meal programs for school children, which enhance access to healthful foods. Policy efforts are broader inasmuch as they seek to modify larger institutional, public, legal structures and policies to improve food systems and thereby facilitate healthy eating within a community. Planning and regulatory efforts make use of planning tools—such as comprehensive planning and zoning—for the same purpose. Below we describe each type of initiative and illustrate the description with examples from communities from across North America.

**EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMMATIC EFFORTS**

**Community Gardens and Urban Farms**

Community gardens are shared open spaces where individuals garden together to grow fresh, healthful, and affordable fruits and vegetables. Although community gardens are more common in urban neighborhoods, they can flourish in suburban settings as well. In addition to being productive spaces where people can grow affordable and healthful foods, community gardens provide numerous other benefits, many of which are much valued by planners. Like parks, they are lush green spaces that bring nature into a city, town, or village. Yet, unlike parks, which may be initiated and maintained by local governments, community gardens last only when there is community motivation, engagement, and ownership over the gardens. Community gardens function as civic spaces that promote social, cultural, and intergenerational exchange in a neighborhood. Many of these gardens exist within economically distressed neighborhoods, serving as icons of hope in these landscapes.

![Hmong gardener in her community garden (Troy Garden) in Madison, Wisconsin.](image-url)
The American Community Gardening Association estimates there are about 18,000 community gardens in the U.S. and Canada. Because many of them exist as informal spaces within a neighborhood, an accurate accounting of the total number of community gardens is nearly impossible. Nonetheless, their potential for increasing access to healthful foods is considerable, especially in low-income neighborhoods. In Ohio, for example, 337 urban gardens generated an annual harvest worth about $1 million (OSU 2000). Well over three-fourths (86 percent) of these gardens were used primarily to grow food for consumption (as opposed to flowers or other ornamental plants), while a small fraction (0.01 percent) were used to grow food for the market. On average, 44 percent of the food grown at these gardens was consumed by gardeners’ immediate family members, another 20 percent was shared with other family members and friends, 13 percent was donated to food pantries, 20 percent was consumed on-site, and about 2 percent sold to grocery stores, restaurants, and other outlets (OSU 2000). Not only did these gardens increase access to fresh produce for the gardeners—three-fourths of whom identified themselves as low-income—but a considerable share of the produce made its way into the larger community through family, friends, and food pantries.

Gardeners recognize and enjoy the dietary benefits of having access to community gardens. For example, community gardeners surveyed in New Jersey reported improved nutrition as an important benefit of gardening. Forty-four percent of gardeners believed that they ate more fresh fruits and vegetables than nongardeners (Patel 1991). Youth gardeners in Buffalo also showed a demonstrable increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables after participation in a gardening program (Raja 2007).

More recently, community gardens and urban farms are gaining popularity as a local response to ameliorating the adverse effects of rising gas prices and climate change. By growing food locally using sustainable organic

![Community garden in Buffalo, New York.](image-url)
methods, community gardeners and urban farmers actively participate in reducing reliance on fossil fuels that would otherwise be necessary to grow and transport foods from long distances.

A large number of municipalities around the country support community gardens and urban agriculture. Cities lease land, provide water, compost, and even insurance to community gardens. In Buffalo, New York, for example, the city leases more than 30 publicly owned vacant lots for community gardens to Grassroots Gardens, a nonprofit group that acts as a liaison between the city and community gardeners and provides insurance to gardens. Many of these gardens also receive subsidized or free access to public infrastructure such as water supply and electricity. PAS Report 506/507, *Old Cities/Green Cities: Communities Transform Unmanaged Land*, documents the efforts of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in turning that city’s vacant land into a neighborhood resource, including a case study of the rebirth of the New Kensington Philadelphia neighborhood and a description of Philadelphia’s Green City Strategy.

Lease agreements between municipalities and community groups for use of public land for community gardens can be fraught with tension when local governments perceive gardens as a temporary use of land, while gardeners see them as spaces vested with aspirations for their neighborhoods and countless hours of gardeners’ sweat equity. This tension is especially pervasive in communities with booming real estate markets, where community gardens may be perceived by local governments as less than the “highest and best” use of land. Such tensions occasionally exist even in stagnant real estate markets. In Buffalo, the city can break its lease with Grassroots Gardens with a 30-day notice and reclaim ownership of community gardens located on publicly owned land. Melissa Fratello, former Grassroots Gardens’ coordinator, notes that such breaks in leases occur not only in the face of the slightest development pressures but also when a mature community garden attracts the eye of entrepreneurial neighbors who bid to buy a “ready-made landscaped lot” from the city for a nominal charge.

While most community gardens programs are initiated and run by community groups, some local governments actively facilitate gardens within their neighborhoods. One of the most successful models is in Seattle, Washington, where a local government-run community gardening program has existed since the 1970s. The P-Patch program, housed in the city’s Department of Neighborhoods, oversees the operation of more than 60 gardens throughout the city, with about 2,500 plots on 23 acres of publicly owned land (www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch). While all citizens of Seattle are eligible to garden on these lots for a small fee, the program gives special consideration to low-income individuals, youth, and immigrants.

The City of Seattle provides ongoing administrative support to individuals and communities interested in establishing community gardens. The following is a sample of services offered by the Department of Neighborhoods’ P-Patch program to residents interested in establishing a community garden:

- Evaluate potential of proposed garden site
- Help residents secure access to the land (through lease or purchase of public or privately owned land, including through the city’s Neighborhood Matching Fund)
- Help with soil testing and recommend potential remediation techniques
- Lead a community group through a garden design process
- Manage plot assignment within the garden
- Monitor plots at each garden at least once a month to monitor plot usage and organic gardening, and work with site coordinators on issues that arise
Maintain a waiting list for plots
Attend to emergencies
Facilitate outreach
Provide materials and educational resources
Facilitate dispute resolution in case of conflicts
Develop and maintain interagency and outside organizational liaison

For almost four decades, P-Patch gardens have contributed to increasing access to healthful foods for Seattle’s residents. About 6,000 people grow organic produce for consumption on these gardens. Gardeners are not allowed to sell the produce but are allowed to distribute it to friends, family, and food banks. Seven to 10 tons of organic produce is donated to food banks by P-Patch gardeners each year.

Community gardens offer a tremendous opportunity for people to grow and consume fresh, affordable, and healthful foods. This access is especially important for individuals with limited access to land and resources, such as renters who do not own land, and low-middle income populations who may wish to supplement their food budget by produce grown in the gardens.

Some cities, such as Goleta, California, Chicago, Illinois, and Madison, Wisconsin, are also home to functioning urban farms. In both Goleta and Madison, conservation easements protect urban farms from future development and ensure that residents have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. In some instances, cities have supported urban farming on land that would otherwise have been underused. For example, in Philadelphia, the Department of Community and Economic Development and the Philadelphia Water Authority facilitated the use of lands around a water tank site (the Somerton Tanks site in Northeast Philadelphia) as an economically sustainable urban farm. The Somerton Tanks Demonstration Farm had about half an acre of growing space and another quarter of an acre for pathways, parking, and farm structures. The farm, which started in 2003, generated $68,000 in its fourth year (2007) of operation.

In Chicago, Illinois, urban agriculture is moving center-stage into public parkland. Tucked in the middle of Grant Park, across from the path fronting Lake Michigan, is a beautifully designed “potager” or French kitchen garden with more than 150 varieties of vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers. The demonstration garden is the result of a partnership between Growing Power, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Milwaukee, and the Chicago Park and Recreation Department. The garden, designed and installed by Growing Power, produces about two tons of organic produce each growing season on about 20,000 square feet of growing area. Designers have paid special attention to the scale, texture, and color of the plants in the garden. As a result, the garden offers an excellent model for an aesthetically pleasing and edible landscape in a highly visible location in the city.

Farmers’ Markets
Described as “recurrent markets at fixed locations where farm products are sold by farmers themselves” (Brown 2001), farmers’ markets connect consumers to producers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that between 1994 and 2006, farmers’ market grew in number from 1,755 to 4,385, a phenomenal increase over one decade (USDA 2007). At these farmers’ markets, consumers can purchase fresh, locally grown, healthful produce from farmers. Occasionally, these markets also serve as retail venues for other goods, such as local handicrafts, baked goods, and other value-added food products. The presence of farmers’ markets in cities, especially
in low-income urban areas, presents an opportunity for both residents and farmers. Central-city neighborhoods often lack access to nutritious and fresh produce. For the same reason, these neighborhoods represent untapped markets for farmers.

**Figure 2-3. Operating farmers' markets in the United States.**

Developing a successful farmers' market requires more than simply inviting a group of farmers to drive their produce into a neighborhood, especially in a low-income neighborhood. Organizers have to choose a strategic site for their markets, such as areas of high foot traffic and near transit stops. Perhaps more importantly, farmers' markets have to respond to customers' economic realities in addition to their preferences and level of knowledge regarding healthful foods. In low-income neighborhoods, for example, farmers' markets may require initial assistance in the form of subsidies. They may also need to allow the use of food assistance vouchers such as from the Women and Infant Care (WIC) and the Seniors Farmers Markets Nutrition Programs (SFMNP). (See [www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SeniorFMNPoverview.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/SeniorFMNP/SeniorFMNPoverview.htm) for more information.) To increase demand for the healthy food, farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods may need to undertake education campaigns. Community organizing may also be necessary to develop a sense of ownership among both farmers and consumers. Market organizers must also consider potential language and cultural barriers that may prevent customers from participating in a farmers' market.

A farmers' market that manages to do the above and much more is the Fondy Farmers' Market in Northern Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The market was established in 2000 after an assessment of Milwaukee's food system in 1997 revealed that only a handful of supermarkets existed in the economically distressed areas of the central city (Kim 200). Instead, corner convenience stores, with limited food offerings and prices as high as 30 percent more than suburban grocery stores, dominated the food environment.

Located on 3,000 square feet of city-owned land, Fondy Market operates six days a week during the growing season. Visitors and vendors at the market are protected from precipitation by a wood shelter built on the site in the 1970s. Somewhat ironically, the shelter was built to house a farmers' market that was eventually abandoned. The Fondy Food Center, the organization that oversees the market, leases the space (for 50 years) from the city for a dollar a year (Kim 200).

At the Fondy Market, 35 farmers, many of whom are immigrants, sell an assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables. To ensure that low-income residents can make use of the market, Fondy accepts the Wisconsin QUEST Foodstamp Cards, only one of two markets in Wisconsin to do so. Farmers' markets were traditionally unable to use electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards because these transactions require card readers with a telephone connection, which is not always available at market sites. At Fondy, farmers are able to accept food stamps using wireless handheld card readers.
A supply of healthful foods, while essential, may not be a sufficient strategy for facilitating healthy eating. To eat healthily, people must also have culinary and dietary education. Recognizing this, Fondy Markets’ organizers run complementary nutrition education programs at the market. Through their Taste the Season workshops, area residents learn about nutrition, how to improve their cooking skills, and taste new foods. Audience members learn about, sample, and share new recipes featuring a different, locally grown, fresh vegetable that is in season and available at the market. Held every other Saturday throughout the market season, the workshops are conducted by a registered dietician and assisted by various culinary, nutrition, and health experts in the community. The organizers also raffle cookbooks and cooking utensils at these workshops (www.fondymarket.org/).

The creation of a farmers market is “a traditional, low-investment way” (fondymarket.org) to make fresh, healthful food available, to contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of a neighborhood, and to support the local farm economy.

*Figure 2-3* (top). Neighborhood Across from Fondy Market, Milwaukee; *Figure 2-5* (center). Fondy Farmers’ Market in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; *Figure 2-6* (below). Immigrant farmer at Fondy Farmers’ Market.
Community Supported Agriculture
Like farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) programs connect farmers directly with consumers. In a CSA program, farmers sell shares of their upcoming harvest directly to consumers at the beginning of a growing season, bypassing intermediaries in the food retail chain between producers and consumers. Shareholders receive shares of fresh produce weekly from the CSA farm and, in turn, share in the risks of farming, such as a poor harvest. Produce shares are delivered to shareholders at pre-arranged CSA drop-off sites by the farmer or volunteers.

Participation in a CSA ensures that city residents receive a steady supply of high-quality, fresh, typically organically grown produce during the growing season. CSAs reduce the distance over which food travels to reach the consumer. Transportation and storage costs are minimized. Thus, food sold through a CSA has the potential to be lower or comparable in cost to produce purchased at a conventional grocery store. CSA farms also typically use organic or more sustainable growing practices than conventional farms.

In addition to providing a steady supply of nutritious locally grown foods to consumers, a CSA arrangement also carries benefits for farmers. Primarily, it distributes risks across growers and consumers. It also provides farmers with capital at the beginning of the growing season, a time when farm expenses are high. A nationwide survey of CSA operators found that half of the farmers surveyed experienced an increase in their income after switching from conventional farming to community supported agriculture (Kelvin 1994).

Despite these benefits, CSAs programs have challenges to overcome. CSA consumers may feel that participation limits their choice of products (in comparison to purchasing the food at a conventional grocery store) since they generally receive only what is in season in their area, and some may lack the skills to cook the produce provided by the farmer. Successful CSA programs overcome this by providing information to consumers on the crops they are likely to receive over the growing season and by giving shareholders a recipe-of-the-week for using the produce. Some CSAs, such as Full Circle Farms in Carnation, Washington, that serves the Puget Sound region, partner with other farming and natural foods producers and distributors to provide additional products not grown on the farm, including eggs, dairy, meat, juice, and fruit. This strategy raises question about the direct producer-consumer relationship for the CSA but certainly offers more convenience and variety to customers. Food distributed through CSAs may also be subject to a greater degree of wastage and spoilage if the amount that is delivered each week exceeds what they may be able to cook and consume.

CSAs also face special difficulties when serving low-income neighborhoods. CSAs require that consumers make one large payment for their share at the beginning of the growing season, or a few payments over the course of the season. Making these downpayments is not possible for residents on fixed income. Thus, even if the cost of produce from a CSA is lower or comparable to conventional produce, the purchase of shares at the beginning of the growing season can be cost prohibitive for some. However, CSAs have been creative in overcoming this challenge. Many offer a greater number of payments or smaller shares of produce to make the programs more appealing to customers. Some trade shares for on-farm picking and packing labor, or for delivery services. Yet other CSAs partner with nonprofit agencies that front the cost of shares for customers, and then recoup the costs over time from customers through pay-as-you-go programs. One innovative approach used in southern Wisconsin (home to many CSA farms) is a coalition of CSA farms (Madison Area Community Supported CSA farms: www.macsac.org) that addresses outreach and low-income share fundraising.
Chapter 2. Current Efforts to Promote Healthy Eating through Community and Regional Food Planning

Farm-to-School Programs

Rates of obesity among youth nationwide have reached unprecedented levels. The CDC reports that the prevalence of overweight children between 6 and 11 years of age has more than doubled in the last two decades, from 7 percent in 1980 to 18.8 percent in 2004 (www.cdc.gov). The increase in overweight children is a significant health risk because it puts them at risk for other diseases, including diabetes. While a number of factors explain the prevalence of overweight children, the quality of foods available to them at home and school is an important one. One type of program that improves youth access to healthful foods is the farm-to-school program.

A farm-to-school program brings fresh, healthful foods from local farms to school cafeterias; these programs are designed to provide nutritional benefits to youth while expanding new market opportunities for farmers. Estimates from the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College indicate a large number of communities have begun to establish farm-to-school programs: 38 states, 769 school districts, and 10,991 schools are currently operating 1,118 farm-to-school programs in the U.S.

Farm-to-School programs offer significant potential for improving food environments in schools, as well as for supporting the local farm economy.

In Buffalo, New York, such a farm-to-school program was piloted in 2006 in Bennett Park Montessori, a public school on the city’s east side. Thirty-seven percent of the population in the school’s surrounding neighborhood has an income below the poverty level, and 40 percent of the residents do not own a vehicle. The neighborhood contains a limited number of stores that sell fresh fruits, vegetables, and meats, creating a barrier to healthy eating (Raja and Breinlich 2007). The lack of car ownership combined with inadequate public transportation limit residents’ ability to access healthful foods in this neighborhood. A local partnership of the school (its students, parents, teachers, and cafeteria staff), the school district, a nearby medical campus, a local farmer, and a local university, and several community groups led to the creation of a farm-to-school program at Bennett Park Montessori. Funded by the Healthy Eating by Design program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the farm-to-school program was part of a comprehensive effort by the local partnership to promote healthy eating among the school’s youth through a variety of programs, including:

- a free weekly salad bar to serve local and organic produce free of charge to supplement the lunch in the school cafeteria for about 124 students, aged 11 to 13 years;
- after-school peer workshops to demonstrate growing, cooking, and consumption of healthy foods;
- integration of healthy eating concepts within the school’s curriculum;
- reinforcement of healthy eating beyond the confines of the school day, such as by hosting dinners, featuring healthful and locally grown foods, for the families of students; and
- reinforcement of healthy eating concepts in the physical environment (e.g., students designed and created a portable mural depicting eating healthy in different growing seasons).

The implementation of a farm-to-school program is challenging. Local family farmers frequently lack the administrative capacity to meet the procurement guidelines of school districts, and they may not want to participate; local farms may be unable to supply sufficient produce to meet the demand of a large school district; and schools may lack resources and staff to implement a farm-to-cafeteria program. Cost is an important issue too because...
school districts are limited in how much they can spend per meal, and federal pass-through dollars for meal provision programs are insufficient, making cost-per-meal a potential barrier to implementation. As efficiencies increase with programmatic stabilization and understanding, this barrier will likely become less significant but not go away. This might require local purchasing agreements that go beyond lowest-cost bids to consider the multiple benefits that local farm purchasing can offer. Despite these challenges, farm-to-school programs hold significant promise from a planning perspective because they offer a mutually beneficial solution—one that facilitates healthy eating (for children) along with spurring economic development by redirecting public expenditures on school lunches to the local farm economy.

**POLICY EFFORTS**

While programs and projects to facilitate healthy eating are laudable, their replication and effectiveness is limited, and even hindered, by the absence of public policies that provide the governmental, legal, and institutional support for transforming community food systems. In recognition of this, a growing number of state and local governments are creating institutions and policies to strengthen food systems and facilitate healthy eating.

**Food Policy Councils**

A food policy council (FPC) is a group of individuals that advises local and state governments on matters related to food policy. FPCs typically do not have the authority to pass laws, but they can be effective advocates for change within a local government.

- generate information on a community’s food system, including commissioning and facilitating community food assessments;
- raise awareness of food issues within local government agencies and the public;
- develop food policy for government;
- advise on neighborhood, city, and regional comprehensive plans;
- develop guidelines for school nutrition programs;
- promote direct marketing opportunities such as institutional purchasing, farmers’ markets, CSAs, and farm-to-institution programs;
- enhance existing program implementation, such as the Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program, and Electronic Benefit Transfer card usage and participation;
- increase the effectiveness of existing food and hunger advocacy groups by developing partnerships and providing a forum for idea development and sharing;
- develop marketing initiatives to promote locally and sustainably grown foods; and
- organize regional conferences and national workshops to promote FPCs.

Members serving on FPCs may include or represent farmers, food processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, nutritionists, public health professionals, school food service staff, anti-hunger advocates, researchers, local government representatives, and concerned citizens (Borron 2003; Caton Campbell 2004). FPCs work closely with planning departments. In some instances, such as in Dane County, Wisconsin, FPCs are staffed by planners.
FPCs offer a community-driven, low-cost mechanism to assess and initiate food policy in a community.

The first FPC in the United States was established in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1982. In the last decade, more than 35 FPCs at the local level (e.g., Kansas City, Kansas; Philadelphia; Portland, Oregon; Dane County, Wisconsin; Grand Rapids, Michigan) and state (e.g., Connecticut, Iowa, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Utah) have been created in the U.S. (APA 2007). There are now approximately 70 nationwide at different levels of formation and authority. Two important FPCs are briefly described below; readers are also encouraged to learn about them through their websites, which we offer in the descriptions.

Portland, Oregon. The Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council (PMFPC) gathers and disseminates information on food-related issues, advising both Portland and Multnomah County governments. It also advocates for local government initiatives that strengthen community and regional food systems. Their Diggable City project, for example, resulted in the development of a citywide database that identifies lands suitable for food production. As a result of PMFPC’s work, in 2005, the Portland City Council approved funding for a full-time staff position (a “food planner”) to work in the Office of Sustainable Development. This staff person now works with the FPC to develop recommendations about food access, local food purchasing plans, and other community and regional food-planning initiatives (www.portlandonline.com/osd). Additional information on the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council is available in the case study section.

Toronto, Canada. Toronto has a distinguished history of food policy making. Lacking federal and provincial leadership on food security issues, in 1991 the city created the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) as a subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health. The TFPC mission is:

[To partner] with business and community groups to develop policies and programs promoting food security. Our aim is a food system that fosters equitable food access, nutrition, community development and environmental health.

Like most FPCs, the Toronto Food Policy Council has no authority to pass or enforce laws. Yet the council has successfully advocated and implemented a number of food-related policies. A few of these are listed below; for a complete listing see the TFPC website (www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm).

- Contributed text on food issues for inclusion in the City of Toronto’s official plan
- Authored and advocated for the City of Toronto Food and Nutrition Declaration in 1991
- Networked with city agencies to develop strategies to improve Toronto’s food system
- Participated in raising approximately 3.5 million dollars for food projects
- Designed and administered the City’s Food Access Grants program, which distributed 2.4 million dollars toward purchase of kitchen equipment for 180 schools and social service agencies
- Advocated for and facilitated institutional purchasing of locally produced food by eight hospitals in the Ontario region

Recognizing the interdisciplinary nature of food issues, the Council sees itself as “a forum for discussing and integrating policy issues that often fall between the cracks of established departments and research specialties” (www.toronto.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm).
Food Charters

A food charter is a statement of vision, values, and principles to guide a community’s food system. Several cities, mostly in Canada, have adopted food charters. These include Toronto, Saskatoon, Manitoba, and, most recently, Vancouver. In many instances, the food charters are crafted and adopted in large part due to the work and advocacy of food policy councils.

**Toronto, Ontario.** Facilitated by the Toronto Food Policy Council, in 2001, Toronto’s city council voted unanimously to adopt a food charter. Toronto’s Food Charter is a holistic approach to food security for all Torontonians in an effort to contribute to the health and well-being of city residents. An excerpt from the charter is shown in Figure 2-7. The charter cites 10 reasons why the city chooses to ensure food security:

1. Food security means no one in the city goes to bed hungry.
2. Food security makes the city more affordable.
3. Food security means every child gets a head start.
4. Food security saves on medical care.
5. Food security means more local jobs.
6. Food security is environmentally friendly.
7. Food security reduces traffic pollution.
8. Food security is good business.
10. Food security is neighbourly. (Toronto Food Charter 2001)

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**Figure 2-7. Excerpt from Toronto’s Food Charter.**

In 1976, Canada signed the United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, which includes "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger." The City of Toronto supports our national commitment to food security, and the following beliefs:

Every Toronto resident should have access to an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable and culturally-appropriate food.

Food security contributes to the health and well-being of residents while reducing their need for medical care.

Food is central to Toronto's economy, and the commitment to food security can strengthen the food sector's growth and development.

Food brings people together in celebrations of community and diversity and is an important part of the city's culture.

Therefore, to promote food security, Toronto City Council will:

- champion the right of all citizens to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, and culturally relevant food without the need to turn to emergency food programs;
- sponsor food safety programs and services;
- sponsor nutrition programs and services that promote healthy growth and develop healthy food-related habits;
- ensure economic access to an affordable range of healthy foods in city markets;
- adopt food purchasing practices that serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility;
- partner with community organizations, residents' groups, businesses and other levels of government to achieve these goals.

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Food security means:

5. Food security means more local jobs.
6. Food security is environmentally friendly.
7. Food security reduces traffic pollution.
8. Food security is good business.
10. Food security is neighbourly. (Toronto Food Charter 2001)
Vancouver, British Columbia. Guided by a sustainability framework, the Vancouver City Council voted to adopt a food charter in February 2007. Similar to the TFPC, the Vancouver Food Charter presents a vision for a food system that benefits the community and environment (Figure 2-8). The charter uses five guiding principles to reach its vision: community economic development, ecological health, social justice, collaboration and participation, and celebration (Vancouver Food Charter 2007). The charter provides a list of action steps that support the vision of the Charter, including the following:

- Improve access to healthy and affordable foods
- Support regional farmers and food producers
- Expand urban agriculture and food recovery operations
- Increase the health of all members of the city
- Celebrate our city’s diverse food cultures

Figure 2-8. Excerpt from Vancouver’s Food Charter.

School Food Policy

As noted above, the prevalence of youth obesity has emerged as a significant public health concern in the U.S. Because children spend a significant amount of their day in schools, there is renewed focus on the impact of school environments on obesity and children’s health in general. School districts and schools are considering and creating comprehensive school food policies to facilitate healthy eating, physical activity, and overall healthy lifestyles for children within the school environment. An extra boost to school food policy making
came in 2004 when, as part of the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization, the federal government mandated all school districts receiving federal funds for meal programs to create school wellness policies by the start of 2006-2007 school year (Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004; S.2507); the Act requires that schools have a wellness policy that:

1. includes goals for nutrition education, physical activity, and other school based activities that are designed to promote student wellness in a manner that the local educational agency determines is appropriate;
2. includes nutrition guidelines selected by the local educational agency for all foods available on each school campus under the local educational agency during the school day with the objectives of promoting student health and reducing childhood obesity;
3. provides an assurance that guidelines for reimbursable school meals shall not be less restrictive than regulations and guidance issued by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to subsections (a) and (b) of section 10 of the Child Nutrition Act (42 U.S.C. 1779) and sections 9(f)(1) and 17(a) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1758(f)(1), 1766(a)), as those regulations and guidance apply to schools;
4. establishes a plan for measuring implementation of the local wellness policy, including designation of 1 or more persons within the local educational agency or at each school, as appropriate, charged with operational responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the local wellness policy; and
5. involves parents, students, representatives of the school food authority, the school board, school administrators, and the public in the development of the school wellness policy.

**Madison, Wisconsin.** In July 2006, the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) adopted a Food Policy as part of the district’s overall Wellness Policy. The Food Policy contains numerous guidelines to create a school environment that encourages healthful eating. According to MMSD, the school district’s policy requires the following:

• Schools shall provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and shall establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and other activities that occur within the school day.
• All students in grades K-12 shall have opportunities and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
• Foods and beverages sold or served at school during the school day, at school sponsored events and in MSCR [the Madison School-Community Recreation department] programs for students shall meet the nutrition recommendations of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005.
• To the maximum extent practicable, all schools in the MMSD shall participate in available federal school meal programs.

Like school food policy initiatives in other communities, MMSD’s food policy was the result of collaborative work by numerous food system stakeholder groups, including the Wisconsin Homegrown Lunch project of the Research, Education, Action, and Policy Food Group (REAP), and the University of Wisconsin’s Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems.

Among all the food policy initiatives described in this PAS Report, planners are perhaps least involved in school food policy. While planners’ distance from schools’ internal programming and policy making is understandable, planning and school food policy may intersect. Consider the following example. In Seattle, Washington, following the passage of a strict school nutrition policy, students at Cleveland High school started going off campus to purchase junk foods from nearby convenience and grocery stores (Seattle
The location of convenience stores and fast-food restaurants near schools, regulated to some degree by land-use planning and zoning, facilitates children’s access to less healthful foods and works at odds with the school district’s wellness policy. Thus, while planners may not have a direct impact on internal school food environments, planners’ work in the surrounding community may affect student food access.

**PLANNING AND ZONING**

Local governments and planners have begun to deploy traditional—and nontraditional—planning and regulatory mechanisms to improve food environments to facilitate healthy eating. Some communities that use community and regional food planning to facilitate healthy eating are Marin County and Benicia, California; Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Waterloo, Ontario, and Vancouver, British Columbia (Glosser et al. 2007).

**Stand-alone Plans Focusing on Community Food Systems or Their Components**

Relative to other areas of planning, community and regional food planning is relatively new. As such, there are few stand-alone municipally sponsored and adopted plans that deal exclusively with community food systems or with an element of community food systems. Nonetheless, there are a few examples (Waterloo, Ontario; Oakland, California; and Madison, Wisconsin) where local and regional governments have authored or have been involved in plans dealing with the food system in its entirety or with an element of it. These plans offer a useful template for communities considering the creation of stand-alone and comprehensive food system plans.

*The Waterloo, Ontario, food system plan.* In April 2007, the public health department of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Ontario, published a food systems plan, “A Healthy Community Food System Plan for the Waterloo Region.” The plan’s goal is to create a system in which all residents of Waterloo Region have access to (and can afford to buy) safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food produced in a way that sustains the environment and rural communities (Meidema and Pigott 2007). It outlines a series of objectives and strategies for meeting this goal, as shown in Figure 2-9. Based

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Figure 2-9. Excerpt from Waterloo Region’s Food System Plan.
on information collected through a series of focus groups, the plan, which was developed within a public health agency whose staff includes a land-use planner, makes several recommendations for municipal and township planners. Key recommendations include increasing availability of healthful foods in all neighborhoods and limiting unhealthful foods within identified neighborhoods through zoning. The plan notes that the first recommendation received considerable support from focus group participants, while the latter received a somewhat mixed response. Implementing the plan’s recommendations faces regulatory challenges, an aspect we discuss below in the section on zoning and regulation.

**Oakland, California, Resolution 79680.** In January 2006, the Oakland City Council Life Enrichment Committee unanimously passed a resolution (#79680) authorizing “the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability to develop an Oakland Food Policy and Plan for thirty percent local area food production, by undertaking an initial food system assessment study.”

The plan’s goals included: maximizing food security; promoting urban agriculture and waste reduction, economic development, and agricultural preservation; and enhancing food literacy and capacity among residents to make healthful and sustainable food choices. Following the plan’s completion, the city passed a resolution to implement the plan’s key recommendations to create a citywide food policy council. To facilitate this, the city passed a Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract with an organization to develop the best strategy for establishing a FPC. The city allocated $50,000 as start-up funds toward the creation of the FPC.

**The Madison, Wisconsin, Community Gardens Plan.** In 1999, the Community Gardens Advisory Committee of the City of Madison adopted an action plan to create and sustain community gardens (Raja 2000). Recommendations arising from this action plan were subsequently incorporated into the 2006 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Madison (City of Madison Comprehensive Plan 2006). Additional details on how the recommendations of the community gardens plan were adopted into Madison’s Comprehensive Plan are provided in a case study in Chapter 4.

Inclusion of Food System Components in Comprehensive Plans

Comprehensive plans provide a roadmap for the future growth of a community. Inclusion of food issues in a comprehensive plan ensures that, along with ensuring adequate housing, jobs, transportation, etc., a community is positioned to have a well-functioning community food system in the future—one that provides access to healthful and affordable foods for all residents. A number of local and regional governments in the U.S. and Canada, from Benicia, California, to Toronto, Ontario, recognize the key role of comprehensive plans in ensuring a food secure future for its residents. Brief descriptions of the Benicia and Marin County, California; Seattle, Washington; and Madison, Wisconsin, programs follow.

**Benicia, California.** Benicia included policies to promote healthy eating in its 2003 comprehensive plan update. The Community Health and Safety chapter supports the creation of demonstration gardens and recommends using vacant property for fruit and vegetable gardening.

**Marin County, California.** On the West Coast, Marin County has emerged as a leader in the area of rural food planning, having recently included a community food component within the natural resource element of their latest countywide comprehensive plan. Additional details are provided in a case study of Marin County in Chapter 4.

**Seattle, Washington.** In large part due to the success of P-Patch program (described above), Seattle’s Comprehensive Plan pays significant attention
to community gardens as a source of healthful foods within a neighborhood. The plan, originally adopted in 1994 and subsequently updated in 2005, calls for one community garden for each 2,000 households in its urban village or areas “where conditions can best support increased density needed to house and employ the city’s newest residents” (City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan 2005, p. 1.3). Section UVG40 of the 2005 update of the Comprehensive Plan calls for the provision of connections linking urban centers to community gardens and recommends the acquisition of property for community gardens as part of the open space acquisition plan.

**Madison, Wisconsin.** Owing to a broad coalition between city and county governments, citizen groups, and the local university, the City of Madison’s 2006 Comprehensive Plan includes a significant section on food. The recommendations of the plan range from creation of community gardens to supporting the countywide food council. Details on Madison’s efforts are provided in Chapter 4.

**Zoning with Food and Health in Mind**

Zoning is an artifact of planning’s deep historic links with public health concerns. Drawing on the legal authority of the police power vested in states or their designated local governments, zoning emerged to regulate land development to protect the health, welfare, and overall well-being of a society. The contemporary application of zoning, however, is largely driven by considerations other than health; these considerations include the degree to which a proposed use will fit the character of a community or the amount of traffic it will generate, etc. Nonetheless, zoning is almost always invoked in the name of public health and welfare. Given recent concerns over “food deserts” and obesity, there is a great deal of interest—and debate—regarding the use of zoning to facilitate public health, especially by regulating the presence of particular types of foods destinations in a community.

How are communities using zoning and city ordinances to regulate food destinations? The use of zoning codes and municipal ordinances to facilitate food destinations varies widely. Ordinances frequently invoke the idea of public health, although the concerns noted pertain to sanitation, cleanliness, and contamination, perhaps reflecting the concerns of a past era when these were the most pressing public health concerns. Consider the following example of Buffalo, New York.

**Buffalo, New York.** The city ordinance in Buffalo, New York, regulates fruits and vegetable vendors as follows:

Every person, firm or corporation operating any premises [namely, outdoor shops, stands, or markets selling fruits and vegetables] in said City under a license as herein provided...shall not permit or allow any diseased, rotten or decayed fruits, vegetables or substance to be offered for sale or to remain upon said premises. (Charter and code of the City of Buffalo, Article 199-4)

Also motivated by similar concerns, the ordinance also stipulates the following regarding wholesale fruit and vegetable sellers:

It shall be unlawful for any itinerant wholesale dealer in fruits and vegetables to sell or to have in his possession with the intention of selling or offering for sale any of the merchandise mentioned in this article which is unclean, unwholesome, tainted, putrid, decayed, poisoned or in any manner rendered unsafe or unwholesome for human consumption. Such merchandise shall be deemed unwholesome for human food if the same has been contaminated by flies or other insects, vermin, dust, dirt or other foreign contamination or if said merchandise contains any poisonous or deleterious or injurious ingredients in kind and quantities so as to render such merchandise injurious or detrimental to health. (Charter and code of the City of Buffalo, Article 199-14)
In the U.S. currently, the lack of sanitation related to the production of fresh produce and vegetables is arguably a lesser public health concern than the complete absence of fresh produce and vegetables, especially in low-income neighborhoods predominantly served by food retailers that sell foods high in calories and low in nutrients (e.g., fast-food restaurants).

Some municipalities do use zoning codes to limit the presence of food venues that may have a detrimental public health impact—namely, fast-food destinations. Consider the following example from Concord, Massachusetts.

**Concord, Massachusetts.** In Concord, the town’s zoning law imposes an outright ban on fast-food restaurants (Town of Concord, Massachusetts, Zoning Bylaws, section 4.7.1, p. 18). It stipulates:

Drive-in or fast food restaurants are expressly prohibited. A drive-in or fast-food restaurant is defined as any establishment whose principal business is the sale of foods or beverages in a ready-to-consume state, for consumption within the building or off-premises, and whose principal method of operation includes: (1) sale of foods and beverages in paper, plastic or other disposable containers; or (2) service of food and beverages directly to a customer in a motor vehicle.

In the case of Concord and a number of other municipalities, the ban on fast-food restaurants is generally not invoked in the name of public health; instead, it is invoked in the name of protection of community character, aesthetic reasons, or preventing traffic problems. In some cases, however, the zoning code has been used to regulate fast-food restaurants for reasons of public health, as noted in the following two cases.

**Arcata, California.** In 2001, Arcata’s Democracy and Corporations Committee formed a subcommittee to research ordinances on fast-food jurisdictions for reasons of better protecting the public health. The city held four public hearings on the issue, and approximately 75 percent of the residents voiced their support in favor of an ordinance to limit “formula restaurants” (see definition below) (www.worldhungeryear.com). In 2002, Arcata’s common council enacted an ordinance to modify the city’s zoning ordinance to limit formula restaurants within city limits due to reasons of “public health, safety, and general welfare” (City of Arcata, Ordinance no. 1333).

Ordinance 1333 defines formula restaurants as follows:

A retail establishment primarily devoted to the on-site preparation and offering of food and beverage for sale to the public for consumption either on or off the premises and which is required by contractual or other arrangement to offer any of the following: standardized menus, ingredients, food preparation, decor, uniforms, architecture, signs or similar standardized features and which causes it to be substantially identical to more than eleven (11) other restaurants regardless of ownership or location.

Ordinance 1333 limits formula restaurants in the commercial and industrial zone districts in the city to nine (the number in the city at the time the ordinance was enacted). Specifically, the ordinance notes:

The number of Formula Restaurants in Arcata shall be limited to nine (9) establishments from the date of the adoption of this ordinance. A new Formula Restaurant shall only be allowed if it replaces an existing Formula Restaurant in one of the following business districts: Janes Road [1], Northtown [1], Uniontown [2], and Valley West/Giuntoli Lane [5]. The allowed number of Formula Restaurants per business district has been indicated in the brackets, and replacement Formula Restaurants are allowed within the business district boundaries as identified in Attachment 1. All other business districts, as labeled in Attachment 1, shall not allow Formula Restaurants.

Although the ordinance initially generated opposition from local franchise owners, the opposition eventually subsided since the ordinance allowed...
existing establishments to dominate the local formula restaurant market (www.worldhungryyear.com). Other municipalities, such as Los Angeles and New York (Fernandez 2006; City of Los Angeles Press Release 2007), are also examining similar restrictions owing to reasons of public health, although formal zoning changes have not yet been adopted.

**Los Angeles.** On Dec 11, 2007, the Los Angeles City Council Planning and Land Use Management Committee (PLUM) approved an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) to limit new fast-food restaurants.

The ordinance proposes a one-year period during which new fast-food establishments will not be allowed to open in the South Los Angeles, Southeast Los Angeles, West Adams, Baldwin Hills and Leimert Park community planning areas. This will allow time for city planners to study the economic and environmental effects of the proliferation of fast-food restaurants in these communities and develop permanent solutions.

As noted above, in most cases (except the ban in Arcata and the moratorium in Los Angeles), zoning limits on fast-food restaurants are generally invoked on the basis of these establishments’ negative impact on aesthetic quality, traffic levels, or overall character of the community. However, legal scholars (Mair et al. 2005) argue that zoning limits on fast-food restaurants are as, if not more, likely to be upheld by the courts for reasons of poor nutritional quality of foods because this has a more direct impact on the health and welfare of the public.

In some instances, zoning codes can act as barriers to businesses that bring healthful foods into neighborhoods. In these cases, communities have used creative strategies to overcome these barriers, as noted in the example from Kitchener.

**Kitchener, Ontario.** Following the recommendations of its food system plan, the Waterloo Public Health agency, along with several partners, recently initiated an implementation effort to start neighborhood produce markets in underserved areas in the city of Kitchener. However, the concept of a neighborhood produce market did not fit neatly into the city’s regulatory framework. An evaluation report by the Waterloo Region Public Health agency notes:

> Local farmers, if they wish to sell their produce directly to the public outside of designated farmers’ market areas, need to follow a licensing process that differs from those at farmers’ markets. Each municipality has a unique license fee for outdoor vendors who wish to sell their wares (e.g. flowers, hot dogs) however there is no by-law or license for vendors wishing to sell fruits and vegetables outside of farmers’ markets. If these produce vendors were to be “accommodated” under the hot dog vendor license then each vendor would need to buy a license and be 200 meters apart from one another. (Miedima 2008)

In essence, the regulatory framework is a barrier to the creation of neighborhood markets. The partnership leading the neighborhood market effort devised a novel way to work around this barrier.

> As a solution to this problem, the idea of having several farmer vendors at one market was abandoned for the 2007 season. Instead—following the community collaboration model—Opportunities Waterloo Region and the Highland Stirling Community Group applied for vendor licenses to sell locally grown fruits and vegetables that were bought from various local farmers. (Miedima 2008)

Eventually, Kitchener also ruled that a variance would not be required for these neighborhood markets under the existing zoning law because the markets served a public interest. Therefore, the markets would be considered a permitted use.
The lesson for other jurisdictions is that implementation will almost inevitably reveal ambiguity or inadequacy in regulatory tools. Jurisdictions need to both understand this and be prepared for flexibility or amendments to such new tools.

In some cases, local governments have begun to use zoning codes to facilitate access to healthful foods, such as in Milwaukee.

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin.** In Milwaukee, the zoning ordinance was amended in 2005 to permit agricultural uses, such as greenhouses and the raising of crops, in all residential and zoning districts. The zoning ordinance was also amended to authorize the cultivation of crops in park districts (Glosser et al. 2007).

For zoning modifications to be effective and legally defensible in facilitating access to healthful foods or in limiting access to unhealthful foods, it is important that they be informed by a thorough food assessment and food planning process.
As the case studies in this PAS Report have demonstrated, planners can contribute to improving food environments using a variety of strategies. Some involve removal of regulatory barriers, while others are more active strategies, such as dedicating land to community gardens. While the strategies used by a particular community are likely to be context-specific, we believe that the following five broad strategies can be helpful in promoting access to healthful foods:

1. Information generation
2. Program implementation
3. Facilitation and coordination
4. Plan making and design
5. Zoning and regulatory reform
INFORMATION GENERATION

Planners have long played the role of information generators within their communities. Kaufman (2004) extends describes four areas in which planners can play this role in strengthening food systems. They can:

- assess the community’s food system by conducting community food assessments;
- illuminate market gaps showing documenting how the conventional food system fails to meet demand for food;
- provide measured, empirical evidence on the benefits of the community food system; and
- document more clearly the external costs of the conventional food system.

While all four areas are important to strengthen community food systems, the first two—conducting community food assessments and documenting how the conventional food system fails to meet the demand for foods—are especially important for facilitating healthy eating in a community. Indeed, in nearly all the case studies presented in this report, the healthy eating efforts of each community were girded by extensive community food assessments that identified the strengths and weaknesses in their food systems and food environments.

What are community food assessments, and how can planners go about conducting them? Pothukuchi (2004) describes community food assessments as a “novel manifestation” of community assessments that involve “activities to systematically collect and disseminate information on selected community characteristics so that community leaders and agencies may devise appropriate strategies to improve their localities.” Such processes have been applied by planners to a variety of issues ranging from transportation to economic development. When applied to the notion of food, a community food assessment is described as:

a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure. (www.worldhungeryear.com)

The process of generating information through an assessment can inform policy makers about the availability of food resources in a community, the food-related concerns of community members, as well as potential solutions for addressing these concerns (Pothukuchi et al. 2002). Assessments can serve as an integral component of a broader community and regional planning and policy-making effort to promote healthful foods.

COORDINATION AND FACILITATION

Planners often play the role of facilitators, coordinators, and negotiators in the land development process, and they can contribute greatly to building healthy cities by extending this role to the area of improving food environments. The three areas of facilitation and coordination for planners are described in the next three subsections.

Coordination Between Local Government Agencies and Departments

Food-related issues do not neatly fall into the purview of any single local government agency or department. With their interdisciplinary skills, planners can coordinate between relevant agencies and departments, such as the local public health agency, public works, engineering, inspections, etc., to ensure that planning recommendations related to food do not fall through the proverbial cracks of the local government bureaucracy. In this role,
planners can also facilitate and coordinate the efforts to create and support a food policy council. Of course, food planners can also make a significant contribution by bringing food to the attention of planners working within traditional areas of planning. A few examples follow:

- Transportation: Transit routes can be designed to facilitate access to supermarkets, farmers’ markets, and other healthful food destinations.
- Environment: Plans for creating and protecting green space can include community gardens.
- Economic development: Community supported agriculture programs that bring healthy local produce to urban consumers are smart economic development and smart food planning, and therefore merit the attention of economic development planners.

Coordination Between Stakeholders of a Food System

A commonly cited barrier for a well-functioning food system is the lack of connection between its producers, processors, and consumers. For example, the absence of fruits and vegetables in a community, even when they are available in plentiful at regional farms, may be attributed to a broken food system that fails to connect local growers with consumers. Planners can play a significant role by connecting various actors in a food system. This has the potential of increasing healthful foods in communities, as well as regenerating the local food economy. The various actors in the food system that planners can work to reconnect are:

- rural farmers and urban school districts (e.g., through farm-to-school programs);
- farmers and consumers (e.g., through farmers’ markets); and
- local food producers and local food processors (e.g., by spearheading buy local campaigns).

Programmatic Efforts

Planners can also act as primary actors in strengthening community food systems and promoting healthy eating. Below we provide some examples of this.

Supermarket and Grocery Store Development

Planners can actively engage supermarket retailers to develop stores in underserved urban and rural neighborhoods. A number of steps may help this process.

- Facilitate the assembly of land for medium to large supermarkets in urban areas where land parcels are small and typically not available in a contiguous fashion. In rural areas, this would be less of a concern.
- Fast-track development approval for supermarket retailers in urban and rural municipalities.
- Explore the use of economic development incentives to attract supermarkets in urban and rural areas.
- Encourage mixed-use neighborhood design and redevelopment to include small and midsize grocery stores (e.g., 3,000 to 20,000 square feet) (APA Food Policy Guide, #3A).

Healthy Corner Grocery Stores

A critique of small grocery stores and convenience stores is that they carry a limited amount of healthful foods compared to supermarkets. However, these stores constitute a significant proportion of food destinations available
in low-income and minority neighborhoods (Raja et al. 2008). Perhaps even more important than attracting supermarkets in these neighborhoods is the need to assist small to medium grocery stores in carrying more healthful foods. Rather than chasing supermarkets that are likely to put small food stores out of business, planners should find creative ways to support the transformation of small grocery stores into healthy food venues (Raja et al. 2008) or to support the establishment of new small to medium grocery stores.

Small to medium grocery stores also have the additional appeal that they fit into the built environment fabric of urban neighborhoods and other compact neighborhoods in terms of square footage requirements as well as aesthetic appeal.

Planners can make creative use of economic development funds to help small stores make capital investments that allow the purchase of refrigeration equipment to store fresh fruits and vegetables, or to scale up their inventory and staff. (See the Philadelphia case study in Chapter 4 for an excellent model.)

**Farmers’ Markets**

Planners can support the creation and sustenance of farmers markets in a number of ways:

- Planners can conduct site suitability analysis and market studies to identify prime location for farmers’ markets.
- They can recruit regional farmers and offer other logistical support for creating and sustaining farmers’ markets in their communities.
- Urban designers can develop design guidelines suitable for farmers’ markets.
- Planners can work with public works officials to facilitate the markets’ access to public electricity and water supply.

**Community Gardens, Edible Landscapes, and Urban Farms**

While planning departments probably lack the expertise to run and manage a community garden per se, they certainly have the skills to facilitate a community gardening program whereby the planning department identifies suitable lands for gardening and coordinates their allocation to interested individuals and organizations.

On publicly owned lands, such as schoolyards, parks, greenways, and tax-foreclosed properties, planners can support the development of vegetable gardens, edible landscaping, and related infrastructure, and the formation of partnerships with community-based nonprofits serving low-income residents for garden-related programs (APA Policy #3A).

**Institutional Purchasing**

Finally, planners can create or support programs to encourage institutional purchasing of healthful foods. For example, cafeterias that prepare and sell food within schools, prisons, hospitals, universities, and even local government offices can be required to offer locally grown healthful foods to their customers.

**PLAN MAKING AND DESIGN**

We outline below ways in which food environments may be improved through the use of traditional and some nontraditional planning tools.

**Stand-Alone Food Plans**

Planners can modify the generic planning process to prepare a stand-alone food system plan for their community. Such a plan can focus on one aspect
of the food system, such as planning for access to healthful foods, or it can be a comprehensive food plan that examines several aspects of a food system, such as production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food. A community’s food plan should be based on a thorough community food assessment to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the existing food system in a community. See Pothukuchi (2004 and 2002) for additional information on community food assessments. Below we outline the general steps that a municipality may follow for a planning process designed to prepare a stand-alone plan that promotes access to healthful foods for its residents. These steps may encompass some of the activities conducted as part of community food assessments.

**Phase I: Identify partners to participate in the planning process.** Planning for healthful food environments requires a diverse set of skills, interdisciplinary knowledge, and varied experiences; as such, planners would do well to engage other relevant partners and stakeholders in guiding the planning process. Planners can draw upon individuals and organizations from different backgrounds to convene an advisory group to guide the community food planning process. These individuals and organizations include:

- advisory groups, such as Food Policy Councils;
- other departments within a local government, especially the local public health agency; and
- community food advocacy groups, local universities, and other organizations and individuals who have the experience and knowledge about local food systems.

**Phase II: Devise a planning approach that fits the community’s need.** In consultation with planning partners, the lead planning agency can develop a planning approach and methodology to guide the planning process. This will involve deciding what phases III through VI might look like for a particular community.

**Phase III: Visioning process.** Like all planning processes, it is important to engage the community in a visioning exercise to articulate a community’s values, ideals, and preferences for a healthy food environment. The visioning process must include diverse constituents, including:

- residents;
- food retailers;
- farmers;
- community gardeners; and
- food manufacturers and processors.

A successful and well-conducted visioning process will help planners articulate the goals and objectives of a community’s healthful food environment plan.

**Phase IV: Gather and analyze relevant data.** Having established the goals and objectives of the plan, planners can gather relevant data to help them understand the state of the food environment in their municipality. Data for this plan can come from a variety of sources. Planners can use quantitative and GIS-based indicators described in Chapter 5 of this PAS Report to:

- document what types of food destinations are available to residents in a community;
• determine whether healthful food destinations are “redlining” particular neighborhoods; and

• determine whether particular population subgroups are especially vulnerable to the lack of healthful food sources.

Planners can also conduct focus groups and surveys with residents to document people’s concerns regarding their food environment. Completion of this phase will illuminate the shortcomings and opportunities within a community’s food environment.

**Phase IV: Prepare preliminary recommendations and establish benchmarks for measuring progress.** In this phase, planners can develop recommendations for improving access to healthful foods based on the preferences of community stakeholders as well as on the basis of precedents from other communities. Recommendations will vary widely, depending on the needs of a particular community. Some communities may find it important to protect lands for food production (in urban and rural areas); some may find it important to ensure availability of food retail in neighborhoods where rates of auto-ownership are low; and others may recommend changes in the municipal ordinance to limit unhealthful foods. Each recommendation must be accompanied by clear benchmarks to gauge progress after implementation of the plan. The plan must also make clear which agency will implement the recommendations, and what the likely fiscal impact of the recommendations will be on the municipal budget. (See the Marin County, California, plan highlighted in Chapter 4 for an example).

**Phase V: Review findings and recommendations with interested stakeholders.** Just as it is important to begin the planning process with a visioning session with community stakeholders, it is critical to receive feedback from them throughout the planning process.

**Phase VI: Implement the recommendations and measure progress.** Preparing for the implementation phase is critical for the success of any plan. The implementation of a plan to improve food environments is likely to face a number of implementation challenges that are important to anticipate. First, municipalities are often trapped by the need for resources. Adding food and healthy eating to their mix of responsibilities may be a daunting proposition. We believe, however, that with a little creativity municipalities can undertake many improvements to their food environment with little impact on their budget. Municipalities can partner with local colleges and universities to conduct food system research and develop baseline data and measure progress. They can create public-private partnerships to leverage funding, or pursue federal and state support, or a combination of all three. For example, a municipality could develop a public-private partnership wherein the municipality identifies suitable lots for community gardens for a community organization, which in turn makes these available to interested residents using agreed-upon terms. Having such a program will minimize maintenance costs of vacant lots for the municipality and increase access to fresh produce for residents.

Municipalities can also use public-private partnerships to leverage external funding for improving the food environment. For example, private nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for the USDA Community Food Projects program that provides a one-time infusion of funds to help communities develop projects that tackle food insecurity as long as the organization can provide matching funds (www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/communityfoodprojects.cfm). Municipalities could set up a program whereby they offer matching funds to community groups whose proposals meet the objectives of the municipal healthy food environment plan. In addition to
Instead of a full-scale food planning process as described above, planners can also begin by incorporating food as an element in other plans, including comprehensive plans, transportation plans, and environmental plans, to name a few.
Support transit programs that improve connections between low-mobility neighborhoods on the one hand, and supermarkets, community gardens, food assistance programs (e.g., food pantries and soup kitchens), and health and social service providers on the other, with a view to reducing travel time and enhancing safe and convenient use (APA Food Policy Guide, #3A).

Develop plans for locating healthful food sources, especially small markets and produce vendors, along transportation corridors and at nodes, such as transit stations. These corridors and nodes experience a high degree of foot traffic.

Use edible landscaping alongside sidewalks and other pedestrian pathways.

REGULATORY AND ZONING REFORM

Planners can contribute greatly to promote healthy eating within their communities by removing barriers to the development of healthy food systems. Examining and reforming regulations, such as zoning ordinances, to ensure they do not impede the creation of a healthy food environment is a good place to start. Zoning codes regulate land uses (e.g., the establishment of food stores and vendors; establishing urban farms; etc.) in a municipality. It is important to critically examine existing zoning codes and licensing regulations to determine if they create barriers for creating a healthful food environment in a community. There are essentially two strategies in which zoning codes and licensing regulations may be used to shape the food environment:

1. To remove barriers, if any, to the establishment of a healthful food environment.
2. To limit the establishment of unhealthful food destinations within a community.

Clearly a combination of both strategies is likely to be a more effective mechanism for improving food environments; however, employing both strategies is not always feasible and trying to employ both may be more difficult than employing only one. We discuss each in turn and leave it to planners to judge what strategy is most relevant of their community.

First, zoning codes have the potential to create a barrier in establishing a healthful food environment. For example, zoning codes may prohibit the establishment of produce markets or produce stands in residential neighborhoods or outside a limited designated area. Such regulations create a barrier for vendors (or farmers) interested in selling produce, as well as for residents interested in purchasing the produce. This was certainly the case in Kitchener, Ontario, as described in Chapter 2 of this PAS Report. Fortunately, in Kitchener’s case, the city deemed the neighborhood market to be in the public interest and ruled the market to be permissible. Nonetheless, the application process—to seek an exception to the city ordinance in order to set up the neighborhood market—imposed a considerable burden (in terms of time and human resources) on the partnership, which was facilitating the application for the neighborhood markets. Moreover, the partnership in Kitchener was singularly focused in its desire to set up a neighborhood market in a particular neighborhood; private entrepreneurs or vendors may not be as willing or interested in navigating city regulations to set up their business. In other words, the presence of such regulations may have the undesirable, and perhaps unintended, result of interfering in the private market and pushing food entrepreneurs away from setting up healthful food businesses in areas that need them the most. Even slight modifications
to the zoning codes and municipal ordinances, such as allowing exceptions to vendors interested in setting up fresh fruit and vegetables vendors in residential neighborhoods, will remove such a barrier.

The second strategy is that of limiting foods that may be unhealthful and less than wholesome for human consumption. Based on the precedents mentioned in Chapter 2 of this PAS Report, we here suggest modifications that planners may wish to consider for their communities. These are not meant to be prescriptive, but simply to illustrate how zoning codes and city ordinances may be modified to encourage creation of a healthy food environment.

**Removal of barriers.**

- Allow fruit and vegetable markets and stands in all zoning districts of a municipality.
- Allow community gardens as a permissible land use in all zoning districts of a municipality, provided land used for the gardens is found to be nontoxic for cultivation.
- Fast-track the licensing process for fruit and vegetable vendors, including mobile markets and pushcarts, to set up business, such as by providing a waiver of licensing fees if the market is set up in underserved neighborhoods, creating a fast-track licensing process, etc.

**Limiting unhealthful foods.**

- Limit the density (or number) of fast-food restaurants and other food venues deemed to be unhealthful by the local health commissioner in designated areas.
- Prohibit fast-food restaurants and other food venues deemed to be unhealthful by the local health department to be located within a specific distance of schools and day care centers.
- Prohibit convenience stores and other food stores located within a short distance of schools and day care centers from placing advertisements for cigarettes and unhealthy foods in the windows or exterior facade of stores.

These provisions on limiting or prohibiting unhealthful food destinations could include an exception for fast-food restaurants that obtain a “healthy offerings” certification from the local public health agency. A critical task in such a provision would be establishing with a certain degree of accuracy of what constitutes unwholesome food or what constitutes a “healthy offering.” One way to do so would be to work with the local public health commissioner’s office to develop an assessment tool to gauge the minimum nutritional quality of healthy foods sold in food destinations, such as restaurant. As part of the licensing process, restaurants would be required to get a “health offerings check” from the commissioner’s office to certify that the offerings in the restaurant are healthful. Of course, a number of exceptions could also be allowed. For example, a restaurant would be required to get a check only if locating in certain areas of the city.

**CONCLUSION**

The profession of planning has always been concerned with the well-being of people and communities. Planners work to ensure people have access to shelter, water, transportation, and jobs. Given the critical role of food for people’s well-being and nourishment, it would be negligent of the profession to overlook its role in removing barriers that limit people’s access to healthful foods. Although this PAS Report primarily focuses on food en-
environments and healthy eating, we would be remiss if we fail to point out that food is one of many complex influences on individual health. Exercise and physical activity, for example, are significant factors that affect people’s health. Without considering the varied factors that influence people’s health, planners may not be able to facilitate the health of communities. Finally, food is not the purview of any single discipline. Farmers, nutritionists, planners, business owners—all play a critical role in facilitating people’s access to healthful foods. Planners have an especially important role in tying many of these fields by facilitating the planning and design of communities where healthy food systems and healthy eating become possible.
END NOTES

1. In many communities, informal grassroots food policy networks may exist outside of the local government structure of a municipality or state.

2. Support for the survey was provided by the Healthy Eating by Design program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

3. The survey was advertised through the Interact, a biweekly electronic newsletter disseminated to all APA members. Interested APA members were directed to a web link that was available only to APA members.

4. Because of the focus of this report on promoting healthy eating through food planning, we did not include a host of other food-related issues, such as economic development through food businesses.

5. The Community Farm Alliance is a grassroots membership organization whose members include farmers and urban and rural citizens from across Kentucky. The organization works on a broad range of issues that focus on connecting rural farmers to urban residents.

6. The assessment included East Downtown and West Louisville. It was conducted in several phases, spanning 2004-2007. The Community Farm Alliance also conducted a food diary program to document eating behaviors of youth in three Jefferson County middle schools. Brown, Johnson Traditional, and Meyzeek Middle Schools are all located in East Downtown or West Louisville. This project is ongoing, but preliminary analysis revealed some interesting findings. From a random sample of 208 diaries, 93 percent of students averaged one or fewer servings of fruit and one or fewer servings of vegetables per day. Sixty percent of students averaged one or more fast-food meals per day, with some students eating up to three fast-food meals a day (CFA 2007).

7. Separate from the efforts of the Smoketown/Shelby Park Farmers’ Market, a federal program also exists to make farmers’ markets accessible to WIC recipients. The WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program was founded by Congress in 1992 and is administered by the state, specifically the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). Out of Kentucky’s 120 counties, KDA administers the grant in 43 counties, not including Jefferson County. The grant is awarded based on successful redemption rates or how many WIC recipients actually use the FMNP money they receive. Unfortunately, a pilot project conducted in 2000 in Jefferson County had relatively few WIC recipients because it was piloted in a middle- to upper-class neighborhood. As a result, the redemption rates were too low to warrant the administration of the program in Jefferson County even though the county has a whole largest concentration of WIC recipients (128,000 families) in the state.

8. In cases where issues of mobility are more severe, a mobile food pantry is operated by Serve Care, a local nonprofit that stops at local parks where people can receive emergency food assistance.

9. Urban Fresh is a business owned and operated by local youth to provide access to healthy, fresh food and to provide economic opportunities. Youth assist the local California Farmers’ Market by picking up produce at farms to sell at the city farmers market. Occasionally, the youth even harvest the produce themselves from local farms. The Urban Fresh recruitment process targets former drug-dealing youth to become part of this unique initiative. Based on their skills in sales, knowledge of neighborhood distribution networks, and familiarity with the neighborhood residents, these youth have valuable knowledge to complement local family farmers in finding new markets for fresh food sales. The youth are able to make an honorable living, and citizens gain access to nutritious and affordable local food.
10. Food security is defined as a “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.” U.S. Department of Agriculture, which is the source of the data for the Brandeis report, measures food insecurity along a continuum, where food insecurity with hunger indicates a worse condition than food insecurity. See www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/measurement.htm for detailed definitions of food insecurity.

11. A community food plan commissioned by the Massachusetts Avenue Project defines the neighborhood as an area including census tracts 66.01, 67.01 and 69.

12. Start-up costs for the business as well as personnel costs are currently recovered through grant monies and other revenue sources.
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**Chapter 1**


**Chapter 2**

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Chapter 4

Chapter 5


**Chapter 6**


**Key Web Resources**

Active Living by Design
www.activelivingbydesign.org/

American Planning Association’s Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning
www.planning.org/policyguides/food.htm

Community Food Security Coalition
www.foodsecurity.org

Children’s Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004
www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/resources/Section204LocalWellnessPolicies.pdf
HEALTHY EATING BY DESIGN  
www.activelivingbydesign.org/index.php?id=392  

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CENTER FOR NUTRITION POLICY AND PROMOTION  
www.cnpp.usda.gov/

VANCOUVER FOOD CHARTER  

WORLD HUNGER YEAR, FOOD SECURITY LEARNING CENTER  
www.worldhungeryear.org/fslc/default.asp
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of special interest

Planning Active Communities
Medical professionals have spent years telling overweight Americans to eat right and exercise—but obesity rates are still climbing. This may be in part, because, as we have become more efficient in how we work, eat, and get around, we have engineered physical activity out of our daily routines.

This report looks at how planning processes, development regulations, and community participation can be used to ensure that development patterns facilitate everyday physical activity. Includes information about safe routes to school programs and accessible schools, along with case studies of planning active communities in Denver, San Diego, Portland, Nashville, Minneapolis, and more.

Integrating Planning and Public Health
Is the form of American cities to blame for the shape of Americans? With obesity rates climbing ever higher, planners are reconsidering how the built environment affects public health—not only obesity, but also asthma, cardiovascular disease, water quality, air pollution, pedestrian safety, and mental health. This report examines collaborations between planners and public-health professionals committed to building healthy communities. It outlines the five strategic points of intervention at which planners and public-health professionals can coordinate their efforts: visioning and goal setting, plans and planning, implementation tools, site design and development, and public facility siting and capital spending. Case studies illustrate the specific tools—including health impact assessments—used in such collaborations. It also examines the role of universal design in creating healthy communities.

Fair and Healthy Land Use: Environmental Justice and Planning
Lawsuits challenging the disproportionate effects of government decisions on low-income and minority communities are on the rise. Studies show that low-income families and racial minorities are more likely to suffer from health issues related to pollution. Grassroots environmental justice groups are increasingly fighting the siting of LULUs in low-income and minority communities. The principles these groups adopt are good planning principles: that no person or neighborhood should be burdened by harmful environmental conditions and that all persons should have the opportunity for meaningful participation in the decisions affecting the health, safety, and identity of their community. This report, from APA’s Planning Advisory Service, explains how the principles of environmental justice can be incorporated into land-use planning processes.