



# Growing Food Connections for Sustainable Communities

New Partners for Smart Growth Conference

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## Objectives for this morning:

- Connect land preservation, agriculture and food access.
- Share promising examples of food systems planning.
- Engage the audience to find out about other exciting initiatives taking place across the country.

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# Building Local Government Capacity to Grow Sustainable Food Systems



**National Advisory Committee**

# We're Taking a Soil-to-Soil Systems Approach

Agriculture and food production

Food-waste disposal  
and composting

Food processing,  
manufacturing,  
wholesale, and  
distribution

Acquisition,  
preparation, and  
consumption

Retail and  
restaurants



## Assess, Apply and Amplify Innovations in Planning & Public Policy to

- Support family farmers and food production
- Promote community food security
- Connect farmers and community residents to improve health outcomes and expand economic opportunities

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## Definitions

- **Food production**

- efforts to grow, raise, and harvest crops, livestock, fish or hunt food for human consumption in urban, suburban and rural areas

- **Community food security**

- the availability, access and affordability of healthy and culturally acceptable food for residents within a community, particularly underserved residents

- **Public policy**

- plans, regulations (e.g. ordinances, licenses, etc.), non-binding policies (e.g. resolutions), public investment, public programs, and public projects

# Goals and Key Strategies

**Build local government capacity to promote  
agricultural viability AND improve community food security**



**RESEARCH**



**EDUCATION**



**POLICY & PRACTICE**

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# Strategies

## RESEARCH



Policy and planning barriers,  
innovations, and tools

Knowledge and perspectives of  
planners

Knowledge and perspective of  
Extension educators

Innovations and barriers in  
planning education



COMMUNITIES *of*  
INNOVATIVE  
PRACTICE



COMMUNITIES *of*  
OPPORTUNITY





# Strategies

## EDUCATION



*Strengthen food systems planning  
graduate education*

- Curriculum development for food systems courses in partner universities
- Internship program
- Doctoral fellowship and training in food systems planning and policy



# Strategies

## Extension: PLANNING, POLICY & PRACTICE



*Build capacity of Local Governments with community partners to work together to create a framework for policy innovation and food system change:*



### COMMUNITIES *of* OPPORTUNITY

- Planners and policy makers
- Extension educators
- Community stakeholders



# Communities of Innovation

- **Communities where local governments are:**
  - Supporting farmers and food production
  - Promoting community food security
  - Connecting farmers with community residents to improve agricultural viability and community food security
- **Goal: Discover what works!**
  - Identify areas of innovative policy practice, as well as gaps
- **Through participant interviews with city/county staff**
- **Interviewed 10 communities, 10 more in the pipeline**
  - Both urban and rural
  - In all Census regions

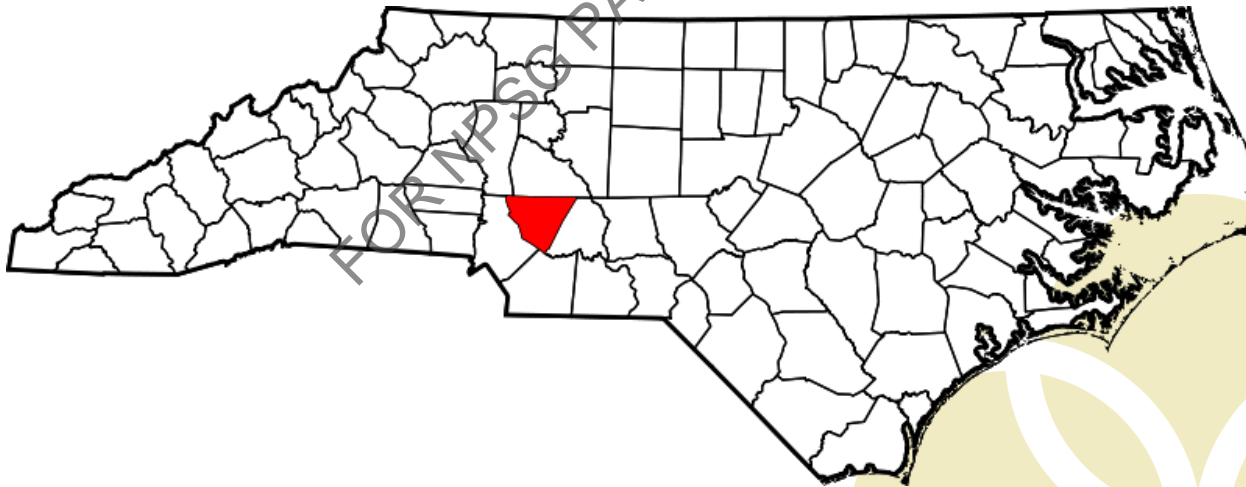
## Sources Used to Identify Potential Communities

Project collaborators and advisory committee members PLUS

- American Planning Association
- National Association of Counties
- National Development Association
- Policy Link
- The Food Trust
- USDA:
  - USDA Food Hub Resource Guide
  - Know Your Farmer Know Your Food Compass (Farm to Institution, Infrastructure, Healthy Food Access; DOT, EPA, HHS-CDC, HUD)
- Wallace Center

## Cabarrus County, NC

- **Population** 184,498
- **Median Household Income** \$54,280
- **Poverty Rate** 11.9%
- **White alone** 78.8%



## Cabarrus County, NC – Ag Facts

- Over half of the farms smaller than 50 acres
- Farm activity dominated by livestock production (beef)
- High production of commodity products (corn/soy)
- Home of Cruse Meats – meat fabrication services
- Soil/climate not ideal for vegetable production, but is possible with enough water/irrigation (challenge)

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## Cabarrus County, NC – Highlights

- Rural, agriculturally based economy, and innovative
- County Commissioners initiated a food policy council and created Local Food System Program Coordinator position
- FPC very active in developing sustainable economy
- Goals: Economic development & Health

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## Cabarrus County, NC – Challenges

- **Access to land: Until 2007 a lot of farmland developed for residential use**
- **Access to capital: Equipment and other inputs**
- **Institutional markets:**
  - 1) Lack of access to institutional markets (for small growers)**
  - 2) Lack of awareness by institutional markets of opportunities for local procurement**
  - Institutions buying from Cisco/Airmark/US Foods – how do they begin to use local, smaller growers?



## Cabarrus County, NC – Opportunities

- **Strong agricultural community**
- **Direct sale – very robust farmers market system for small scale farmers (5 market locations, two year round)**
- **Desire by calf-cow producers to process and sell meat locally**

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## Cabarrus County, NC – Leveraging [new] assets

- **Incubator Farm** – established by the county through land grant
- **Slaughter Facility** – established through new policies
- **Completed a Food System Assessment** – to understand the state of agriculture in the county before planning next steps
- **Established a Food Policy Council** –to guide and influence a diverse group of stakeholders, including private citizens.
- **Go Local NC Farms**

## Cabarrus County, NC – “Go Local NC Farms”

- Cross between a CSA and a food hub
- Meat/poultry, vegetables, other specialty produce
- Aggregates local products in one “market” available for consumers à la carte
- Purchased items sent to pick-up locations for distribution
- Currently a retail service with plans to expand to wholesale operation for sale to grocery stores



## Cabarrus County, NC – Lessons

- **Hiring staff champion: Local Food System Program Coordinator activated policies, coordinated stakeholders**
- **Assessment first: Intention to understand current the state of agriculture in the county before planning next steps**
- **Not afraid to try new things: incubator farm, slaughter facility, online food hub**

**The planning process, not the plan itself, resulted in key public actions.**

## Seattle and King County, WA

- **Population**

city	634,500
county	2,007,400
- **Median Household Income** (city) \$68,470
- **Poverty Rate** (city) 13.2%
- **White alone** 70%

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## Seattle and King County, WA – Facts

### Region

- Wide range of ag production, including specialty crops
- Some livestock and dairy

### City

- Backyard gardeners and farmers
- Community gardens and farms (public/private partnerships)
- Urban ag businesses
- Public orchards – on parks and other city land

## Seattle and King County, WA – Challenges

- Lack of large, contiguous land and high cost of land
- Lack of ag support services in the city
- Poor soil quality and limited/expensive water
- Limited earning potential – difficult to reach scale needed for profit; urban farmers must supplement income
- Small networks of food system stakeholders is strong, but larger network is weak – stakeholders do not collaborate fully or share resources

## Seattle and King County, WA – Opportunities

- Most city residents have very good access to food, including culturally appropriate foods
- Strong public support for urban food production
- New TOD communities – focus on access to healthy food

### Leveraging assets

- Local Food Action Initiative
- Seattle Food Action Plan
- Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council
- City of Seattle Food Interdepartmental Team
- Food Policy Advisor (city position)



## Seattle and King County, WA – Lessons

- **Public-Private Partnerships – increasing food access and strengthening food systems**
- **Policies and programs that support larger plans – zoning regulations, land use provisions**
- **Funding – grants for community building, farm to table program, “fresh bucks” program**

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## Preliminary Findings: Challenges

- Price and affordability of food
- Transportation – distance: walking, transit access
- Availability of fresh, high quality v. low quality foods
- Political challenges
- Limited infrastructure to support food producers and sale

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## Preliminary Findings: Opportunities

- Presence of Food Policy Coordinator/Director Position
- Food Policy Council
- Food Systems Plan or Comprehensive/Sustainability Plan with food elements
- Food Initiative, Resolution, or Charter
- Interdepartmental Food Team

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## Preliminary Findings: Food Security

- **Healthy Corner Store Programs in new or existing stores**
- **Healthy Food Carts Program**
- **Healthy Food Carryout Program**
- **Emergency Food Aggregation/Distribution Program**

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## Preliminary Findings: Food Production

- **Urban Agriculture Land Use Regulations/Programs**
- **Sustainable Agriculture Project Fund or Food Production Grant Program**
- **Water Access Policy**
- **Local Slaughter Facility**

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# Preliminary Findings: Consumer Connection

- **Buy Local Campaign**
- **Institutional Food Procurement Policies**
- **Farm-to-Table or Urban-Rural Connections Programs**
- **Farmers Markets EBT and Double Value Redemption Programs**

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# Communities of Opportunity



## COMMUNITIES *of* OPPORTUNITY

- Selecting Communities of Opportunity
- Invitation to partner with GFC
- Social Networking & Regional Results Workshops
- Technical Assistance and Training Workshops



## The Importance of Community Food Systems Planning

Community food systems planning provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to identifying food system challenges and opportunities within a community.



## Research, Education and Planning & Policy

These three major activities will work hand-in-hand to address the concerns of struggling farmers and vulnerable consumers by building



[growingfoodconnections.org](http://growingfoodconnections.org)





# Group Breakout Session

- Who are the **STAKEHOLDERS**?
- Who are the **DECISION MAKERS**?
- Who are the **BENEFICIARIES**?
- Are we **CREATING NEW** power dynamics?
- Are we **RECREATING EXISTING** power dynamics?
- Are we **GROWING CONNECTIONS** across these areas?

**Share a solution story when you  
effectively made change.**