Dudley Real Food Hub
Community Food Planning Process

Practical Visionaries Workshop 2014

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Abstract

This report is the result of a Field Project class undertaken at the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning. It was produced by the 2014 Practical Visionaries Workshop (PVW) team, part of an ongoing relationship between the university and several community organizations. The team worked in partnership with Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and Alternatives for Community and Environment to support a community food planning process based in the Dudley neighborhood in Roxbury, in Boston, Massachusetts. The food planning process was oriented toward the Dudley Real Food Hub, a vehicle for community action around food issues. The PVW team provided background research to ground the resident-led planning process. Results include a community food planning framework presented as a literature review; six case studies of community food initiatives; and a Planning Process Proposal, which outlines suggestions for future action based on the partners’ unique context combined with the research the team conducted.
The Dudley Neighborhood Real Food Hub Community Food Planning Process Report is a result of the 2014 Practical Visionaries Workshop, the fourth year of a university and community partnership among Tufts University Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning department, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), and other community organizations in Boston and Somerville. This field project was conceived as part of four years of collaboration and co-learning toward the goal of building a just and sustainable local economy.

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Table of Contents

Abstract
Acknowledgements
Table of Contents
Executive Summary.................................................................1
Chapter 1: Introduction................................................................5
Chapter 2: Community Food Planning Framework.................17
Chapter 3: Case Studies..........................................................31
Chapter 4: Planning Process Proposal.................................63
Chapter 5: Conclusion............................................................81
Appendices*...........................................................................85

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*Signed Memorandum of Understanding and IRB exemption form available as separate documents
Overview

Over the past two decades, communities have become increasingly conscious of the social, economic, and ecological consequences of the global industrialized food system and have been actively crafting solutions and alternatives. Hundreds of cities across the United States have drafted food system plans or reformed existing codes to promote local food production, increase food access, preserve regional farmland, and revitalize local food economies. Additionally, community-based organizations and nonprofits have formed to advance policies and programs that promote a more just and equitable food system.

This report highlights community-based food system planning and practices in low-income communities and communities of color across the country. While these communities are on the frontlines of the struggle for food justice, there is relatively little documentation of the approaches, methods, and lessons from their work. Specifically, the report aims to advance a resident-led food planning process in the Dudley neighborhood, a section of Roxbury in Boston, MA.

The Dudley Neighborhood Real Food Hub Community Food Planning Process Report was created as part of the Practical Visionaries Workshop (PVW) at the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, an initiative that aims to unite university resources and knowledge with community experience and expertise. Founded by emerging community leaders, organizers, urban planning educators, and practitioners, PVW first brought together the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), and other neighborhood partners in the spring of 2011 to address questions of sustainable economic development in Roxbury and Somerville. Since then, PVW participants have built a body of work ranging from envisioning a local food economy as an alternative to big-box retailers like Walmart, to developing tools for engaging residents in driving change in their local food economy.

The work of PVW advances in 2014 by bringing together the Tufts University Field Project student team, DSNI, and ACE as project partners to facilitate the development of a community food planning process for the Dudley Real Food Hub (DRFH). The Food Project is an additional partner that will be involved in the implementation of the DRFH. This report is intended to lay the groundwork for these organizations to engage residents in developing a community action plan for a more just and sustainable local food economy.

The report consists of three sections: (1) a Literature Review of food justice, food hubs, and community food planning frameworks; (2) Case Studies that highlight best practices, challenges, and lessons learned from community food systems efforts across the country; and (3) a Planning Process Proposal. The Planning Process Proposal draws upon the rest of the research to highlight suggestions and approaches for a food planning process situated in the distinctive community of Dudley and led by the partner organizations who have years of experience in community organizing and planning.

Research and Findings

Part 1: Literature Review

The Literature Review offers an overview of current frameworks and approaches to food systems change, including food justice and
its variations, food hubs, and community food planning methods. While the DRFH partners will create their own plan and undertake their own actions toward food systems change in the Dudley neighborhood, these plans and actions take place within an existing set of frameworks that can help inform their vision and strategy.

One primary framework includes Food Justice, which unites activities that are happening at scales ranging from the local to the global. Most food justice efforts frame current inequities as a result of historic processes of racial and economic injustice. While the DRFH fits squarely within food justice, the partners can determine how to frame food justice within their organizations and for the community as a whole. Additionally, the literature shows that the DRFH is a unique initiative within existing food hubs and food planning processes. Established food hubs generally serve as an aggregator of food production, processing, and distribution to satisfy local or regional consumer demand. Yet operational models can vary to be context sensitive and to align with local or regional economic and community development goals.

In planning for a food hub or for other food systems change, the DRFH builds upon peer organizations’ approaches to food planning, but with an emphasis on community leadership and control. The DRFH stands to gain from past work done by municipalities and nonprofits, but the partners should critically evaluate how food planning and food hubs have been implemented in the past, and what they will look like in the context of Dudley.

Part 2: Case Studies

The PVW Team conducted six case studies of organizations working to advance a more just and sustainable food system in low-income communities of color in U.S. cities, including Buffalo, New York; Detroit, Michigan; Holyoke, Massachusetts; Oakland and the East Bay Area, California; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. While there is tremendous diversity in approaches, some common themes and methodologies emerged from the research:

1. **Use of participatory research and engagement methods**: Community food planning practitioners make frequent use of participatory qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis, and several of the cases studied model innovative participatory research and engagement methods.

2. **Importance of youth leadership and engagement**: Community food planning can offer a democratic vehicle for young people to help determine the direction of their community. Strong youth programs have advanced many successes in food planning.

3. **Food as a vehicle for community development**: Food system interventions can be used to advance broader goals such as public safety, cultural preservation, transportation, or community economic development.

4. **The importance of cross-sector collaboration**: Given the breadth of sectors and institutions that shape local food systems and economies, developing strategic partnerships across these sectors is critical.

5. **The value of both ‘professional’ and community knowledge**: Community food planning and systems change demands both grassroots and technical expertise. While outside experts can play
useful roles, much of the necessary technical expertise and resources already exist within communities.

6. **Building upon existing community assets**: Leveraging existing community resources, events, and programs can often be more beneficial than creating independent food planning activities.

7. **Planning and implementation can (and should) occur simultaneously**: Implementation of short-term goals can help build momentum during the food planning process, and help engage residents in implementation from the beginning.

8. **Engagement in the local policy arena**: Food and land use policy arenas such as food security or policy councils can bolster grassroots efforts and minimize political barriers to local food systems change.

**Part 3: Planning Process Proposal**

The Planning Process Proposal serves to illustrate what a DRFH planning process could look like, based on the Dudley context, as well as the partners’ work, values, and expertise, and lessons learned from the case studies. It is meant as guidance for how a community food planning process could unfold. The proposal consists of five phases: Process Design, Defining the Problem, Visioning, Creating the Community Action Plan, and Implementation. Although the phases are presented linearly, they can happen concurrently and feed off of one other. The proposal is meant to lead into a process that allows the Dudley community to determine what needs to change in their food system, how it needs to change, and what a healthy and just food system could look like.

**Building a Just and Sustainable Food Economy**

This report is just one of the first steps of defining the Dudley Real Food Hub and making the food economy work for residents. Ultimately, Dudley residents will decide how to address the current condition of the food system, and will take an active part in driving the planning process and its resulting initiatives. DSNI, ACE, TFP, and other stakeholders and community members have the opportunity to envision a new food landscape and to work toward putting that vision into action. What that collective vision looks like has yet to take shape, but with the suggestions in this report, the experience of the partners, and the expertise and passion of residents, there is an exciting opportunity ahead to build a healthy, just, and sustainable food economy in Dudley.
Chapter 1
Introduction
Introduction

The past two decades have been marked by a growing public awareness in U.S. cities of the social, economic, and environmental challenges of the global industrialized food system. A variety of strategies have been generated to address these challenges including hunger alleviation and food access efforts, local food production and regional farmland preservation, food retail and economic development, and more. Alongside these efforts, community food planning has emerged as one strategy to address the systemic and interconnected nature of food-related problems and to promote new initiatives involving innovative solutions.

Communities across the United States are conducting food planning processes, but only a handful have truly built off of community knowledge and initiative surrounding food through grassroots engagement. For this project, the Practical Visionaries Workshop (PVW) 2014 team has partnered with Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE) to inform a community food planning process in the Dudley neighborhood of Boston. DSNI and ACE are members of the Dudley Real Food Hub, which has and will continue to serve as a center for positive food system change in the neighborhood, and which will build off the planning process.

The Practical Visionaries Workshop at Tufts University was created as a way to unite university resources and knowledge with community experience and expertise. PVW first brought together Tufts faculty and students, DSNI, ACE, and other neighborhood partners in the spring of 2011 to address food justice issues in Somerville and the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. Since then, PVW participants have built a body of work ranging from envisioning a local food economy as an alternative to big-box retailers like Walmart, to developing tools for engaging Roxbury residents in driving change in their local food economy. This project advances previous PVW work. The partners have done important and influential work in community planning and organizing; the PVW team seeks to combine that expertise with a solid understanding of community food planning, as well as potential food hub initiatives.

Dudley Neighborhood

This project is rooted in a very specific place. The project scope was developed with the unique context of the Dudley neighborhood in mind, and builds off of its assets and challenges.

Source: Jennings, James (2013). DVC and Sub-Neighborhoods of Dudley Square, Dudley Triangle, and Grove Hall.
Geography

Boston’s Dudley neighborhood contains parts of Lower Roxbury as well as North Dorchester. The neighborhood measures about 1.3 square miles, and sits between Dudley Square, Grove Hall, and Upham’s Corner in a section of the city fairly close to downtown. In all, it includes about 49 percent of the Roxbury neighborhood. Dudley’s borders are the South End to the north, the Newmarket Industrial Area to the east, the rest of Roxbury to the south, and Northeastern University and Mission Hill to the west.¹ Within the Dudley area there are two sub-regions: the Dudley core area, sometimes called the Dudley Village Campus, and the Dudley triangle, a region partly controlled by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and residents through a community land trust.

Demographics

The Dudley neighborhood consists of 7,407 households and 22,753 people. The neighborhood has a high level of racial and ethnic diversity— it is 57 percent Black or African-American (which includes many of Cape Verdean descent), 28 percent Latino, and 12 percent white.² In addition, around 23 percent of Dudley residents were born outside of the United States, with 41 percent speaking a language other than English at home.³ The diversity of residents is often drawn upon as an asset, and adds to the vitality of the neighborhood.

Dudley also contains a large number of young residents. Thirty-eight percent of the population is nineteen years and younger, while 23 percent of that number is fourteen and under. Overall, there are approximately 1,800 children aged five and under⁴ and families with children under eighteen years old make up half of Dudley households, which is twice the Boston average.⁵ The presence of so many young people is an argument for engaging young residents in the future of their neighborhood.

The Dudley neighborhood is one of the poorest areas of Boston. The median household income is below $29,000 and has a poverty rate almost twice as high as the entirety of Boston. Thirty-eight percent of children live below the federal poverty line.⁶ About 56 percent of residents in Dudley are in the labor force. Almost 18 percent of them are unemployed. Additionally 11 percent of total households receive public assistance.⁷ While the economic status of Dudley residents is a real challenge, it can also act as a driver of change and a springboard for potential.

Health

These stark disparities are also reflected in community health outcomes. Fifteen percent of Dudley residents had asthma in 2010, compared with 11 percent in Boston as a whole. That same year, there were 54 asthma-related emergency room visits per thousand children under five, a rate almost twice as high as Boston. Diabetes and obesity rates are similarly higher in comparison with Boston. In 2011, there were 4.7 diabetes hospitalizations per thousand residents in Dudley, and 2.3 in Boston, while there were 14.4 heart disease hospitalizations per thousand residents in Dudley versus 11.2 in Boston. Food systems are a part of these problems, and will ideally be used to address making Dudley a healthier community.

Food Economy

The food economy is made up of all the steps, entities, and actors involved in the food system, from production through distribution and consumption, to dealing with waste. The Dudley neighborhood food system struggles in many ways to provide just and healthy sustenance, but the area’s food economy has much potential. Almost 300 food economy businesses are in operation in the Dudley neighborhood and the adjacent Newmarket Square neighborhood, home to many industrial food businesses. Almost three thousand people are employed by these businesses, and approximately $1.5 million in revenue is generated each year, with room to grow.

The industries involved in the Dudley food economy include the following. (The categories are standards taken from the North American Industry Classification System [NAICS]).

- Production: Crops, Animals, and Aquaculture
- Processing: Food Manufacturing
- Distribution: Wholesale Grocery Distribution
- Sales: Grocery Stores; Restaurants; Convenience Stores; Specialty Food Services (Caterers, Food Service Contractors, Mobile Food Services); Specialty Food Stores; Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores
- Waste: Waste Collection

History

Post-War Disinvestment in Roxbury

The conditions afflicting the Dudley community and Roxbury evolved historically and are rooted in Boston’s history of racism in urban development. Author Mike Davis covers much of the historical context of the neighborhood in his book *Fire in the hearth: the radical politics of place in America*. Redlining and housing discrimination kept African Americans from being able to own homes, many of whom had migrated from the south during the 1940s and 50s. A predominantly Jewish and Irish community, Roxbury was one of the few places open to African Americans, and quickly became the center of Boston’s Black community. While African Americans migrated north in pursuit of industrial jobs, Boston suffered from significant industrial job loss during the period of 1947 to 1975, as many businesses moved to the outlying suburban areas. Facilitated by the GI bill and highway construction, this process of over-investment in suburbs and disinvestment from core urban areas further embedded racial segregation. With no option to move to the suburbs, and a shrinking job and tax base in the city, this uneven metropolitan development devastated Black communities in places like Roxbury. Similar to Detroit, Oak-
land, Los Angeles, and many cities across the U.S., Boston entered a period of ‘urban decline.’

Between 1950 and 1980 Roxbury’s population declined by 57 percent. The Madison Park and Washington Park sub-neighborhoods saw major demolition through urban renewal, in which areas that were declared ‘blighted’ could be demolished with public funds and often no plan for the relocation of displaced residents. During this period, hundreds of properties became vacant, and there was widespread arson by landlords who wanted to reap insurance payments from underwater properties. In the late 1960s, the community was threatened by further destruction from the proposed Inner Belt Highway project that would have expanded Interstate 95 and cut directly through the neighborhood. This project was defeated by a multiracial regional coalition, and resulted in one of the greatest transportation justice victories in U.S. history. Yet with disinvestment, redlining, arson, and abandonment Roxbury experienced solely the negative side of uneven development.¹⁰

Suburbanization and uneven development meant that major cities that once had thriving downtowns lost their central business districts, and many planners and policy-makers were desperate to get investment back to the city. By the late 1970s, some capital flowed back to Boston, facilitated largely by highway construction, massive urban renewal programs, and tax breaks for corporations willing to relocate into cleared areas downtown. Boston was able to transform to a service and technology based economy with significant downtown investment. Yet again and perhaps more acutely, the distribution of this development has been uneven and has come with high rates of inequality by income and wealth and increasing racial disparities.¹¹

Community Activism in Roxbury

The forces of urban segregation and disinvestment produced rich histories of social and political struggle and community-driven alternatives in Roxbury. The activist Mel King has called the diverse forms of political expression in Roxbury a “chain of change.” Black leadership and civil rights struggles for fair housing, jobs and services, school desegregation, reparations for displacement, and political representation and power have forcefully defined not just the Black community, but all of Boston’s history.

In their essay “Roxbury: Capital Investment or Community Development?”, Marie Kennedy, Mauricio Gaston, and Chris Tilly cover the history of neighborhood resistance and activism as well as victimization. Black residents in Roxbury protested racial discrimination in hiring practices throughout the 1960s, and in the late 1970s launched the “Boston Jobs for Boston Residents” campaign, demanding racially equitable hiring practices on city construction projects. There were also efforts to build Black-controlled businesses such as Freedom Industries and Unity Bank. Black leadership in Roxbury was central to the defeat of the Inner Belt movement and subsequent Southwest corridor project and public transit funding in the 1980s. The Inner Belt organizing helped create the basis for the Rainbow Coalition, the multiracial movement that originated in Boston and powered Jesse Jackson’s presidential campaign. In 1986, nearly 50,000 Black Roxbury residents voted on whether Roxbury should incorporate as its own municipality called Mandela, named for the late South African anti-apartheid leader and president. While the referendum was defeated, it reinvigorated debates in the Boston’s Black community about community control and how best to achieve freedom from white supremacy.¹²
Partners

The community partners involved in this project have their own rich histories, and have established places in the Dudley neighborhood. This project was developed not only with the neighborhood in mind, but the expertise and goals of the partners as well.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

DSNI was created as a response to the 1985 Dudley Square Plan released by the BRA, which proposed a $750 million investment in the revitalization of Dudley Square. The plan was produced with no community participation, but the history of community organizing and struggles for community control in Roxbury created a strong basis for DSNI and community-driven planning, which has continued to be critical as investment pressures have grown and Roxbury too has been threatened by downtown development and gentrification.

In 1987, a newly-formed DSNI and the Dudley community engaged in a nine-month process to develop the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Revitalization Plan: A Comprehensive Community-Controlled Strategy. Residents and community organizations came together to revitalize the Dudley neighborhood and resist the BRA plan, a gentrification plan which would have transformed the area into hotels and offices serving downtown Boston. DSNI brought together the neighborhood’s African American, Latino, and Cape Verdean residents to develop their own comprehensive plan. During this period they also began to organize the community and rebuild social fabric. They launched the Don’t Dump on Us campaign, which demanded city accountability for illegal dumping in the Dudley area, taking advantage of then Mayor Ray Flynn’s need to build rapport with Boston’s Black community.

In 1988, DSNI’s Dudley Neighbors, Incorporated made history by winning the power of eminent domain and establishing a land trust over a 60-acre parcel in the Dudley Triangle. Thirty acres of what were once vacant lots and dumping grounds now hold five-hundred units of permanently affordable housing, playgrounds, a school, and commercial space, all within the community land trust. The land trust has protected the community from gentrification and displacement as well as from sub-prime loans and foreclosures. While the surrounding area has been the hardest hit by the collapse of the housing market and the foreclosure crisis, in the Dudley triangle, no homes were lost to foreclosure; only four foreclosures have ever happened on the land trust since its inception.

Since DSNI’s early victories, it has continued as a strong presence in the Dudley neighborhood, launching several more campaigns over the years. DSNI recently constructed a greenhouse on the land trust, now operated by The Food Project. The greenhouse provides year-round growing space to local residents and organizations, strengthening the local food system. They seek to continue to build on food system work through the Dudley Real Food Hub.

Alternatives for Community and Environment

Alternatives for Community and Environment is a community action organization focused on environmental and social justice issues, with a specific orientation toward communities of color and low-income residents. ACE was formed in 1994 by two lawyers, and has continued to draw on legal strategies to create change. ACE is located in Dudley Square, immediately adjacent to the Dudley neighborhood, although its activist work stretches beyond this area to greater Boston and be-
ACE addresses environmental justice issues on a neighborhood scale as well as at the policy level. To achieve its goals, ACE makes space for community members to effect change, providing research and legal services, among others things, for their organizers.

ACE draws heavily on youth empowerment, and supports youth in advocacy work. Working at the local and state governmental levels, youth have successfully backed energy efficiency plans, pollution control initiatives, and youth-friendly public transportation policies. One of the key programs at ACE is REEP— the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Program. As just one part of REEP, youth are engaged in the Grow or Die campaign, a response to the vacant land so prominent in the surrounding area. Youth and supporters have used vacant land in the Dudley area for raised bed gardens, tended by neighbors. Through their Grow or Die campaign, ACE has taken over six vacant sites and built raised bed gardens that are now tended by more than seventy families.

**Dudley Real Food Hub**

DSNI’s land trust has spurred many exciting community alternatives to the dominant economic development paradigm. Additionally, the neighborhood is home to The Food Project (TFP), a non-profit that seeks to create a more sustainable food system in the Boston area. TFP began as a farm in Lincoln, Massachusetts, and still operates a production farm on the same land. Since its inception, TFP has branched out into the Dudley neighborhood as well as in Lynn, Massachusetts. The organization runs many programs, from a youth training program to a Community Supported Agriculture initiative to a farmers market. TFP operates DSNI’s greenhouse, providing space for residents to grow in its “enterprise bay” area and producing food for sale with TFP youth. TFP’s greatest visibility in the Dudley neighborhood is the dozens of raised-bed gardens youth and staff have built for residents to grow in.

DSNI, ACE, and the Food Project have come together to grow their local food system and build the Dudley Real Food Hub (DRFH) while facilitating a community planning process to craft the neighborhood’s vision for this food hub. Currently, the Food Hub acts as a vehicle for important conversation and partnership work. The community will ultimately decide what form the Dudley Real Food Hub will take once the planning process commences. The DRFH will be funded by a grant from the University of Wisconsin, administered through TFP.

The Dudley Real Food Hub and the community food planning process are predicated on decades of grassroots power and community organizing in the neighborhood’s African American, Latino, and Cape Verdean communities. With a long history of civil rights, community control, and community driven planning, there are many lessons to draw upon, and rich opportunities ahead for building a more just, sustainable, and community-driven food system.

It is important to note that many food systems activities are already happening in Dudley. Residents of the Dudley land trust are growing food in their own gardens. The 2013 Practical Visionaries Workshop Team identified “65 homes with raised bed, in-ground, and potted gardens, some over 40 years old, and conservatively estimate the total area under production to be about 1/5 of an acre, growing over 50 types of vegetables and fruit, and yielding over two tons of produce (4400 pounds)” The community contains many food-related businesses, from grocery and convenience stores, to restaurants, to distribution sites. The Food Project raised beds and the Dudley greenhouse...
are also major sources of food production and food access work, in addition to ACE’s Grow or Die campaign and DSNI’s youth food team activities.

**Project Scope**

**Key Research Questions**

The PVW Field Projects team developed three key research questions to guide the process and to shape outcomes:

1. How are low-income communities and communities of color in the United States doing community food planning and what are the outcomes?
2. What methods of community engagement are they using and what lessons and best practices can we draw from to inform the Dudley Real Food Hub community planning process?
3. What are the goals and objectives of a Real Food Hub in the Dudley neighborhood?

**Methodology**

In order to answer the key research questions, the team employed a mix of methods. Literature research was conducted to provide the framework for the project, including historical and demographic backgrounds of Dudley, as well as general context for community food planning and food hubs. Identification of case studies was done after a synthesis of several potential cases, which were then ranked by criteria the team created according to the needs of the partners. Quantitative data research and analysis was also used to dig deeper into the food economy, health, and demographics of Dudley, and to create visualizations that may be useful during the planning process. The team additionally conducted interviews with the partners and related actors, as well as key figures at the case study sites, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the partner organizations and the realities of the case studies.

**Deliverables**

**Literature Review**

The literature review provides a broader policy and theoretical context relevant to the community food planning process, with an overall emphasis on underserved and underrepresented populations of lower socioeconomic status. Publications reviewed include academic articles, books, films, and grey literature from policy think-tanks, government agencies, and community organizations. The review consists of three components:

1. **Food Justice Frameworks**: A historical overview of the food justice movement and current discourse surrounding food sovereignty and democracy, with a focus on its social and economic impacts on low income communities and communities of color.
2. **Food Hubs**: The need to define a food hub and its significance to a community food planning process is critical to this project. The scalable nature of a food hub allows it to operate within communities of different sizes and sectors, calling for a need to examine a variety of existing food hub models throughout the United States.
3. **Community Food Planning:** A variety of local food planning models are reviewed to understand the roles and interplay of municipal governments, policy, planners, and community members in the process community food planning. Models grounded in community engagement are given special emphasis.

The PVW team chose to focus on six cases around the country, highlighting applicable information and lessons learned. The cases emphasize approaches that are relevant to the goals of the Dudley Real Food Hub and to DSNI and ACE’s organizational goals.

a) Planning processes or projects that seek to address racism in the food system and craft solutions that advance **racial and environmental justice** and equity.

b) Planning processes or projects oriented toward **grassroots and resident leadership** rather than simply participation or community engagement.

c) Planning processes or projects that have emphasized **youth engagement** and youth leadership.

d) Planning processes or projects that seek to address **community economic development** including job creation and entrepreneurial development, and

e) Planning processes or projects that offer a model of **community ownership or control**, going a step beyond economic development.

f) Planning process or projects that are exceptional **community food planning process** models, and which demonstrate effective strategies or tools used to create community food plans.

g) Planning processes or projects that build on successful **food production models**.

The visual on the next page explains how the case studies fit into an analysis of the wider food system. Three primary areas of food systems transformation work exist—food policy, food justice programming, and food systems planning. This project focuses on the latter, zooming in specifically on community-based food systems planning, rather than top-down planning.

**Planning Process Proposal**

The Planning Process Proposal recommends a framework to implement a community food planning process toward the realization of the Dudley Real Food Hub. The proposal is informed by a synthesis of the literature review, the Dudley neighborhood, the team’s understanding of the partners’ values and goals, and case studies. The proposal outlines key phases and recommends implementation strategies for a community food planning process specific to Dudley.
Notes


6. Ibid.


11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. Ibid.

Chapter 2
Community Food Planning Framework
Community Food Planning Framework

Much work has been done in the past few years when it comes to sustainable and equitable food systems, both in theory and in practice. The community food planning process in Dudley will take place within an existing framework, although the process and its results may look very different than those in other communities. The literature review below covers some of this framework, including food justice and its variations, food hubs, and community food planning methods.

Food Justice

- **Food justice** unites activities that are happening at scales ranging from the local to the global. Most of these efforts frame current inequities as a result of historic processes of racial and economic injustice.
- The alternative food movement, often couched in the language of food justice, can be exclusionary, though is not inherently so.
- **Food sovereignty** declares the right to determine one’s own food system, and has been used to challenge traditional global, capitalist regimes.
- **Food democracy** seeks to engage community members in actively visioning and producing their food systems.

Concerns for environmental sustainability, public health, and local economic development have coalesced in the food justice movement. Though the movement takes many shapes, the prominent food justice organization Just Food defines food justice as “communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat [food that is] fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals.”¹ The current industrial food system dominated by a very few corporations makes achieving food justice more vital than ever. While today’s primary food justice activists tend to operate within grassroots, community-based organizations, the most impactful change will come from within the system. A wide variety of actors are required to participate in the movement, with a special focus placed on low-income communities and communities of color, as this is where the impacts of food justice have been the greatest.²

This section will begin by detailing a brief overview of how the food justice movement began, and then move into dominant trends within the movement today. It will include a list of key terms, as activists and academics alike are further exploring the field and developing new rhetoric.

The History of Food Justice: Economic and Social Implications

The conversation around food justice has recently picked up, in part because of the global food crisis. In 2007, The Food and Agriculture Organization warned of global food shortages and subsequent price increases, as simultaneous problems of higher oil prices, increased use of food for agrofuels and cattle feed, and drought in producer nations occurred.³ ⁴ The World Bank reported that food prices increased 83
percent in three years, which inevitably impacted the poorest and most vulnerable populations most profoundly. Though there were various causes of the global food crisis, the solution was largely in the hands of the corporations that control much of our industrialized food system, despite being part of the root of the problem. The inequity that precipitated following the crisis indicates that much work needs to be done to greater incorporate economically and environmentally sustainable habits within the larger food system.

In many cases, food justice acts as a response to this large-scale corporate system that dominates control of the global food system. Specifically, food justice advocates utilizing this approach argue for government intervention, a shift in attention towards those underserved by this system, and a greater focus on locally-based food systems. Eric Holt-Giménez refers to these producer giants as “food-regimes,” which is a “rule-governed structure of production and consumption on a world scale.” As this regime operates within the larger capitalist structure, food is thus utilized as a commodity rather than treated as a fundamental shared human need. Activists in fields such as anti-hunger, worker rights, sustainability, and social justice often converge in the food justice movement because their efforts stem from this basic fact. Food justice aims to realign the priorities of food systems towards overall wellbeing.

Additionally, there are issues unique to the United States that further the importance of food justice in this country. In the United States, it is evident that food is treated as a commodity, given the rampant subsidies offered for crops such as corn. Though fruits and vegetables may be more beneficial for human health, the multiple uses for corn have the market valuing the crop for much more than its nutritional content. Such economic disparities play out at a local level as well. Food deserts are one of the most frequently cited examples of inequities in the food system. The United States Department of Agriculture has defined a food desert as “census tract with a substantial share of residents who live in low-income areas that have low levels of access to a grocery store or healthy, affordable food retail outlet.” Although the term “food desert” is contentious, as defined they can be seen in nearly every major metropolis across America, but their implications go beyond the physical lack of grocery stores, suitable transportation routes, or even economic equality.

It is important to consider the history of places that are prone to suffering from food justice challenges. Typically, low income communities and communities of color have a history of enduring governmental devaluation with schemes such as block busting and redlining. Food justice can serve as a response to a history of systematic devaluation and disinvestments. Scholar Nathan McClintock uses the example of Oakland, California to demonstrate the transition from booming industrial center to food desert, calling this phenomenon “demarcated devaluation.” Cities like Oakland across the country have faced histories of rapid industrial expansion, and then, during economic downturns, little assistance from local and federal authorities. Again, those who are most vulnerable and unable to find a job or home in a new city are forced to stay, despite prolific disinvestment. As a result, smaller grocery stores lost price war battles with their larger supermarket counterparts, and liquor stores and convenience stores were often the placeholders of the void left by smaller chains in underserved communities. Having this historical perspective illustrates the complex nature of food justice and highlights fundamental disparities within society.
Food Justice Today: Key Terms and Current Trends

Though the interconnectedness of food justice issues with many other societal problems can be overwhelming, scholars, activists, and citizens have come together to craft a variety of solutions. Many agree that for food justice to be realized, concurrent efforts at the local level and larger, more systemic changes are needed.

Local: Placemaking and Cultural Relevance

The foundation of the U.S. food justice movement rests primarily at the local level. Tools such as urban agriculture, farmers markets, and community gardens all promote equity within local food systems. While such efforts are key to a successful food justice movement, it is important to evaluate the community setting in which such efforts are taking place. Rather than accept such projects as “good” on their face value, scholars Alison Alkon and Julian Agyeman speak of acknowledging one’s “positionality” when engaging in efforts toward food justice. Positionality is “understanding that our lived experiences, particularly those of race, class, and gender, shape our worldview.”¹⁴ This leads to a larger discussion of who controls the food justice rhetoric and the importance of cultural resonance.

The “culturally-appropriate” component of the Just Food definition of food justice demonstrates how there is no one-size-fits-all approach activists utilize in the movement. Julie Guthman states that, “whites continue to define the rhetoric, spaces, and broader projects of agrifood transformation.”¹⁵ What is accepted as universally good within the mainstream food justice movement is generally what is appealing to the white majority. Unfortunately, some see educating minorities populations about the benefits of farmers markets and communities gardens as the solution to bridging this gap, when Guthman argues the real problem is the lack of cultural resonance within the current movement.¹⁶ When posed as “the alternative food movement,” such solutions can sometimes have an unintentionally exclusionary tone that does not sit well with low-income communities and communities of color that have profound histories of disinvestment.

Having resonance within the communities is vital to building a successful local food justice movement. When profiling different farmers markets in California, scholar Alison Alkon discovered a stark difference in preferences between market goers in affluent North Berkeley and the environmental justice community of West Oakland. In North Berkeley, priorities circled around ecological sustainability, whereas those in West Oakland were more focused on achieving environmental justice.¹⁷ The priorities for why people utilize the market can be seen as a reflection of community needs. Similarly, Valiente-Neighbours has challenged the standard application of the term “local” through her research with local food systems in San Diego. She found that Filipino immigrants tended to utilize the term “local” to mean what was culturally familiar food, whereas many Americans utilized the term in a more traditional, geography-based context.¹⁸ These are just two of many examples indicating the importance of cultural resonance within the food justice movement.

Systemic: Food Regime Transformation

Within the food justice movement, local efforts have the potential to come together to spark a larger shift the national, and even global, food system. Eric Holt-Giménez is a prominent scholar in this field, and divides up current system-level approaches between progressive and radical ideologies. Holt-Giménez argues that the progressive
trend is “possibly the fastest growing grassroots expression of the food movement.”

The progressive approach encompasses much of the mainstream food justice movement, includes fair trade practices, Slow Food, and community supported agriculture.

While the progressive approach is very practice-based, its more radical counterpart, food sovereignty, has a greater focus on political advocacy and wealth redistribution. Food sovereignty asserts that all individuals have a right to safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable food, as well as a right to determine their own food system and produce their own food. Calling for a redistribution of power within the industrial food system, organizations like Via Campesina are working to ensure food is treated as a right, rather than a commodity.

Holt-Giménez states that both approaches are necessary for a systemic change within our food system. This kind of transformation will help address the short-term and long-term inequities spurred by the current system, and help ensure that such processes work in favor of justice in the future.

**Synthesis: Food Democracy**

One method for bringing together these approaches is the food democracy framework. A food democracy calls for active, engaged citizenry within all steps of the food planning process. Citizens have specialized knowledge of their communities, while activists coming from the outside may not always have the most suitable or just solutions. Additionally, a democracy offers a concretized framework of how to approach food justice in a way that ensures fair representation of community values. Though a food democracy implies that change will be slow and incremental, its pragmatic nature ensures that lasting change in favor of food justice, and social and environmental justice will occur. As for the role of local governments within this process, Wekerle argues that, as a partner, they are vital to ensure that food justice movements have the resources and the legitimacy necessary to be successful. Ultimately, these smaller local processes can link up in a larger global network aiming for system-level change.

Efforts rooted in communities—especially those with a history of devaluation and disinvestment—that are targeted toward greater equity and justice can come together in what some call a “food democracy.”

While approaches at each of these levels may vary, and the rhetoric around food justice is ever evolving, the term food democracy currently best encapsulates this system of multileveled efforts.

**Food Hubs**

- Food hubs aggregate food system activity, and usually food itself.
- Food hubs do not all look the same, and vary from traditional business models to non-profits to farms.
- People and communities have used food hubs to strengthen local and regional food systems, in opposition to larger industrial systems.

**What is a food hub?**

The USDA has identified food hubs as entities that “coordinate some aspect of the production, processing, and/or marketing of food to meet consumer demand for local, fresh, organic, or other value-laden products.” Food hubs take a variety of shapes and sizes. They oper-
ate within both the rural and urban sector, and many function at a regional level. Food hubs are becoming increasingly common, and successful; of the 107 hubs identified by the USDA, 62 percent began operations within the last five years, and 31 percent had $1 million or more in annual revenue. Food hubs utilize a variety of ownership models, include private, public, cooperative, nonprofit, and informal, in order to best suit their communities needs.

**Why do we need food hubs?**

Generally speaking, food hubs are meant to fill in any gaps created by the current food system. Food hubs are created to help build a local and/or regional food systems. One way this happens is through economic development. Food hubs across the nation utilize innovative business models that are specifically focused on shortening the distance from farm to table. Much of this innovation is taking place on the beginning stages of production as food hubs work to create the infrastructure needed to better link distribution and processing facilities. Such practices also create local jobs, which supports the local economy as well as local people. The average food hub creates nineteen jobs, and demand for food hubs is only increasing, demonstrating the potential for such systems to offer sustainable economic development.

Community engagement is another key component of the purpose of a food hub. Food hubs help increase transparency about food production, something that is seriously lacking from the current industrial, corporate food system. Many food hubs have explicit community engagement components within their missions as well. In evaluating the mission statements of food hubs across the nations, the USDA found promoting “local food,” “food access,” and the “local economy” as some of the top goals. However, in order to help support the community, food hubs often need a little help themselves when getting started. The National Food Hub Collaboration has identified around thirty funding opportunities through the federal government either through grants or loans. While support from philanthropic organizations is small but growing, many people beginning a food hub utilize a combination of private and public funding to get started. Clearly, the process of starting up and maintaining a successful food hub is hard work, but the system reaps a multitude of benefits.

**Community Food Planning Activities**

- Most community food planning process are initiated and guided by municipalities.
- Food systems are a new addition to city planning agendas, although food planning is quickly gaining momentum around the country.
- Some, though not all, community food planning processes attempt to incorporate meaningful community engagement strategies
- Community food planning generally follows a process of visioning, a food assessment, implementation, and evaluation, with community engagement happening along the way.
Community food planning is receiving increasing attention from state and local governments, community-based organizations, activists, and academics alike. The literature surrounding community food planning processes has a substantial base and appears to be growing. It provides a good overview of the purpose, scope, actions, and actors involved in various planning processes, although some of those processes may look very different from one another. The major driving force for community food planning processes is currently at the municipal level. Some attention is paid in the literature to more community-based planning, as well as collaboration and synergy between communities and municipalities.

**Municipal Planning**

Trends in Municipal Food Planning

Food planning is a relatively new addition to city and regional planning agendas. Planning departments have largely ignored food systems work even into the late 1990s, and food is by no means a routine part of planning initiatives. Pothukuchi and Kaufman undertook a study to evaluate why planners have been reluctant to address food systems. They found that planners sometimes felt that the food system had no relevant problems to address, that food was the realm of private enterprise, or that food was not an urban or regional issue. In addition, they cited a lack of funding for food planning.

However, this historical trend is quickly reversing. Many planners and others in government are realizing the importance of food and the peril of ignoring food systems. Interested planners have guessed that municipalities are paying more attention to food planning because of the overarching trend linking planning to basic needs. Growing health problems, a stronger national network of food security interests, and increasing corporate control of the food system may also be contributing to government intervention.

Municipal food planning processes can be understood in terms of three major models. First, a planning department or other government agency may direct the process itself, with minimal community direction or leadership. Second, the government may give grants to community-based organizations to complete their own process. Third, governments may collaborate with the community to connect municipal resources to community knowledge.

Local government can be an appropriate force in at least three dimensions: food programming (and the funding for such programming), food policy, and food planning. In the policy realm, local government can convene food policy councils, create food charters, and influence school food policy. Government can also create stand-alone food plans, ensure food is part of comprehensive planning, and pass zoning regulations that promote healthy foods and agriculture. Major parts of food planning processes often involve food system assessments and food policy councils. Food policy councils in their current form generally have the power to advise government agencies but little else.

While much attention is paid to local and regional food planning processes, state and federal governments are also poised to address food systems issues. State and federal governments may seek to change farm to school policy, create state food policy councils, and fund research.
The Role of Planners

In 2007, the American Planning Association (APA) released a landmark policy guide devoted to the issue of food planning. The guide recognizes that food touches on many other more-established planning fields such as the economy, land use, health, energy, and the environment. The APA recommends that planners pursue several general food policies such as strengthening local and regional economies through food systems, the development of legislation to facilitate food planning, and support for food systems that improve health. Other policies the guide suggests planners pursue focus on food systems that are ecologically sustainable, socially equitable, and appropriate for native and minority food cultures.

Food planners do not have a set role when it comes to changing the way governments and communities address food system problems. They may act as facilitators in community food planning processes, bringing stakeholders together into food policy councils and managing emerging conflicts. They may help community residents engaged in food planning to design and conduct food assessments or collect data on food systems, connect with the media, and revise land-use policies. Further tasks may include analyzing the connections between food and other issues, integrating food into comprehensive plans, and educating other planners and government officials.

The Process

Biehlen, et. al. provides a clear framework for government-led food planning processes. Steps involve coalition-building, identifying stakeholders, defining goals, and setting a procedural structure. Biehlen, et. al. also identify several stakeholders within local government who could be included in food planning initiatives. The school system, redevelopment authority, law enforcement, and the departments of human services, parks and recreation, transportation, and conservation may all play a role in food planning. Campbell emphasizes the importance of beginning with a stakeholder analysis before moving on to other steps in the planning process. A stakeholder analysis is particularly useful for identifying shared and differing values surrounding the local food system, and can anticipate conflict during the planning process.

Raja, Born, and Russell offer a seven-phase food planning process for planners and local governments. The phases involve 1.) identifying partners, 2.) devising a planning approach within a community process, 3.) visioning, 4.) gathering and analyzing data, 5.) creating preliminary recommendations and deciding how to measure progress, 6.) reviewing findings with stakeholders, 7.) implementing recommendations and measuring progress. They imagine planners as taking on the organization of these phases.

Community-Based Planning

Trends in Community-Based Food Planning

Since food planning as a whole is a relatively new concept, the literature concerning community-based planning processes is less robust than that for municipal food planning. While these sorts of planning processes are occurring in many parts of the country, there is comparatively little research on the theory or practice of planning processes that are primarily community-based or resident-led.
Meaningful community engagement is clearly an important factor in developing food plans and policies that properly address issues of concern for neighborhoods, and are intimately involved with issues of justice and equity. In practical terms, including community members in planning processes demonstrate the real needs of communities as well as successes and community assets.  

Food planning fits well into a community-controlled economic development approach to neighborhoods. Progressive approaches to economic development develop community assets and are locally place-based, rather than catering exclusively to large corporations. Community-controlled economic strategies are appropriate for unifying food agendas, holding powerful actors accountable, and developing community-based food leadership in food and agriculture.

The success of community-based food planning can be determined in terms of four categories of space. Community participants must have social space, which may be physical but is also represented by trust of other actors. They must also have political space to influence policy and programs. In addition, they must have intellectual space, which involves visioning and reflecting, and economic space to influence finances, businesses, and job development. Altogether, creating and maintaining these four areas of space should contribute toward public participation, the formation of partnerships, and shared principles across participants.

The Process

Garrett and Feenstra provide guidance for community groups wanting to undertake community food projects. They note that the most successful groups integrate projects with policy, and are able to identify relevant stakeholders early on in the process. The process of community food planning is not linear, but moves generally from visioning to resource development (which may include a food assessment) to project implementation and eventually evaluation. Coalition building is occurring along all steps of this path.

One model for community-based food planning available in the literature is community-based participatory research (CBPR). Although CBPR has been used for a variety of issues, it is particularly applicable to food planning. Vásquez, et. al. detail a CBPR process in San Francisco involving a local non-profit and the health department, aimed at increasing food security in a particular neighborhood with an emphasis on health and nutrition. The process involved identifying the relevant health problems, developing a research agenda, planning an intervention, implementing programs, and evaluation. The CBPR partnership relied on youth for much of the process. Vásquez, et. al. extrapolate from this example to determine successful CBPR initiatives include effective community participation, focus on community-developed goals, and identification of important stakeholders in the neighborhood.Similar in scope and design is participatory action research, which includes diagnosing problems, planning, acting, evaluating, and identifying learning. Another way to understand community-based food planning processes is through public scholarship. Public scholarship is defined as intellectual activity that aims to organize community members’ thinking and reflections, and which allows them to reason collectively. What defines these approaches in part is community-driven issue framing and engagement in all steps of the process.
Intersection with Municipal Planning

Community-based food planning does not tend to exist in an entirely separate realm from the municipalities in which they are based, though there is no systematic study of how meaningful or effective community engagement tends to be in municipal planning. Food planning represents an opportunity for meaningful collaboration between government and civil society.58 Some, though certainly not all, food planning efforts have effectively linked community and municipalities in partnership.

In many cases, local governments and planners seek to engage residents in the planning process. For example, the APA planning guide explicitly recognizes that community participation is crucial for successful food planning. Alternatively, community-based organizations may seek to collaborate with municipalities. In Toronto, activists already involved with food systems work collaborated with local government to create a new approach for the city to work with community-based organizations to change food policy. Together, the community and the city created a Food Charter, convened an action committee, and managed to have food issues addressed in Toronto’s Official Plan.59

In Baltimore, one community-based organization’s mission is to link the city and other community organizations, bridging the gap and promoting more effective programs and policy. It facilitates city and non-profit partnerships to implement programs, provide grants, and generate research.60

Conclusion

The Dudley Real Food Hub partners will create their own plan and undertake their own actions to create food systems change in the Dudley neighborhood. Those plans and actions take place within an existing community food planning framework they can draw from to strengthen their work in creating a food hub. Many people and organizations have advanced the concept of food justice and its several iterations, such as food sovereignty and food democracy. The work the DRFH partners hope to do fits squarely within food justice, though they have the choice in how to frame food justice within their organizations and for the community as a whole.

Additionally, the literature shows that the DRFH is a unique initiative within existing food hubs and food planning processes. Prominent food hubs tend to simply aggregate food and distribute it to a wider audience, although the DRFH can orient itself in alignment with food hubs’ focus on economic development, as well as community engagement. In terms of planning for a food hub or for other food systems change, the DRFH is building off of food planning that has been done before, but with an emphasis on community direction and control. The DRFH stands to gain from past work by municipalities and non-profits, but the partners should critically evaluate how food planning and food hubs have been done in the past, and what they will look like in the context of Dudley.
Notes

4. Rising Food Prices: A Global Crisis (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2008).
23. Ibid.
32. Matson, Role of Real Food Hubs, page 11.
34. Ibid.
36. Matson, Role of Real Food Hubs, 14.
37. Fisher et al., Findings, 14.
43. Pothukuchi, “Community and Regional Food Planning,” 350-351.
47. Pothukuchi, “Community and Regional Food Planning.”
60. Kirschbaum, “Making Policy in a Crowded World.”
Chapter 3
Case Studies
The following six case studies highlight organizations across the country that have developed innovative initiatives for a just food system and/or have conducted community food planning processes. The purpose of these case studies is to highlight the range of models and approaches that organizations based in low-income communities of color are using to promote food systems change, share some of the challenges they have faced, and offer reflections on strategies and lessons that can help inform the DRFH.

Each case study begins with highlights of major accomplishments, a description of the selection criteria, and a summary. They then offer background information on the organizations and share some of the successes and challenges each case has faced. Each case study concludes with lessons relevant to the planning for the DRFH.

The PVW Field Project Team worked with ACE and DSNI to identify selection criteria for the case studies that would be relevant to the context and goals of the DRFH.

The criteria are as follows:

a) Planning processes or projects that seek to address racism in the food system and craft solutions that advance racial and environmental justice and equity.

b) Planning processes or projects oriented toward grassroots and resident leadership rather than simply participation or community engagement.

c) Planning processes or projects that have emphasized youth engagement and youth leadership.

d) Planning processes or projects that seek to address community economic development including job creation and entrepreneurial development.

e) Planning processes or projects that offer a model of community ownership or control, going a step beyond economic development.

f) Planning process or projects that are exceptional community planning process models, and which demonstrate effective strategies or tools used to create community food plans.

g) Planning processes or projects that build on successful food production models.

While few of the case studies fit all of the criteria, each is strong in at least two or three, and collectively they span the spectrum of all the criteria above.
Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) in Buffalo, New York. The student team conducted a community needs assessment that included community engagement activities to gauge the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities in the neighborhood’s community food system. A thorough stakeholder analysis catalogued community organizations that either had the capacity to drive change or were implementing programs to advance the plan’s four overarching visions.

The culminating plan was an important platform that helped to raise additional funding for MAP and their work to strengthen the community food system, develop youth leadership, and advance community economic development.

**Background**

*Food for Growth* was developed by graduate students in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Buffalo, under contract with the Massachusetts Avenue Project (MAP) in the fall of 2003. According to the 2000 census, the West Side Target Area (WSTA) was a low-income section of the city with a median household income of $16,968, or about two-thirds of the median income of all of Buffalo’s households. The West Side of Buffalo was and still is predominantly a community of color, including Latinos, African-Americans, and Asians. Due to the lack of food retailers that carried fresh produce and healthy foods, food access was the defining problem the community food planning aimed to resolve. Surveys of food retailers in the neighborhood revealed that food prices were generally higher and the products of lower quality than stores in other neighborhoods. Additionally, a majority of residents did not have access to automobiles or reliable public transit options to travel to larger food retailers in the area.
The University of Buffalo student team used five community research and engagement methods to collect qualitative data from neighborhood residents:

1. A community needs assessment of the WSTA looked at socio-economic conditions and identified assets and gaps.

2. Focus groups were conducted in which WSTA residents were asked to share thoughts and concerns about neighborhood food options and quality.

3. Interviews with community gardeners and regional farmers were conducted to understand challenges in producing and supplying food to Buffalo residents.

4. A survey of grocery stores was conducted to assess food price and quality within the WSTA.

5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercises were facilitated with neighborhood residents and stakeholders in the areas of land use, economic development, and youth development.

Additionally, the research team used quantitative analysis to assess the local food economy:

1. Independent and chain food stores in the WSTA were surveyed using price and expiration dates to assess food affordability and quality.

2. Data from InfoUSA was compiled to provide an overall picture of the food retail sector highlight type and number of establishments, sales, and jobs.

3. An Input / Output analysis was used for the food retailers in the neighborhood to project job growth, revenue, and multiplier impacts.

The Food for Growth plan developed recommendations to build upon MAP’s ongoing efforts to address food security issues in Buffalo and used their existing inventory of food-related programs as a platform for neighborhood revitalization.

Successes

Since the plan’s completion in 2004, MAP has successfully implemented several programs within the production and distribution sectors of the food system. In the ten years that followed the completion of the plan, MAP has expanded its anchor program, Growing Green, which develops youth leadership through urban agriculture (much like The Food Project) into a robust and successful job training, education, and mentorship space for low-income youth and children in the neighborhood.

Growing Green’s Urban Farm now consists of thirteen reclaimed vacant lots, covering almost an acre of land in Buffalo’s West Side. On the farm, youth collaborate to produce, market, and distribute produce to communities, restaurants, and retail establishments in Buffalo. As of 2011, approximately 6,000 pounds of organic food had been produced on the premises, with nine local restaurants sourcing their ingredients from the Urban Farm. The Growing Green program prides itself in nurturing social and technical skills in their participating youth, who have a 100 percent high school graduation rate and continue onto college.
Recommendations from the plan also helped MAP bolster their role in city-level political activism, establishing a seat on the Buffalo and Erie Country Food Policy Council, and playing a key role in Buffalo’s zoning reform. The revision of the City’s land use and zoning policies, the form-based Buffalo Green Code, established as-of-right use of market gardens in all neighborhoods, retail, and campus districts. This was a good example of how a food system plan can align with and leverage existing neighborhood plans, city plans, zoning codes, or policies.

**Challenges**

Community engagement was a major challenge during this planning process. Despite the student team’s diligent efforts in public outreach and accommodations to families with children, public meeting turnouts were low. Residents were not forthcoming when discussing details about their behavior in relation to food access and consumption behaviors, seeing as a more personal subject. Informal community engagement methods such as neighborhood potlucks and meals may have been more effective than formal public meetings and surveys. Incorporating research and engagement into existing community programs and activities may also have created a more comfortable space to facilitate meaningful conversation and public input.

There was also little capacity for evaluation during the planning process or the opportunity to systematically improve methods and strategies.

**Lessons**

1. Engagement with the city-wide planning and policy arena can strengthen the impact of the community food planning and its subsequent implementation initiatives.
2. Informal community engagement methods such as neighborhood potlucks and meals can be useful forums in addition to more traditional community meetings.
3. It can be helpful to incorporate community research and engagement into existing community programs and activities rather than creating independent forums.

**Sources**


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Detroit Black Community Food Security Network

- Uses a food sovereignty framework to build power in Detroit’s low-income Black community.
- Established D-Town Farm, a two-acre lot leased for ten years from the city for $1 annually.
- Key player in establishment of Detroit’s Food Security Policy and Council.

Criteria
Racial and Environmental Justice | Grassroots Leadership | Community Economic Development | Community Ownership | Local Food Production Models

Mission
DBCFSN works to build self-reliance, food security, and justice in Detroit’s Black community by influencing public policy, engaging in urban agriculture, promoting healthy eating, encouraging cooperative buying and directing youth towards careers in food-related fields.

Vision
DBCFSN’s vision is to advance movement towards food sovereignty while advocating for justice in the food system that ensures access to healthy foods with dignity and respect for all of Detroit’s residents.

Summary

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) was formed in 2006 to address food insecurity in Detroit’s African-American community, in light of the fact that many of the key players in the local urban agriculture movement were young Caucasians and not representative of the Detroit’s broader demographic. DBCFSN was formed in response to food security and justice issues that faced Detroit’s majority African-American population. The organization addresses these issues by mobilizing their community to effect change in public policy, promote healthy eating, engage in urban agriculture, and foster youth development through food-related programs. The organization’s Officers and Board of Directors are all rooted in Detroit and active in the Network’s on-the-ground operations in addition to fulfilling their executive roles.

Background

DBCFSN initially began as a means of providing community members with a greater say in their local food system. While the influx of well-intentioned white food justice activists from outside Detroit did great work in supporting a thriving urban agriculture movement in the city, residents felt that a truly sustainable movement would have to be led by community members themselves. Beyond the passion for food and agriculture was a passion for the community, which was something that the incoming urban agriculture supporters could not offer.

From the organization’s inception, DBCFSN has worked to bring about systems-level change in favor of food justice, food security, and community self-reliance. DBCFSN began with a ¼-acre plot at a...
4-H center on Detroit’s eastside, and has used their model to scale up to larger plots throughout the city. In addition to the organization’s urban agriculture work, DBCFSN also engages in two other components of the food justice movement—policy development and cooperative buying. These methods together demonstrate the organization’s holistic effort to build a thriving local food system with residents at the core.

Successes

DBCFSN’s greatest successes have been within public policy, food sovereignty, and public education. The organization was a key player in the development of Detroit’s Food Security Policy and its governing body, the Food Policy Council. The Food Security Policy was drafted through a community visioning processes consisting of a series of hearings and listening sessions organized by DBCFSN over eighteen months. The policy was adopted unanimously by the City Council in 2008, laying the framework for addressing food access, hunger and malnutrition, citizen education, economic injustice, urban agriculture, schools, and emergency response. Action plans were developed for each issue area to guide DBCFSN’s work in the community food system. The DBCFSN continues to be involved in policy-level work. For example, a DBCFSN working group member is currently on a decision-making body for food choices in Detroit’s Public Schools.

Since the passage of Detroit’s Food Security Policy, DBCFSN has served as a space for the organization’s leadership and entrepreneurial development programs, food production, and the site of the Annual Harvest Festival. The Festival has been the Detroit Food Policy Council’s primary method of engaging the public in the local food system and highlighting the Council and local food-focused organizations’ achievements.

In 2008, DBCFSN launched a food cooperative called the Ujamaa (meaning “collective economics” in Swahili) Food Co-op. Partnering with United Natural Foods (UNFI), the largest natural foods distributor in the United States, members can benefit from considerable savings when purchasing bulk foods, household items, and supplements. The Food Co-op developed a sense of community through collective buying and provided an alternative to expensive food retailers that no longer operate within Detroit.

Challenges

All of DBCFSN’s successes to date are attributed to tireless volunteers. The organization has lacked operational resources to hire dedicated full-time staff, which led to the initial dissolution of the Public Policy Council that led the development of the Food Security Policy. The lack of staff also meant that volunteers take on a large workload in community organizing, event planning, and report drafting while also working paying jobs. Moreover, the drawn-out nature of community organizing before witnessing any tangible change or outcome in public policy also has discouraged many volunteers throughout the years.
Lessons

1. It is important to encourage community members to serve on working groups and regularly recognize the accomplishments of volunteers through publications or at public events to maintain enthusiasm and momentum of the work.

2. Food system programs require technical staff that can effectively run the organization’s programs or work with volunteer leadership who is demonstrably invested.

3. Informal food events are helpful for engaging residents and grow excitement for initiatives.

4. Connecting to larger-level policy-making bodies while working on neighborhood-level food initiatives is both feasible and beneficial.

5. Food has been an effective lens through which to advance a broader agenda of building power within Detroit’s Black community, and to engage in community control of land.

Sources

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- Significant successes using food production as community economic development on a small scale, providing jobs and skills training for low-income residents.
- Strong community partnerships between food systems organizations and other stakeholders
- A combination of education/training and drawing from peoples' own knowledge and experiences is an effective model for community-driven food systems change.

Criteria
Racial and Environmental Justice | Community Leadership | Youth Engagement | Community Economic Development | Community Ownership | Food Production Model

Mission
The mission of Dig Deep Farms & Produce (DDF&P) is to build and operate a local food enterprise network of businesses and to create jobs in Ashland and Cherryland based on producing healthy food.

Vision
Our vision is to create a vibrant, sustainable local food economy that brings fresh, healthy affordable food to the residents of Ashland and Cherryland. We will create a successful business based on growing, packing, packaging, processing, distributing and selling fresh, healthy food. Our enterprise creates a cascade community benefits including healthy soil, healthy food, and healthy people with a vital stake in their own community. Our work will create hope, break the bonds of dependency and build self-reliance.

Summary
Dig Deep Farms and Produce approaches urban agriculture as a crime-prevention and economic development tool to improve the lives and communities of the East Bay area in California. Programs primarily include a number of farms that grow food for an area CSA and restaurants.

Background
The communities of Ashland and Cherryland where Dig Deep is based suffer from severe poverty, unemployment, and high rates of crime, and Dig Deep was founded in 2009 in order to combat these problems. Several people came together to begin the new enterprise, including a sheriff’s office sergeant who ran an afterschool program called the Deputy Sheriff’s Activity League, a food activist, a farmer, and local African-American residents. From the beginning, Dig Deep was meant to be a driver of community development and provide jobs, so policies required staff to hire employees with low incomes and at least one child.
Dig Deep farms approximately eight acres of land spread over five sites throughout the East Bay area. The organization use sustainable methods of growing to produce vegetables for a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. One site is located near an addiction recovery and re-entry program and is partially farmed by volunteers from the program. The newest farm site sits next to a county juvenile justice facility. The Deputy Sherriff’s Activities League provided the network to create this farm.

Since its beginning, Dig Deep has formed partnerships with several area food justice groups, helping them to reach more customers and raise enough revenue to continue, including grants. Dig Deep also has relationships with restaurants who pay for farm produce, allowing them to charge more for their vegetables than is possible with the CSA.

**Successes**

Dig Deep staff members treat each other and community members with a deeply held respect. The organization’s former director was trained in psychiatry and has emphasized the importance of listening to people—both employees and the community at large. The environment the organization creates allows individuals to develop their skills and share their knowledge. At one community meeting, the farmer asked farm crew members to share their knowledge of Dig Deep’s land and produce. Together, they pooled their knowledge and collectively planned the season’s crops.

Dig Deep has also successfully formed partnerships with organizations such as the Alameda County General Services Agency, the Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center, and People’s Grocery, bringing new customers, land security, and legitimacy in the eyes of residents, city officials, and funders. Partnerships were formed early on and continue to be maintained as an essential component of operation.

As a farm and CSA, Dig Deep realizes that it is an organization primarily of people of color, operating within a sphere of food activity that is currently defined mainly by white groups. Those involved in Dig Deep’s work find ways to define their own experience and methods, while maintaining ties to other models. So, while Dig Deep sells produce to high-end restaurants, it does so to remain self-sufficient to serve other ends, and has the power to choose when to connect with these models.

**Challenges**

Because new hires came from low-income backgrounds, they often were not well versed in business language skills or in farm work. They were also challenged since they had to take care of families. As a solution, employees worked part-time, and were trained in farming and business management. Over time, many employees took initiative to learn new things on their own.

The first several months of Dig Deep’s operation were rough and created some mistrust. The farm needed to increase revenue, and had to address staff’s lack of farm and business skills as well as personal issues. Added in were the community’s negative perceptions of the police. As a result, the managers held team meetings that included all staff, in an effort to bring them into the loop on decision-making and to share organizational information, including financial. The staff participated and felt that the managers responded to their concerns, and were able to address and lessen the mistrust.
The eating and cooking habits of the communities Dig Deep serves has also provided some challenges in expanding the CSA. Many people, especially young people, are unfamiliar with cooking and there is a low demand for fresh produce. Additionally, people who do buy fresh food prefer to buy it at lower prices than Dig Deep can provide.

**Lessons**

1. Food production and food systems work can successfully be framed as a crime prevention measure and re-entry program, and can provide activities and jobs for people as an alternative. The young people working at Dig Deep have found their work not only worthwhile in preventing crime in their own lives, but understand themselves as healthy mentors for younger youth to follow in their footsteps.

2. Expanding healthy food initiatives, even if supported by some in the community, may prove challenging. Popular education tools may offer a way to draw on the food knowledge and interest residents already have, while providing new teaching about produce and cooking.

3. Patience and investment are critical when training inexperienced community members in farming and business. Dig Deep employees needed several years to acquire the professional skills necessary for the farm to run smoothly, but gained crucial and transferable skills along the way. More support and training could have benefited employees and made the transition faster.

**Sources**


Growing Power (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

- One of the most well known food system and urban agriculture organizations in the nation.
- High level of innovation in sustainable urban farming techniques, including aquaponics and vermicomposting.
- Has developed a hybrid funding model that includes a business enterprise, fee for services, as well as $5 million from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and $1 million from Wal-Mart.

Criteria
Racial and Environmental Justice | Community Economic Development | Local Food Production Model

Mission
Growing Power is a national nonprofit organization and land trust supporting people from diverse backgrounds, and the environments in which they live, by helping to provide equal access to healthy, high-quality, safe and affordable food for people in all communities.

Vision
Inspiring communities to build sustainable food systems that are equitable and ecologically sound, creating a just world, one food-secure community at a time.

Summary
Growing Power is a national nonprofit organization and land trust focused on bringing high quality, affordable, and nutritious food to low-income populations. The organization hosts hands-on training sessions and on the ground demonstrations, and offers outreach and technical assistance to facilitate the integration of social justice, local economic development, and sustainability in all sectors of the food system. The organization is headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is home to Growing Power’s Community Food Center. The two-acre Community Food Center contains fourteen greenhouses, two aquaponic hoop houses, thousands of fish, a livestock inventory, an anaerobic digester, and many other amenities. Growing Power also has smaller farms in Milwaukee, Madison, and Chicago.

Background
Growing Power was started in 1993 by former basketball player and MacArthur Genius Fellowship recipient Will Allen. Allen took over his wife’s family farm in the Milwaukee suburbs after quitting his job in corporate sales in marketing, eager to reconnect to his farming roots. Allen wanted to start selling produce, and managed to find a three-acre vacant center in Milwaukee’s north side. This also happened to be the last parcel of land zoned for agriculture in the city, which inspired Allen to look into methods of on-site production. This opportunity, coupled with the interest youth expressed in farming jobs and training, led to the creation of Growing Power.

The organization officially became a nonprofit in 1995, and had the intention of operating as an urban agriculture education center,
teaching technical farming skills in hopes of developing a self-reliant and secure local food economy. The organization has continued to innovate and expand over the years, incorporating techniques such as composting, vermicomposting, and aquaponics into the urban farms. Today, Growing Power has 65 full time employees and more than 70 outreach programs in cities across the world.

In order to expand so prolifically, Growing Power has acquired funding in a variety of ways. Primarily, the organization runs on grants, fee-for-service programs, product sales, and contributions, with fifty percent of the budget coming from fee-for-service programs. Growing Power’s Commercial Urban Agriculture Training Program is one example of the sizeable amount of money the organization draws in, charging participants $2,800 for five three-day sessions. Products and services that Growing Power offers includes groceries, growing supplies, composting materials, a CSA, and technical support and workshops. Additionally, Growing Power has earned some sizeable grants, including $300,000 the USDA and City of Chicago, $500,000 from the MacArthur Foundation, and $5 million from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The organization’s annual budget for 2010 was $2,850,000.

Successes

Growing Power has broken up their project goals into three different areas, known as the “grow, bloom, and thrive” components. Each category features a variety of programs and initiatives that aim to promote food access, community development, and sustainability.

Grow: Urban farming comprises the backbone of Growing Power, and the organization ensures that their practices are as sustainable as possible by considering all aspects of the food system in their work.

The Milwaukee farm is especially expansive, and utilizes solar panels and an anaerobic digester to keep resource use to a minimum. In addition to the expansive urban farming network, Growing Power composts and vermicomposts ten million tons of materials annually, thus diverting potential waste from landfills.

Bloom: Bloom is the education and civic engagement component of Growing Power. In addition to conducting tours and hosting workshops, the organization actively engages community members by bringing their workshops to schools and community centers and building raised bed gardens. Additionally, Growing Power has two Youth Corps programs that strive to promote youth entrepreneurial development and support low-income youth to gain professional experience working on an urban farm. Growing Power is also active in two Illinois-based food policy councils. Finally, Growing Power is a founding member of the Growing Food and Justice For All initiative, which convenes organizations that are working in low income communities and communities of color through local and sustainable agriculture.

Thrive: Growing Power’s food distribution efforts are another vehicle for community engagement and democratization of the food system. Aside from the more conventional farmers markets, CSAs, and farm-to-table restaurant design, Growing Power has a Market Basket program, which is a fusion between a mobile grocery store and a CSA, and the Rainbow Farmer’s Cooperative, which expands market opportunities for small-scale farmers. Additionally, the Kellogg grant will be dedicated to expanding the organization’s community food center model to other underserved communities in the United States.

Growing Power is currently partnering with Kubala Washatko Architects to create a five-story vertical farm at the Milwaukee headquarters.
(see figure below). This greenhouse and aquaponics operation center will allow Growing Power to cultivate fruits, vegetables, and herbs and harvest fish annually. Additionally, the center will include a demonstration kitchen, food processing, and freezer storage. Sustainability is also integrated throughout the structure, complete with a rainwater catchment system and solar panels. A common struggle that many urban agriculture organizations face is the availability of viable farming plots, and Growing Power’s use of vertical space demonstrates the kind of innovation that will help make such efforts more feasible.

**Challenges**

While Growing Power is one of the most financially successful food organizations in the nation, some have raised critiques of their funding strategy. In 2011, Growing Power was awarded a $1 million grant from Wal-Mart, bringing criticism from the broader food movement over what was seen as a contradiction in values.
Additionally, while Growing Power’s size and influence is impressive, it raises questions of how in touch the organization can be with local communities through such quick growth. Growing Power tends to attract people that already have an interest in food systems rather than everyday community members, and does not have significant representation of low-income residents on their staff.

**Lessons**

1. The Growing Food and Justice Initiative demonstrates the power in networking with like organizations. Through talking with groups that may be facing similar struggles in community outreach and engagement, organizations can innovate new ways to ensure that their approach is most effective for their residents.

2. While Growing Power is more precisely focused on food production than the Dudley Real Food Hub will be, bridging economic development and environmental sustainability is one impressive facet of the organization. Keeping these competing forces in mind, especially when making land use decisions, will be valuable in the long run.

3. Growing Power has utilized a variety of funding sources, including grants and fee-for-service programs to remain profitable. Considering options for financial stability will be especially important during the initial planning stages of a food hub.

**Sources**


HOPE Collaborative
(Oakland, California)

- Innovative participatory methods for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.
- Robust community planning process, engaging over 400 residents and 30 organizations.
- Original community action plan has strong emphasis on community ownership and decentralized food enterprise networks.
- Challenges in the transition between planning and implementation.

Criteria: Community Planning Methodology | Grassroots Leadership | Youth Engagement

Mission
HOPE’s mission is to create community driven and sustainable environmental change that will significantly improve the health and wellness of Oakland’s flatland residents most impacted by social inequities.

Vision
The HOPE Collaborative envisions vibrant Oakland neighborhoods that provide equitable access to affordable, healthy locally grown food; safe and inviting places for physical activity and play; and sustainable, local economies – all to the benefit of the families and youth living in Oakland neighborhoods with the greatest health disparities.

Summary
HOPE Collaborative was formed through an invitation from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation’s Food and Fitness Collaborative initiative in 2007. From 2007 to 2009, HOPE conducted a participatory planning process, engaging over 400 Oakland residents and 30 organizations in conducting community assessments and developing a Community Action Plan (CAP) in the areas of Food Systems, Built Environment, and Economic, Civic, and Community Ownership. HOPE Collaborative is now in its fourth year of implementing a ten year CAP which includes a policy and programmatic agenda focused on promoting healthy food retail and urban agriculture, food entrepreneurial development, a food hub, and healthy neighborhood planning.

Background
HOPE Collaborative (initially called the Oakland Food and Fitness Collaborative) was convened by the Alameda County Public Health Department and the Alameda County Food Bank. Upon receipt of Food and Fitness funds, the institutions formed a community collaborative that was led by a Steering Committee comprised of four community action teams structured around specific content areas.
The Steering Committee included a youth action board that conducted independent work, including a multi-media project documenting neighborhood parks, and a food enterprise planning project. The collaborative began a two and a half year community-driven planning process in 2007, which concluded with the development of the Community Action Plan for improving food and activity environments in east and west Oakland.

**Successes**

HOPE’s community planning process integrated professional planning practices with a grassroots, bottom-up approach, where residents worked alongside government agencies and nonprofits in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and in forming subsequent recommendations. HOPE Collaborative has been widely referenced as an innovative model for conducting community food assessments and as a community food planning process. Their planning process incorporated compelling approaches to participatory data collection, interpretation, and evaluation methods.

HOPE Collaborative used both scholarly and grassroots approaches to research and community food assessments. It conducted a meta-analysis of the food systems in the area by reviewing around fifteen studies on the Oakland Food system, the built environment, and local sustainable economic development. They found that affordability was a key barrier to healthy food access and that crime was a key barrier to the use of the built environment for physical activity and play.

HOPE also conducted micro-zone assessments, since the geographic scale of the flatlands of Oakland is so large. The collaborative used census tract data to identify six smaller ecological zones throughout east and west Oakland in which to conduct in-depth community assessments. They developed assessment protocol for these micro-zones, which included the following elements:

- Food stores, products, prices, quality, ownership
- Aggregate consumer food expenditures
- Land use
- Streets and sidewalks
- Parks, playgrounds
- Types of businesses and ownership

As part of the micro-zone assessments, HOPE collected on-the-street interviews, and held listening and community mapping with residents (See Appendix B for explorations of these exercises.) They also conducted neighborhood surveys to find out about neighbor perceptions and experiences, and researched media archives, including photographs, video, and audio. Finally, they used participatory data interpretation strategies to include the community in understanding the information they had collected (details in Appendix C).

**Challenges**

Many of the challenges of HOPE Collaborative’s process involved the limited nature of the data collection and interpretation. For example, the micro-zones that HOPE Collaborative focused only represented six small areas within the larger community, so they were limited in capturing the entirety of community input. Similarly, the listening sessions only included questions about food access, the built environment, and the economy, which excluded other concerns residents may have had about the food system or the neighborhood in general.
Maintaining community partnerships involved some tension, especially between larger institutions like the health department, and smaller, community-based organizations. Only larger organizations that had enough time and resources from outside of HOPE Collaborative could stay engaged throughout the process.

The transition from the planning process to implementation of initiatives proved to be challenging. Partly because of this transition, the planning process did not lead to a Community Action Plan that was fully documented in a way that could have been distributed to the community. No immediate feedback sessions were conducted, although staff held community meetings with residents well after the conclusion of the planning process. While the transition was difficult, HOPE eventually reengaged people in implementation of projects in a thoughtful way.

Lessons

1. The HOPE Collaborative planning process, while very thorough, proved to be too long to maintain resident engagement and cut into time that could have been spent implementing the plan.

2. Significant turnover in staff and leadership made continuity within the organization and accountability to residents difficult.

3. Short-term small scale implementation may have helped maintain the momentum of the CAP.

4. The combination of scholarly research and grassroots community engagement techniques proved beneficial to gaining comprehensive insight into the food-related needs of the Oakland community.

Sources


Nuestras Raíces (Holyoke, Massachusetts)

- Owns and operates a thirty acre farm “La Finca” which rents plots of land to gardeners and food entrepreneurs in Holyoke’s Puerto Rican community, providing them shared resources, market access, and community support.
- La Finca also serves as the site of the Nuestras Raíces CSA and farmers market, and as a community gathering space and for the preservation of Puerto Rican culture.
- Has maintained strong community engagement and leadership throughout substantial growth of organization.

Criteria: Racial and Environmental Justice | Grassroots Leadership | Youth Engagement | Community Planning Methodology | Community Economic Development | Community Ownership | Local Food Production Model

Mission Statement
To create healthy environments, celebrate “agri-culture,” and harness our collective energy to advance our vision of a just and sustainable future.

Summary
Nuestras Raíces is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting access to healthy, affordable, and nutritious food to the residents of Holyoke, Massachusetts. Though initially conceived as an organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Puerto Rican Holyoke Community, Nuestras Raíces has created a variety of social, environmental, and economic initiatives in an effort to foster holistic community development.

Background
In 1992, Puerto Rican migrant farmers in South Holyoke formed Nuestras Raíces to address the lack of economic opportunity in their community. Holyoke is among Massachusetts’ most impoverished cities, and the closing of city mills combined with the lack of farming jobs made the sizeable Puerto Rican community especially vulnerable. While the initial goal was to create a greenhouse in downtown Holyoke, the organization began by revitalizing a vacant lot into a community garden. Partnering with a Hampshire College student, community members worked to find resources to develop the garden. After the student graduated, the gardeners started Nuestras Raíces as a means of continuing the project.

After some initial standard growing pains, Nuestras Raíces added two more gardens to their stock. In 1997, using grants, loans, gifts, and revenue, Nuestras Raíces took out a mortgage on a single story building that would later become the Centro Agrícola. This building still serves as a hub of the organization today, and grew from a space for just meetings and classes to a robust center including a bilingual...
agricultural library and a community kitchen. The final additions to the Centro, completed in 2003, totaled approximately $350,000 in grant funding.

In the summer of 2004, Nuestras Raíces engaged in a community planning process and decided to create La Finca (the Farm), which is still in existence today. The organization purchased four acres of farmland, and then the Sisters of Providence agreed to lease the 26 adjacent acres for $1 per year. This remarkable gift demonstrates the faith that the community had in the power of Nuestras Raíces’ work.

Today, Nuestras Raíces operates with a budget of approximately $800,000 per year. This funding supports a multitude of programs, including a network of ten community gardens, a program for inner-city youth, a thirty-acre inner city farm, a CSA, and an environmental program focused on the sustainability of Holyoke. Nuestras Raíces has partnered with many organizations to help promote these initiatives, including Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council, The Trustees of Reservations, and Energía LLC.

Successes

Nuestras Raíces has a variety of opportunities through which to engage community members in their work. The four primary initiatives include:

Community gardens: The community gardens provide a space for intergenerational interaction, promote healthy food access for low income populations, and have an added aesthetic benefit. On average, families cultivate approximately $1,000 worth of organic produce annually, with some families selling leftover produce for supplemental income.

Inner city farm: As a result of the success of the community gardens, La Finca was born. While engaging in a community planning process, the organization discovered that community gardeners were looking for a space in which they could scale up their operations into a marketplace. La Finca rents out small pieces of land to interested gardeners and small businesses and provides them with shared resources, market access, and community support. The thirty-acre farm also serves as a community gathering space for residents to come together and celebrate Puerto Rican culture. The Nuestras Raíces CSA and farmers market is located on La Finca.

Youth Program: Nuestras Raíces offers Farm Apprenticeships to inner city youth, providing them the opportunity to gain experience working on a farm. The apprenticeships focus on skill building and one-on-one mentorship. Additionally, the organization hosts a youth organizing committee in conjunction with Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council, which provides a space for youth to engage in local food systems issues and work to address problems they see in their communities.

Environmental Justice: Nuestras Raíces received a Level 1 EPA CARES grant in 2009, and utilized the funds to assess local indoor and outdoor air quality, brownfields, and water quality. Several community meetings were held in order to provide residents with a space in which they could identify what environmental concerns the environmental justice program should prioritize.

Additionally, Nuestras Raíces partnered with Meridian Consulting and developed a strategic plan for 2013-2016 titled Nurturing Vision. The Nuestras Raíces staff and Board of Directors came together with
community members, volunteers, and program participants to engage in a yearlong self-reflection process to formulate the organization’s goals and vision for the future. *Nurturing Vision* is broken up into two components—the strategic plan, which will help ensure the Board of Directors prioritizes the organization’s mission and vision in upcoming years, and the program plan, which highlights implementable next steps for the organization to put these priorities into practice. The plan divided the organization’s goals into five separate buckets: agri-cultural development, green enterprise, conservation and environmental justice, organizational planning and evaluation, and fund development.

The nature of Nuestras Raíces’ community leadership and engagement efforts are other notable strengths of the organization. Staff members aim to be as receptive as possible to community members by having open door policy and utilizing more informal means of community engagement, such as conversations while gardening or going on neighborhood walks. For example, the desire to incorporate youth programs into Nuestras Raíces’ work was brought about as a result of these conversations, and their popularity with youth led them to become an organization staple. Additionally, the organization’s Board of Directors is half comprised of community members, ensuring that residents have a seat at the table in organizational decision-making at the highest level.

**Challenges**

Through *Nurturing Vision*, the organization has identified communication as an area of ongoing challenge, given the changing ways that community members receive information. The organization has acknowledged the need to reach out to residents early when planning out the plot assignments on La Finca because they are in high demand. The plan also reveals a need for more internal data regarding the demographics of the farmers and other program participants. This will ensure that Nuestras Raíces programs are as tailored to community needs as possible within the context of changing demographics.

Like many other grassroots organizations, the need to balance local knowledge with technical expertise has proven to be challenging. Eventually, outside ‘experts’ were brought into the community to help inform best practices on a variety of agricultural projects. Nuestras Raíces was very conscious of these outsider dynamics, and encouraged them to build relationships with the community to ensure that their knowledge would be put to use effectively.

The role of the City of Holyoke has been an additional challenge, particular around land ownership. Conflict has arisen between the organization and city officials who ultimately control the land. While Nuestras Raíces’ has built rapport with the city over the years, it is an ongoing struggle to maintain control over the use of the land and to orient it toward the needs and visions of the community.

**Lessons Learned**

1. Food production through community use of land has been an important strategy for building power, cultural preservation, and resilience in Holyoke’s Puerto Rican community. Maintaining control of the land has been contentious and political.

2. A combination of formal and informal community engagement strategies has enabled Nuestras Raíces to gather valuable information about the community’s wants and needs, and the space of the farm itself has provided an important vehicle for resident engagement.
Sources


Supplemental Case Studies

The full case studies represent just some of the relevant work that is being done to address just food systems and to initiate community food planning. Many more organizations and municipalities are doing this work than have been presented. Some of these have been highlighted as supplemental case studies. Supplemental cases did not fit strongly enough into the case study criteria to include as full cases, but they still merit inclusion. The DRFH partners may choose to look more into the following supplemental cases if they wish. Each supplemental case includes criteria, mission, and a summary of the organization or municipality. They also include contact information for follow up.

**Mill City Grows**

978-656-1678
Lowell, MA

**Criteria:** Environmental Justice | Food Production Model

**Mission:** Mill City Grows fosters food justice by improving physical health, economic independence, and environmental sustainability in Lowell through increased access to land, locally-grown food and education

**Summary**

Located in a challenged urban community in Massachusetts, Mill City Grows is a non-profit operating in the same political environment as the Dudley Real Food Hub partners. Mill City Grows mainly focuses on food production that improves food access, building garden beds, community gardens, and an urban farm located in Lowell. This organization is very new—it was created in 2012, and has grown tremendously in the past two years. Initial growth came out of a community-initiated desire to add a garden to a local park to make it safer, though it is unclear to what extent the community was involved in the design and creation of that initial garden, or subsequent initiatives.

**Sources**


Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative

Criteria: Youth Engagement | Community Economic Development | Local Food Production Model

Mission: to make our region a place where every day, all people have access to healthy, locally grown foods and abundant opportunities for physical activity in the places where we live, learn, work and play.

Summary

The rural Northeastern Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative is considered the exemplar of the original Kellogg Food and Fitness grant recipients. The Northeast Iowa FFI focuses in particular on school food and fitness policy and youth engagement in schools, and has created community gardens at several sites. The FFI has also empowered community members to lead some projects in their school districts. The FFI claims to have added seventy new jobs to the region and has impacted the area through over $4 million from the Kellogg Foundation, other grant sources, and food sales.

Community engagement has been important since the beginning of the Northeastern Iowa FFI, and first took the form of a Vision Work Group which joined together community members in a leadership structure. This changed to a Regional Leadership Council as the organization aged, with an emphasis on gaining members from vulnerable populations.

The FFI has recently developed a food hub for Northeastern Iowa. In 2012, it convened stakeholders to begin the process of developing a strategic plan for a food hub. Today, the FFI employs an Iowa State University Extension specialist devoted to developing the food hub. In its current form, the food hub aggregates food (not just produce) from local farmers, boxes it into shares, and delivers it to area employees at large institutions and businesses.

Sources


Phat Beets Produce
info@phatbeetsproduce.org
Oakland, CA

Criteria: Racial and Environmental Justice | Youth Engagement | Community Economic Development

Mission: Phat Beets Produce aims to create a healthier, more equitable food system in North Oakland through providing affordable access to fresh produce, facilitating youth leadership in health and nutrition education, and connecting small farmers to urban communities via the creation of farm stands, farmers’ markets, and urban youth market gardens.

Summary

Phat Beets is a community based organization run entirely by volunteers. While it has not undergone a community planning process, it has made remarkable progress since it was founded. Phat Beets runs two farmers markets and several community gardens and organizes a CSA that draws from local farmers, with an emphasis on farmers of color. It operates a Healthy Hearts Garden, which serves as the site for work with youth who are at risk for diabetes. A kitchen incubator program was launched to help low-income people set up healthy food businesses, though it has been embroiled in conflict with a landlord the organization sees as a gentrifier. Nonetheless, in 2014, Phat Beets plans to start a youth pickle business. Beyond programming, Phat Beets participates in community organizing work and belongs to numerous councils, such as the Economic Development without Displacement Coalition. Phat Beets considers its food work holistically—for example, it has published a position on gentrification, which includes a declaration to resist that process.

Sources


Red Tomato
508-316-3494
info@redtomato.org
Plainville, MA

Criteria: Community economic development | Local food production model

Mission: connecting farmers and consumers through marketing, trade, and education, and through a passionate belief that a family-farm, locally-based, ecological, fair trade food system is the way to a better tomato.

Summary

Red tomato is a non-profit business which fits under the USDA’s defined model of a food hub. While Red Tomato does not own a warehouse or trucking fleet, it acts as a wholesaler by coordinating produce from a semi-local area, and connecting it with local delivery partners who bring the produce to 200 businesses in the Northeast. In addition to facilitating this network, Red Tomato markets and packages their produce around the region. The organization is a previous recipient of a Kellogg Grant, and has been successful in funding itself through other grants and income; it has an annual revenue of more than $3 million.

Red Tomato’s values and business model spring from fair trade standards. It takes economic justice into account by dealing with small farmers and working with them to set fair prices, but does not specifically seek out farmers of color or from low-income backgrounds. However, it has worked in this arena in the past. In 2008, Red Tomato partnered with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Georgia, an organization formed by African-Americans to keep southern black farmers in business.

Sources


St. Mary’s Nutrition Center of Maine
207-513-3848
nutritioncenter@stmarysmaine.com
Lewiston, ME

Criteria: Racial and Environmental Justice | Youth Engagement | Community Planning Methodology | Local Food Production Model

Mission: to build a viable food system, while supporting local leaders, strengthening community ties, and engaging youth as agents of change.

Summary

The St. Mary’s Nutrition Center serves as a focus of food justice activity in a low-income Maine city. In recent years, the Nutrition Center has adapted to a changing population, as Somali/Somali Bantu and other East African refugees and immigrants arrived. There are three initiatives at the Center: an urban gardening program, a nutrition education program, and a food pantry. Some, though not all, programs successfully involve community leadership, such as a nutrition series aimed at Somali women, and designed and implemented by Somali women.

Recently, the Nutrition Center has started moving toward advocacy-based work as well. The crux of the organization is its youth program, which guides youth through leadership development, empowerment, and lessons in gardening and nutrition. Some youth are now part of the Youth Campaign Crew, envisioning a better school food environment and working to make it happen.

The Nutrition Center was also an integral part in founding the Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn, which recently released a Lewiston Community Food Assessment. Local students and Community Action Researchers worked together to assess the food system landscape, with an eye toward food security. The researchers used surveys, focus groups, mapping, and interviews to collect information.

Sources


Criteria: Racial/Environmental Justice | Grassroots Leadership | Planning Methodology

Mission: The TFPC connects diverse people from the food, farming and community sector to develop innovative policies and projects that support a health-focused food system, and provides a forum for action across the food system.

Summary

Although the Dudley Real Food Hub will likely not involve substantial municipal involvement, lessons may still be learned by municipalities that have at least partially embraced food justice work, particularly since cities are often the main actors creating and implementing food planning processes. Toronto represents a municipality that has not only shown dedication to improving the food system, but has done so in a way that engages residents. As a subcommittee of the Board of Health, the Toronto Food Policy Council is one of the only food policy councils that has influence and power. Most councils serve as advisory boards and have limited decision-making authority. Community based organizations were the driving force behind the creation of the council, as they worked for several years to get food on the city’s agenda. The resulting council includes community activists, gardeners, farmers, planners, city councilors, and more, and has included social justice issues as critical right from the start. The council produced a Food Charter, was successful in incorporating food into the Official Plan, and contributed to the Toronto Food Strategy. While the council could do more to fully empower citizens, it has worked with community groups to identify and address food justice issues in Toronto neighborhoods, and has then leveraged city resources to address those issues.

Sources


The case studies demonstrate the wide range of work happening across the United States to advance a more just and sustainable food system in low-income communities of color. The reflections and lessons below are meant offer an assessment of some of the emerging practices within this trend of food systems work, as well as some successful practices and common challenges.

- **Participatory research and engagement methods:** Part of what distinguishes community food planning from other forms of community planning is its frequent use of participatory qualitative research methods for data collection, assessment, interpretation, and evaluation. Several of the cases studied model innovative participatory research and engagement methods that DRFH can draw upon in designing its democratic planning process. Additionally, several of the cases relied on informal community engagement methods such as community potlucks, festivals, and block parties in addition to formal community meetings and research, which could also be a useful approach in Dudley.

- **Importance of youth leadership and engagement:** Nearly all of the cases placed a high value on youth engagement and leadership in food planning and food systems change. Given the strong youth programs at DSNI, ACE, and The Food Project, the DRFH has much to draw upon in engaging youth in food planning. Given the large youth population in Dudley as well as DSNI’s Dudley Village Campus vision, the food planning will be an important vehicle through which to deepen youth leadership and open up democratic space for a future vision for Dudley’s food economy.

- **Food as a vehicle for community development:** Many of these organizations use food system interventions to advance broader goals such as public safety, cultural preservation, transportation, or community economic development. In addition to indentifying food needs, the DRFH can use the community food planning process as an opportunity engage residents around broader questions of social justice and community development.

- **The importance of cross-sector collaboration:** Given the breadth of sectors and institutions that shape local food systems and economies, developing strategic partnerships across these sectors is important. Local food systems change requires collaboration amongst public health, economic development, land use authorities, as well as institutional purchasers and the privately owned actors within the food system itself. Identifying and engaging these partners can help to advance the specific programmatic work of the DRFH, and can also help to create a framework for how food efforts fit within a broader community development and social justice agenda.

- **Use of both outside ‘expert’ and community knowledge:** Many of these cases highlighted the importance of using both grassroots and technical expertise to conduct community food planning and to implement food systems change. DSNI and ACE have long histories of combining community-based research methods with academic and technical ‘expertise’, and should build off the lessons and experiences from these approaches in the food planning work.
• Building on existing community knowledge: As community-based organizations, ACE and DSNI know that community residents already have many of the skills needed to effect change. For food work as well, much of the necessary technical expertise is already within community. Engaging in knowledge sharing among residents who have a background in agriculture, community health, or even local economic development will not only provide insight into the resources that already exist within Dudley, but also help strengthen community bonds. Furthermore, educating the community about all components of a just and sustainable food system, from healthy eating to food business development, will make sure that the benefits of the DRFH will stay ingrained within the community for the long-term.

• Building upon existing community assets: Many of the cases highlighted the utility of using existing community resources, events and programs to conduct food planning activities, rather than creating independent forums. Additionally, implementation of food activities can be more effective when tied to existing community institutions, activities, and programs.

• Planning and implementation can and should occur simultaneously: Implementation of short-term goals can help build momentum during the food planning process, and can help engage residents in implementation from the beginning. DSNI can build off its early history of anti-dumping actions as it awaited the larger eminent domain victory and conduct food planning in a similar way. The actions that the DRFH organizations are doing together currently and subsequent similar ones can be framed as part of the Dudley food planning.

• Engagement in the local policy arena: Several of these organizations had success in engaging in food security and policy councils, as well as city-wide land use planning arenas. Food and land policy arenas can bolster grassroots efforts and minimize political barriers to local food systems change.

These cases represent just a small sample of the incredible food justice work happening across the country, and an even smaller profile of the lessons that these organizations have learned. The DRFH is a unique entity in a unique context, and the partners and residents will ultimately be the ones to best determine how, if at all, these approaches will inform the DRFH’s and its planning process.
Chapter 4
Planning Process Proposal
The Planning Process Proposal serves to illustrate what a DRFH planning process could look like based on the Dudley context, the partners’ work, values, and expertise, and lessons learned from the case studies. Some suggestions may resonate more with the partners than others; they are meant as guidance for how a community food planning process could unfold, and can be adopted singly or together. The proposal consists of five phases: Process Design, Defining the Problem, Visioning, Creating the Community Action Plan, and Implementation. Although the phases are presented mostly linearly, they can happen concurrently and feed off of each other. The proposal is meant to add up to a process that allows the Dudley community to determine what needs to change in their food system, how it needs to change, and what a healthy and just food system could look like.

**Phase I: Process Design**

The objective of the process design phase is to articulate the purpose and goals of the planning and to define the leadership structure that will carry it out. While the goals and structure will change and evolve throughout the process, defining them at this stage is meant to provide a guiding framework to orient the rest of the planning.

This section includes suggestions for some of the baseline goals of the DRFH, based on an assessment of the historical moment in Boston as well as interviews with the partners. Additional guiding questions are provided to help advance a common vision for the DRFH, along with some ideas for conducting a stakeholder analysis and forming a committee to guide the planning process.

*The Political Moment in Boston*

The City of Boston is undergoing significant political and socioeconomic change. With over 53 percent people of color, Boston is for the first time in its history a ‘majority minority’ city. Boston is also experiencing increasing rates of economic inequality, with its richest households having an income at least 15 times that of the poorest twenty percent. Its history of racial segregation continues to shape the city, which according to the 2010 census, is one of the highest ranking in the United States for residential segregation. Additionally, studies have found Boston to be the most rapidly gentrifying city in the country, with over a quarter of all Boston residents currently living in what were once low-income neighborhoods that have since undergone the demographic changes associated with gentrification.

Boston is under new mayoral leadership for the first time in over twenty years. After a dynamic primary race with six candidates of color, a progressive slate of most of these former candidates helped to elect Mayor Martin Walsh on a platform that emphasized greater economic quality for this ‘majority minority’ city, and more equitable, transparent, and neighborhood-based approaches to economic development. Among the primary mayoral candidates was DSNI’s former executive director John Barros, who has now been appointed by Walsh as Boston’s Chief of Economic Development. Walsh framed Barros’ appointment as part of his vision for a more “inclusive City Hall” that would promote economic development not just downtown and in the Seaport district, but in the neighborhoods.
At DSNI’s DSNI@30 event this spring, John Barros and longtime activist Mel King shared their reflections on this moment in Boston as a window of opportunity for grassroots community economic development. With the Boston Redevelopment Authority reform and neighborhood-based economic development at the center of Walsh’s agenda, the moment is ripe for connecting local community development initiatives to a larger vision for social justice in Boston. The Dudley Real Food Hub and DSNI’s leadership in community food planning can be a part of this picture, offering a community vision for grassroots development that meets the needs of existing residents and enhances community wealth.

Defining Goals Planning and Implementation

In interviews with ACE, DSNI, and TFP, the partners articulated the goals of the Dudley Real Food Hub and the community food planning process. While all the partners are committed to working with Dudley residents to define these goals, the organizations also bring their own visions and strategic orientations to this process. Evaluating areas of alignment and difference offers a useful starting point for a deeper discussion of the collective goals of the Dudley Real Food Hub.

1. Goals of the Dudley Community Food Planning Process

Building community leadership

For DSNI, ACE, and TFP, the community food planning process is an important avenue for grounding the organizations’ work in the neighborhood within a vision explicitly set by Dudley residents. Although each organization has a different relationship to the neighborhood, the planning represents an important process for organizational accountability.

Although DSNI is experienced in community planning, community food planning is a relatively new territory for the organization. Current establishments like the Dudley greenhouse and other activities related to the food hub are part of DSNI’s vision of local sustainable economic vitality, and the food planning process will steer DSNI’s efforts to align with community needs.

For TFP, the community food planning process is key to guiding the organization’s work in Dudley, and will inform the organization’s broader strategic plan. This process is important to establish TFP’s accountability to its community stakeholders, helping to root the organization’s work and resources within a resident-driven vision and framework, rather than as a ‘service’ offered to residents.

ACE’s activities are grounded in environmental justice and not entirely place-based; therefore the leadership of DSNI in this project is critical. As a state-wide environmental justice organization, ACE’s participation in community food planning process and its subsequent implementation can drive political activism in food policy, especially among youth.

2. Goals of the Dudley Real Food Hub

Building a catalyst for food justice and community power

All three organizations see the food hub as a catalyst for shared activity in the Dudley neighborhood to advance food justice and build community power.
For DSNI, the food hub is physically rooted by the Dudley greenhouse. The greenhouse increases awareness of community resources, provides an avenue for residents to gather and share knowledge on healthy food choices and agricultural skills, nurture a connection to their land, and improve access to healthful foods.

TFP sees the greenhouse as a community food action generator, rather than the conventional definition of a food hub, which serves as an aggregator of regional food production and distribution. TFP’s vision for the greenhouse is to be both enterprise and community hub: a job generator and self-sustaining entity. TFP is facilitating a number of food-related activities, and the greenhouse serves as a catalyst for these activities.

For ACE, the Dudley Real Food Hub Food is not a physical institution, but a network for organizations to convene and build relationships and share knowledge and resources to advance the goal of local food justice. The youth-led REEP at ACE will play a long-term role in empowering youth to implement and advocate for the food hub.

Deepening Collaboration and Partnership

All three organizations see value in their collaboration; specifically in supporting a resident-driven just and sustainable food system.

DSNI envisions the food hub to exist physically and in principle. A long-term, coordinated collaboration of the partners can lead to a successful Dudley Real Food Hub that bolsters the local economy by generating jobs and providing opportunities for entrepreneurship in the food industry. The hub will also improve residents’ access to local, healthy, affordable food and businesses through the use of technology and participatory planning tools.

ACE has a strong vision for food sovereignty and community ownership. They believe growing food is a right and residents should be able to do so in their neighborhood, especially on abundant vacant, underutilized land. Although they believe home gardens will not improve the nutrition of residents, having control over one’s diet has an empowering effect that can potentially serve as a foothold for engagement.

TFP emphasizes better food options and access. Increasing local food production may boost economic activity, but its ability to generate good jobs or real profit may not be realistic. A viable and sustainable economic model is needed for the Dudley Real Food Hub; for example, food can potentially be used “an alternative currency.”

Further Questions

Given some of the differences above, some questions that may be helpful for the DRFH partners to convene on are:

1. What could a community food economy look like in Dudley? How could the food hub become a vehicle for advancing the local economy?

2. What is our collective vision for how the Dudley Real Food Hub could contribute to a strategy for local community economic development in this neighborhood? What broader policy and programmatic agendas does it need to be part of?
**Forming a Guiding Group**

In addition to articulating goals, a key part of the process design is determining the leadership structure that will advance the planning. Although DSNI is taking the lead on conducting the planning process, it will be important to clarify the roles of other organizational partners, including ACE and TFP, as well as other key stakeholders. Given the emphasis on resident and youth involvement within DSNI, ACE, and TFP, determination of the roles of youth and adult members of their organizations in this process will be critical.

Within the partners’ organizational structure, there already exists people who are ideally situated to be part of the guiding group (in addition to the individuals already involved). They include members of the Sustainable and Economic Development subcommittee of DSNI’s board, as well as youth that are involved with each of the three partners.

**Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis**

As part of the process design, the DRFH partners should conduct a formal stakeholder analysis. A stakeholder analysis can answer different levels of questions within the process design, for example:

1. Who are the key players within each sector of Dudley’s food economy?
2. Which food economy stakeholders will be necessary to partner with to drive the neighborhood interventions we hope to achieve?
3. Of these stakeholders, which do we want to engage in the core leadership and decision-making of the planning process, versus those that we want to engage on specific projects?

The Kellogg Food and Fitness program offers a collaborative partners tool to help facilitate organizational thinking on these questions. Below and on the next page is a sample of this tool, as well as an example of how HOPE Collaborative used it to identify core partners in their planning process and form a guiding group (steering committee) that reflected the goals of core initiatives.

**HOPE Collaborative Stakeholder Analysis**
Penn Loh and Glynn Lloyd’s recent article, “The Emerging Just and Sustainable Food Economy in Boston” may be helpful in facilitating an initial discussion of DRFH stakeholder analysis (see visual below). The article identifies key grassroots players in the food system in Roxbury and Dorchester, and outlines how these stakeholders could merge into a coordinated local food economy rather than operating as independent, siloed entities within the food economy.

On the following page is a suggestion of potential stakeholders that the Dudley Real Food Hub could engage during community food planning process and subsequent implementation. As relationships deepen among partners, organizations and institutions can potentially move closer to the core partners category. The graphic below gives more information regarding the structuring of these stakeholder relationships.

**Potential DRFH Stakeholders**

![Image of Boston Community Food Economy]


![Image of HOPE Collaborative Stakeholder Relationships]

Source: Hope Collaborative, adapted from University of Michigan evaluation for Kellogg Food and Fitness program.
### Core
- DSNI
- ACE
- The Food Project

### On-going
- City Growers
- City Fresh Foods
- City Growers
- Haley House
- Crop Circle Kitchen
- Food Ex
- Dorchester Food Coop
- CERO
- Boston Food and Fitness Collaborative

### Strategic
- Boston Public Health Commission
- City of Boston Mayor’s Office of Food Initiatives

### Targeted Potential Allies
- Boston Redevelopment Authority
- City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development
- Massachusetts Food Policy Council
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Boston Natural Areas Network
- Trust for Public Land
- Urban Farming Institute
- Local business owners

### Opportunities for Participation/Integration
- Developers
Phase II: Defining the Problem

The PVW partners already understand that the food system in the Dudley neighborhood is challenged on many levels. However, the community will need to define the specific problems that the Dudley Real Food Hub will address. While it is impossible to tell exactly how food system problems will be articulated, the community may decide to focus on some of the following categories of framing. These categories can be used to start the discussion about the food system.

1. **Health:** The health disparities in the Dudley community are disheartening, but also a site for community action. The ties between food systems, diet, and health are well known, and personally affect many residents in the neighborhood.

2. **Food access:** While there are many food businesses located in the Dudley neighborhood, they may not represent the kind of food that all residents would like to be able to purchase. Residents may identify healthy food access concerns in relation to home gardening or urban farming as well.

3. **Economic opportunities:** Residents may see the food system as a way to address unemployment and underemployment in the area. Food businesses already employ many people in the neighborhood, although they may or may not be “good jobs” as defined by residents. Issues of economic control may also come into play.

4. **Community land control:** Considering that DSNI and ACE are already focusing in this area with the community land trust and Grow or Die campaign, control over land in Dudley will likely be an issue of concern, particularly land for food production and food businesses.

Process: Community Food Assessment

Whatever the problem areas, the partners and community will need data in various forms to refine what the problems are, and to move on to next steps of visioning and problem-solving. Defining the problem is the first step in which community data gathering and analyzing is vital. In the case of food systems planning, this step is best framed as a community food assessment. In Dudley, a community food system assessment will depend heavily on engaged community members, including youth. The guiding group will likely have a major part in designing and managing a community food assessment.

Some general guiding questions to consider include:

- What do we know about the food system and what do we still need to know?
- What are the existing food assets and needs in our community?
- How can the community food assessment build community leadership and skills?

A Dudley community food assessment can involve several types of community meetings and engagement. The partners can choose some or all of the following processes to engage residents in an assessment.

1. **PVW 2013 workshops:** The Food Economy Experience workshop designed by the Practical Visionaries Workshop 2013 team is meant to tease out people’s individual relationships with the food economy, and to start to collect information and experiences. Additionally, the New Information workshop builds off of the first workshop. The exercises use maps and interactions to help residents think about the current state of the food economy.
2. **Storytelling and listening sessions:** Giving residents space to tell and hear stories relating to the food economy can be a powerful way to make food system problems (and strengths) more visible. Organizing a community meeting specifically aimed at sharing stories would be a way to collect qualitative data about how people currently relate to the food system. An open storytelling session could be combined with a slightly more formal listening session style (as practiced by the HOPE Collaborative), with residents responding to specific food-related questions.

3. **Youth data collection:** DSNI’s youth food team, ACE’s REEP youth, and TFP youth can play a large part in defining the problem and collecting and analyzing information. Teams of youth may look at the data already available and assess what may be missing. For example, one gap in the data that currently exists is the time it takes for residents to get to sources of food. Some other communities have powerful information about the time and effort people must expend to get to the grocery store. Youth could identify the various ways people use to get food and then follow those routes to collect data, such as time and number of bus transfers. Other examples include visiting corner stores to assess what is being sold and groundtruthing identified sites of food businesses to find out if they are still in operation.

4. **Community mapping:** Collecting and using mapped information can take a variety of forms. A meeting could look similar to the HOPE Collaborative’s community mapping sessions. Additionally, youth and other residents could collect their own mappable data and add to what the PVW team has included below in the tools section.

**Tools**

Several tools are already available to use in the suggested processes.

1. **PVW 2013 curriculum and FEET tool:** The team has already developed workshop curricula and the Food Engagement Economy Tool for specifically these purposes. These tools are readily accessible on the team’s website.

2. **Data visualizations:** The infographic in Appendix C visualizes Dudley socioeconomic, health, and food economy data in an engaging way. The infographic can be used at any of the above community meeting formats in order to start dialogue and inspire questions and stories. A Dudley food economy map is also included in Appendix D. This map layers various food business data together to visualize the Dudley/Newmarket food economy. This map can be used at community meetings in conjunction with the infographic.

3. **Static Boston Food Economy maps:** The PVW 2013 team compiled several food economy maps that are useful for comparing the Roxbury neighborhood with other areas of Boston. The maps are located on the 2013 team website, and visualize six different steps of the food system.

4. **Google Fusion:** In addition to the static Boston maps, the PVW 2013 team also created a dynamic web-based Google Fusion map that allows people to upload locations they have identified as part of the community food economy, found on the PVW 2013 website. Also included is a companion tutorial about how to use Google Fusion, an open source mapping application. Google Fusion is useful in creating new maps residents may identify as necessary.
A variety of data is available to make maps with. The data sources include:

**Boston Data Sets**, data.cityofboston.gov. The City of Boston open access data portal has a large number of datasets on demographics, infrastructure, and city initiatives. The city also provides a tool to visualize tabular data sets in map form, and can combine several data sets into one layer to provide comparison visualizations.

**Mayor’s Office of Food Initiatives Maps and Data**, www.cityofboston.gov/food/data.asp. Drawing from the City of Boston data, the Office of Food Initiatives provides links for easy access to food-related data, specifically farmers markets, corner stores and farmers markets with healthy food, and community food production spaces. Both tabular and map data are available.

The maps below were created using City of Boston/Office of Food Initiatives data spreadsheets and the Google Fusion tool.

**ReferenceUSA**: ReferenceUSA is a subscription database with detailed information about local businesses. A highly useful draw tool can be used to define the borders of the area for which data is found. Business data for the Dudley neighborhood as well as the Newmarket area was selected and downloaded into spreadsheets by business type, which will be made available to the partners. Each spreadsheet contains the name of each business, the business owner, the owner’s gender and ethnicity, the number of employees, the approximate earnings, and the location (address as well as latitude and longitude).
The two maps below are examples of visualizations of spreadsheets generated with ReferenceUSA.

5. **Shareabouts app:** The Shareabouts app collects public data through community mapping. Users can drop pins on a map, wherever they are, to identify sites of the community food economy in action, or other relevant data. Youth could be instrumental in both using and promoting this app in order to collect community knowledge.

**Phase III: Visioning**

Community visioning is a part of the participatory process that will engage Dudley residents in developing a consensus on community goals and what is necessary to achieve them. A primary product of the community visioning process can be a vision statement that provides a holistic and strategic framework to guide the long-term implementation process and unite the community. The vision statement is typically drafted through a collaborative process that involves a wide range of local residents and stakeholders (identified in Phase I) that have considerable investment in the community. Visioning will additionally involve imagining potential solutions that will bridge the gap between problems and community goals.

As in DSNI’s other community planning processes, outreach throughout this phase should involve as many residents as possible to obtain meaningful input from residents of various ages, ethnic backgrounds, genders, socioeconomic statuses, and occupations. The DRFH partners can leverage their shared organizational values and mission statements to initiate the community visioning process, also identified in Phase I.

Community visioning can be initially conducted with a high-level perspective, but smaller citizen visioning activities can be conducted throughout the planning process to produce issue-specific goals.
Using data collected in the community food assessment in Phase II, stakeholders might convene around targeted issues by establishing working groups that are most relevant to their expertise.

Key questions that can be used to guide the Dudley community vision process:

- What do we want the Dudley community food system to look like?
- What are the current contributions and barriers to this vision?
- What are the necessary steps to achieve this vision?

**Techniques and Tools**

Parts of the process and many of the proposed tools in Phase II, such as listening sessions, can also be used in the visioning process to inform participants and spark conversation on identified issues. Conversations about defining food system problems often naturally transition to talking about visions of alternatives, as well as solutions.

Other commonly used community visioning tools include:

1. **Charrettes and Community Workshops**: Derived from the French word for “wagon”, charrette comes from the practice of architecture students in the early 1800s who used carts to rush their drawings from one place to another to get final approvals. In the spirit of visioning quickly yet effectively, the DRFH partners could use a focused charrette to create a short, intensive brainstorming session that allows maximum participation without compromising the quality of the process. Small groups could brainstorm visions for a better Dudley food system, and then share back to the larger reconvened group to reach consensus. Alternatively, the DRFH partners could run community workshops with the same questions. Community workshops are very similar to charrettes, but often have a broader focus and can be run as a series over a longer period of time.

2. **SWOT analysis**: A SWOT analysis can be used to assess the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to the Dudley food system. As part of SWOT analysis, participants could collect the skills and knowledge they and their neighbors already have when it comes to the food system. Dudley undoubtedly has a wealth of food system-related skills, such as cooking (informally or professionally), gardening, construction, and health and fitness. Asking residents to collect these strengths—perhaps combining them on a large visual—can assist the DRFH partners in concretizing actual, rather than perceived, strengths and weaknesses. The guiding group and participants can match strengths with opportunities to identify competitive advantages. Similarly, a community meeting could include collecting a list of skills residents would like to have, which could allow participants to think about converting threats or weaknesses into strengths and opportunities. These practices may even give rise to immediate implementation steps to advance the food hub.
1. The New Oregon Model: Local communities in Oregon have been engaged in local community visioning processes to generate values and goals that complement state-mandated plans. The Oregon Model is a linear model that consists of five steps. Each step focuses on a driving question to produce specific results and promotes implementation by developing indicators to measure success. More information on the Oregon Model can be found in Appendix E.

2. Focus groups: Similar to public forums and listening sessions, focus groups are smaller and held in more intimate settings. The guiding group could choose to hold focus groups that target specific community members, such as youth or ethnic groups, to find out if those groups have shared needs or visions for the food system. Open-ended questions are often encouraged at focus groups, such as the ones included at the beginning of this phase.

3. Gamification (solving problems using game techniques): Community PlanIt is an online platform developed by Emerson College’s Engagement Game Lab that “gamifies” the planning process to render it more approachable to youth. DSNI has already implemented Community PlanIt; the DRFH partners can continue to use this tool to engage their youth. Successful community visioning processes using this tool have been devised by City of Salem’s Point Neighborhood and City of Quincy’s North Quincy and Wollaston Vision Plans to maximize youth involvement. The tool was customized to issue challenges that encourage participants to physically explore their neighborhood and provide meaningful input in exchange for points, virtual tokens, or badges.
4. **Social media and other interactive online tools**: Community visioning for the Dudley Real Food Hub should be an ongoing process that involves gathering community input over the course of many years, even after implementation begins, although it may be less active and directed. Several online tools are readily available to collect or crowdsourcing qualitative and quantitative data over a period of time. Besides the Shareabouts app and mapping tools covered in Phase I, the DRFH could use:

* **MindMixer**: A “virtual town hall” that can be used to distribute polls, surveys, and create forums for public input. Over 400 communities throughout the U.S. have utilized MindMixer to engage residents for master planning and community visioning processes.

* **Plan In A Box**: A web tool that lets users easily create a website to manage communication and public input. Food-related events can be publicized online with little effort. This tool also converts the website into a poster or flyer at the click of a button.

Lessons learned from case studies reveal that informal techniques can also be used to gather information from the community, sometimes with more success than formal approaches. These techniques provide a more relaxed and comfortable setting that encourages meaningful discussion, especially on a personal subject like food. Formal data-gathering such as surveys can be incorporated into informal activities to remove access barriers. Long-term or regular planning of food-centric events also builds trust between community organizations and local residents. The partners already conduct many of these informal gatherings, but could continue to do so with an eye for collecting information about food system visioning.

- **Community potlucks**: Bringing community members together to share food and generate informal but meaningful conversation around food.
- **Neighborhood block parties**: Building relationships with community members.
- **Food festivals**: Promote local food culture and sense of pride.
- **Neighborhood tours**: Educate community members about their neighborhood’s assets and resources.

**Phase IV: Creating the Community Action Plan**

The preceding steps have set the stage for a comprehensive and practical plan to take shape. Setting up the process design, defining the problem, and engaging in visioning will give the DRFH Partners the tools necessary to develop a plan that is responsive to community needs and the unique Dudley context. Following these essential steps, there are three key pieces of information that will help inform the DRFH Community Action Plan, a product summarizing the problem defining and visioning, and setting up implementation steps:

**Supplemental Information**

Best practices and lessons learned from select case studies of organizations conducting community food planning are offered to the DRFH partners as a part of this document. A synthesis of best practices of these selected case studies can be utilized to inform the DRFH Plan. Additionally, DRFH Partners should draw upon their previous experiences with other plans or community-based, food-related proj-
ects to effectively create the most relevant, comprehensive, and dynamic plan for the Dudley Neighborhood.

Community Data

Community food assessments can identify and convert food related issues into actual activities for research. The HOPE Collaborative’s Blue Book model can interpret qualitative data into actionable steps (see Appendix C). The Blue Book model allows participants to work individually or in groups to describe what story the data is telling in their own words. Additionally, the Blue Book model asks participants to describe what potential solutions to such problems would look like. This not only gives community members a voice in the planning process, but also helps give the data some meaning. Seeing where the stories that community members share overlap will help identify potential focal points for the plan as well.

A sizeable amount of data will also be acquired from other community engagement activities noted in Phase III: Visioning. Synthesis and analysis of collected quantitative and qualitative data can identify recurring themes and trends that can lead to the development of a set of recommendations and strategies that corresponds to each of the four issue frames in Phase II: Defining the Problem or the vision statement developed in Phase III.

Community Input

Given the sizeable amount of community feedback that will have been collected, the partners should take the opportunity to evaluate this information, and consider feasible action steps that are within the scope of their capacity.

Following these discussions, the partners can begin drafting the initial components of the DRFH Plan. The partners should consider developing a methodology to assess collected input and prioritize goals. Additionally, a retrospective review of the goals determined at the beginning of the planning process can provide a valuable perspective of whether or not the plan is an accurate reflection of initial visioning.

Once a draft of the plan is complete, a public comment period should be implemented so all stakeholders can review and provide feedback on the draft plan. This could be a time to introduce more informal meeting styles, such as potlucks or other food events. Following public review and comment, partners should reconvene and incorporate revisions to the plan to align with community vision. After final revisions are complete and a final draft of the plan is produced, the partners can proceed onto the formal stage of implementation.
Below are some guiding questions to help facilitate the creation of the DRFH Plan:

- What format will the Dudley Real Food Hub Plan take?
- Who will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the plan?
- What roles will the each of the actors part of the steering committee assume?
- How will the final draft of the plan be presented to the community for feedback?
- How will the specific issues that the community indicated be addressed in the DRFH Plan?

**Phase V: Implementation**

The complete plan will be used as a tool to guide and inform implementation. The partners can work with the community to determine where best to start, but one way to get the plan off the ground may be to start implementation in coordination with programs that are already happening in Dudley. For example, DSNI's Thrive in 5 initiative may be a good place to fit in some of the actionable steps of the Plan, as this initiative already has a strong health and community engagement component, and it is one with which the community is already very familiar.

While implementation will likely take place in small, incremental steps so that there is adequate time to assess the impacts of the plan and reevaluate as necessary, implementation can really happen throughout the planning process. Engaging in implementation before the plan becomes an official document shows commitment from the partner organizations to the DRFH, and also serves as a more active means of community engagement. For example, the partners are already engaging in implementation that could be interpreted as part of this larger DRFH process, such as the vacant lot takeovers and the building of raised bed gardens. Additionally, the results of these actions can also help better guide the partners in developing a plan that is best suited to community needs.

Regular evaluation is highly recommended throughout implementation. The process of self reflection and evaluation allows the implementation to address and adjust to challenges, unanticipated or not, and to provide opportunity to recognize successes. Maintaining a dynamic edge throughout implementation will be critical to overcoming unprecedented barriers and nurture relationships between steering committee members.

Below are some guidelines for what can be happening during each phase of the implementation process, in addition to actual programming:

**Short-term (present- 1 year)**

- Assess which programs currently exist that can be feasibly incorporated into the Plan
- Determine and delegate community members and community organizations to carry out components of the Plan, and identify the staff or funding resources for them to do so
- Engage with local food businesses to identify ways they can participate in the Dudley Real Food Hub initiative
- Continue both informal (potlucks, block parties) and formal (community meetings, focus groups) means of community engagement
Streamline and standardize data collection to correspond with goals and objectives laid out in the Plan

Build a constituency contacts database and organize according to skill, sector, etc.

Begin a branding initiative by developing a DRFH logo and informational flyers and brochures for distribution

Medium-term (1 year- 2 years)

- Research funding opportunities for future projects, and begin application process
- Collect and track data on active projects for evaluation.
- Perform self evaluation
- Regularly publicize progress to keep community engaged and interested, and foster civic pride
- Identify any unanticipated gaps and barriers and develop a plan to address them.

Long-term (2 years and beyond)

- Consider engaging in food systems change at the policy level; stakeholders can form a policy advocacy group
- Network with other food hubs in the region to share knowledge, resources, and to expand DRFH’s economical capacity beyond the Dudley neighborhood
- Continue to publicize data and progress of the Dudley Real Food Hub Plan

Ultimately, this plan can function as a dynamic document, changing as community needs evolve over time. For this reason, engaging in regular self-evaluation is emphasized in this planning process proposal. This, coupled with keeping the community thoroughly involved in all aspects of the planning process, will help ensure that the plan is as effective, comprehensive, and representative of local needs as possible. Ultimately, bringing together the DRFH partners’ technical expertise and organizing power and the community’s fundamental understanding of the way in which food issues manifest locally will lead to a successful plan. Maintaining flexibility during the implementation process will help ensure that the plan is serving and empowering the community to create a just and sustainable food system.
Chapter 5
Conclusion, References, & Appendices
Conclusion

Over the last four months, the Practical Visionaries 2014 Field Project team has synthesized literature, data, and practical examples of food planning processes and food initiatives across the country. The results situate the Dudley Real Food Hub planning process and implementation within a broader context of food justice and food planning.

What is clear is that the DRFH is a unique endeavor. Fortunately, the food hub and its guiding partners are not operating in a void, and can learn from what others have done. From the literature, the DRFH is part of an ongoing conversation about food justice, though it breaks the mold in terms of its conceptualization of what a food hub is as well as its commitment to meaningful community engagement at a neighborhood level. The case studies demonstrate that similar communities are struggling with the same food and health issues as Dudley, and have sought to create positive change in a variety of ways that are available to inform the DRFH process. Finally, the Planning Process Proposal—which draws from the literature, the data about the DRFH context, and the case studies—ties together what the team has learned about the partners and case study practices to offer background on what a community food planning process could look like.

Next Steps

This report is meant to inform a process that will begin in the summer of 2014. The most immediate next step is for the partners to evaluate the suggestions and tools contained in the report before that process begins, and choose which ideas should be adopted in part or in full. The PVW 2014 team hopes that the information gleaned from the literature, lessons learned in the case studies, and strategies devised in the Planning Process Proposal will strengthen what is sure to be an innovative and community engaged planning process. Deciding on an implementation strategy in regards to this report will tie together the research done by the PVW team and the process that is already taking shape.

Looking Ahead

This report is just one of the first steps of defining the Dudley Real Food Hub and making the food economy work for residents. Ultimately, Dudley residents will decide how to address the current condition of the food system, and will take an active part in driving the planning process and the initiatives that come out of it. Working together, DSNI, ACE, TFP, and other stakeholders and community members now have the opportunity to envision a new food landscape and to work toward putting that vision into practice. What that collective vision looks like has yet to take shape, but with the suggestions in this report, the experience of the partners, and the expertise and passion of residents, the Dudley food system and the people therein stand only to make their food system healthier, more just, and more reflective of what the community needs.
Appendices

Appendix A: Bibliography


Shaffer, Amanda, et. al. (2006). “Changing the Food Environment: Community Engagement Strategies and Place-Based Policy Tools that Address the Influence of Marketing.” Loyola of Los Angeles Law


Appendix B. HOPE Collaborative Community Mapping Sessions

The micro-zone assessment also included a two-stage community mapping process in each of the micro-zone areas.

The following is first-hand a description of the mapping process by HOPE Collaborative:

“At the beginning of the first mapping session, survey responses and listening session themes were shared with participants to establish a sense of what issues their neighbors had raised to date in the HOPE Collaborative micro-zone assessment process. Participants were then asked whether they agreed, and if they felt that anything significant was missing from the data generated during the surveys and listening session.

Participants were divided into small groups to work with the maps of the micro-zone area created during the visual inventory. Depending on meeting attendance, group size ranged from 4 to 10. Each group was given an urban design toolkit which included paper cut-out symbols for a range of structures and programs, including street trees, gardens, improved intersections, transit routes, policing programs and more. The design toolkit was created based on themes that arose during listening sessions and during conversations with community residents. In addition to the toolkit, participants were given blank sheets of paper, markers, pens, glue sticks and scissors, and were asked to draw, write, or stick symbols on the map. The two questions that participants were asked to answer were, “What would make it easier for you to eat well in your neighborhood?” and “What would make it easier for you to be more active in your neighborhood?

“Each group had 25-30 minutes to work together on designing their map. Each group was asked to choose a recorder who would ensure that all ideas were captured somehow, and a speaker who would represent the group. At the end of the small group breakout, each group’s speaker was given 5-7 minutes to share what their group had identified as needed changes in the neighborhood. These presentations were recorded digitally, using a voice recorder and, in most cases, a video camera.

“At the second mapping session in each micro-zone, the maps were brought back to the group for viewing, and the group was again split into smaller teams to work on prioritizing the issues raised. Participants were asked to identify which of these changes should be emphasized as short-term goals and as long-term goals, and to identify who might be some strategic allies to work with to achieve these goals.”
Appendix C. Data Interpretation: Blue Book Exercise

The solutions raised by groups in each of the micro-zone areas were clustered into themes, and separated according to the micro-zone at which that idea arose. The data was organized based on the frequency of how often certain ideas and solutions were generated by residents across the micro-zones in both the listening sessions and mapping sessions.

For HOPE Collaborative, a Blue Book Exercise was used as the core method for participatory data interpretation and as the primary engine for generating conclusions from the micro-zone assessment, and making recommendations for the Community Action Plan.

Here is a snapshot of what this exercise looked like:

1) What story is the data telling? In this story, what have people living in the flatlands identified as problems and issues relevant to food access, to accessing safe and attractive environments for active living, and to local, sustainable economic development? What have people told us they want in their neighborhoods and in Oakland relative to these three areas?

2) Please develop a written statement to achieve the following outcome: Increased access to fresh, healthy, affordable, local food so that 30% of food consumed by flatland residents comes from these sources, linked to increased opportunities for safe physical activity and play, and linked to local neighborhood wealth formation and ownership of assets. The HOPE Collaborative will work together over the next several years to implement and support a system of practices, policies and advocacy that produces the desired outcome for the food and fitness project.

In writing your statement, please use the story from question 1, your own wisdom, and other references to describe what practices (see Toolbox) the HOPE Collaborative should use to achieve this outcome.

To complete this assignment, people can work individually or in any grouping that they choose, through the action teams, through neighborhood affiliations, through organizational affiliations, etc.

Please return your blue book to the HOPE Collaborative office at an Action-Team meeting designated for this purpose. Then in the Action Teams, we will discuss practices and identify recommendations from each Action Team. The Collaborative will then discuss these recommendations to decide on the top-ranked practices to be included in the CAP. The Collaborative will then identify the policies, partnerships, and resources necessary to implement these practices.
Appendix D. Visual Tools for Dudley Real Food Hub Community Engagement

Dudley Village Campus

Who Are We?

Race

Poverty

The Dudley Food Economy

Location

Employee Size

Annual Sales Volume

Legend

Production

Processing

Retail & Service

Restaurant

Waste

State of Health

DVC

27%

Obesity

21%

DVC

11%

Diabetes

6%

DVC

15

Heart Disease Hospitalizations (per 1000 residents)

11

Sources:

3. Reference USA

Legend

White

Asian

Latino

Others
Appendix E. The New Oregon Model for Community Visioning

The New Oregon Model: Envision → Plan → Achieve

Steven Ames
Steven Ames Planning
USA

Many of today's community visioning projects can trace their work back to futurist Alvin Toffler and his concept of "anticipatory democracy" – the notion that governance can evolve and adapt to change whilst engaging citizens in the process. In practice, anticipatory democracy blends elements of futures research, long-range planning, grassroots public participation, and, ideally, a healthy measure of creativity.

As an adjunct to traditional community planning, visioning promotes greater awareness of societal change and deeper citizen involvement. It can also provide communities with a stronger sense of control over their destinies, bringing citizens together in a uniquely different context to consider their common future. And it explicitly encourages them to explore new ideas and possibilities.

Essentially, visioning is a planning process through which any community creates a shared vision for its future and begins to make that vision a reality. It provides an overlay for local plans, policies, and decisions, as well as a guide to concrete actions in the wider community.

In the English-speaking world, cities of all kinds from Blue Mountains, NSW to Bradford, U.K., Hamilton, Ontario to Hilo, Hawaii, have employed a wide range of visioning approaches and techniques. Based on two decades of working with many such processes, I have concluded that the most successful visioning efforts share five key characteristics.

1. They understand the whole community
   Visioning promotes a shared understanding of the whole of a community and the full range of issues shaping its future. It also tries to engage the entire community and key stakeholders in this conversation.

2. They reflect core community values
   Visioning seeks to identify a community's core values – the deeply held beliefs and ideals shared by its members. Such values inform the idealistic nature of the community's vision.

3. They address emerging trends and issues
   Visioning explores emerging trends driving the community's future and the strategic issues they signal. Addressing these trends promotes greater foresight, and adds rigor and realism to the community's vision.

4. They imagine a preferred future

Visioning produces a statement describing the community's preferred future. The vision statement represents the community's desired "destination" – a shared image of where it would like to be in the long-term future.

5. They promote local action

Visioning produces a strategic action plan. The action plan serves as the community's "road map", moving it closer to its vision in the near-term future.

My own visioning work is designed to create both a shared sense of direction and a framework for future community decisions and concrete goals and strategies for action. At the same time, there can be many secondary benefits that derive from the process, such as:

- enriching public involvement by expanding the terms and scope of civic engagement;
- fostering new leadership in citizens who have not been previously active in public life;
- promoting active partnerships among government, business, civic, and nonprofit organizations; and
- strengthening community cohesion and "social capital."

Additionally, there can be significant benefits for the function of planning itself. For example, strong consensus on community goals can provide an informed and supportive context for the development of other plans and policies. This, in turn, can facilitate and even streamline public involvement.

At the same time, visioning places new demands on planning. It stretches the traditional role of planners, calling upon new skills and competencies. It demands increased levels of dialogue and trust with the public. And it requires more effective cross-sector communication and collaboration.

The New Oregon Model

Oregon was one of the first places in the United States to pioneer the use of community-based visioning. In a state recognized for innovative local planning and growth management policies, visioning was seen as an overlay for local plans and a tool to help communities better manage complex change.

Based on successful local visioning projects, the Oregon Model (see Figure 1) represents a comprehensive approach to visioning framed by five simple questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where are we going?
3. Where do we want to be?
4. How do we get there?
5. Are we getting here?

Step One profiles the present community's current conditions and core values.

Step Two analyzes emerging trends and their probable impact on the community. Step Three creates the vision and Step Four develops an action plan. Finally, Step Five pro-
motes implementation and develops indicators to monitor and measure success in achieving the vision.

Visioning is designed to be iterative and ongoing. The action plan, having a much shorter horizon, requires more frequent updates, and monitoring provides an important feedback loop for updating the community’s vision and plan over time.

Figure 1. The new Oregon model.

**Community Visioning**

As a relatively new approach to planning, visioning can have a steep learning curve: it may employ non-traditional techniques such as environmental scanning or alternative scenarios; managing diverse stakeholder groups or alleviating public skepticism can prove daunting; and mid-process course corrections are typically necessary.

Fortunately, none of these challenges is insurmountable. Moreover, the ability of visioning to provide strategic input for perennial planning concerns like growth management, urban design, transportation, housing, community development, and sustainability justifies the investment. Indeed, planners increasingly use the outcomes of visioning to frame and legitimize other major planning initiatives.
Involving the Public in Visioning

True to visioning's roots in anticipatory democracy, public involvement is a critical element of this process. Engaging the public is essential in creating a shared vision and action plan, as well as in promoting their eventual achievement.

To some planners, such a dialogue seems increasingly difficult in today's society, given numerous urgent issues on the public agenda, shrinking local government budgets, citizens' busy lives, and the ever-present distractions of the media and pop culture. For these reasons, public outreach and strong "branding" of the process are critical to successful public involvement. The Internet and social networking are providing valuable new tools to accomplish these objectives.

Fortunately, for many people, there remains a fundamental appeal in talking about the future of their community. The reason is probably the abiding importance of "place." People relate to and care about where they live. It's one of the basic ways through which we continue to connect as human beings.

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