



## A VISION FOR FOOD POLICY IN CHICAGO

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The Vision for Food Policy in Chicago received a wealth of input through an open comment process. These recommendations are intended to shape the City of Chicago's policies for regulating, zoning, funding, and supporting a sustainable food system, including urban agriculture. Throughout the summer of 2011, the Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council (CFPAC) helped coordinate the evolution of the document. A list of groups and individuals who have given input is at the end of the document.

### **Vision for Food Policy in the City of Chicago:**

By 2021, the City of Chicago will have created a thriving, comprehensive, and just food system due to its forward thinking, commitment to a healthy and productive city, well-integrated food policies, and its partnerships across departments, agencies, non-profits, communities, and local businesses. A healthy food system will be a vital part of everyday life across Chicago and will contribute to the well-being of all residents. We envision that:

- Food access is improved across, social, racial, and economic backgrounds throughout Chicago's communities.
- Diets and health will improve as access to healthy food is now very diverse and affordable in locations such as, schools, grocers and corner stores, garden and farm stands, farmer's markets, local food pantries and kitchens, and mobile fresh food carts, bikes, trucks and buses.
- The food system will be more localized, which will provide for more access to walking and other arenas for exercise.
- Children will be effectively engaged in a healthy food system, which will increase awareness of the food system, improve nutrition, encourage interest in agriculture and plant sciences, and influence a new generation of growers and healthy food system advocates.
- Communities will have an increased quality of life and safety because of comprehensive food system projects taking over vacant and derelict properties and buildings.
- Entrepreneurs all over the city will create jobs by growing, preparing, and selling healthy food, re-using vacant space and land, while creating a new industry in Chicago.
- Communities will come together to decide how their areas should develop and grow.
- Comprehensive food policies will positively contribute to Chicago's environment by capturing and reusing storm water, reducing landfill waste by composting, reusing vacant land and buildings, lowering the heat island effect and providing natural areas for wildlife. Growing will be done responsibly with minimal-to-no harmful pesticides.
- Citizens will be well educated on healthy foods and agriculture.
- Chicago's food system will be sustainable environmentally, economically, socially, and culturally.

### **Priority Areas for Chicago's Comprehensive Food Policy Statement:**

Each of the areas below includes a description of the priority area and a list of policy recommendations for the City.

- **Food Access**
- **Community Development and Engagement**
- **Economic Development**
- **Creating Infrastructure**
- **Education**
- **Sustainable Environment**



## **FOOD ACCESS**

Many of Chicago's communities are without adequate access to nutritious and affordable food, which has led to a health crisis in which diet-related diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity have exploded in adults and youth, even in children under ten years of age. Increasing access to healthy food is a citywide priority, not only in "food desert" labeled areas. Comprehensive food policy can create access to sources of high-quality, fresh, nutritious, and affordable foods, and can also aid in reducing the travel time of food to market, and can increase the nutritional value of food crops.

### **Policy recommendations:**

#### Expand outlets for healthy food purchases in neighborhoods:

- Increase farmer's markets in areas needing more food access.
- Allow for sales from gardens and farms in residential areas- including home gardens, community gardens and commercial farms.
- Allow for cooperative sales of farmer-produced product with a certification process to ensure that the food was farmer produced.
- Advocate for a more diverse range of access to food in all communities, such as grocery stores, farmer's markets, co-op's, shared kitchens, food trucks, and farm stands.
- Streamline the process to get more mobile food markets (carts, bikes, trucks, buses, etc.) on the streets.
- Open LINK Card and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers access to all farmers markets both City and privately managed markets, and connect WIC coupon recipients to these markets. Also, expand the "double coupon" programs across Chicago.
  - Expand the locations where WIC coupons are distributed.
  - Allow LINK to be used for seedling and seed purchases.
  - State level legislation is currently in place to provide for more mobile LINK card access at markets.
  - Find or increase funding to provide for better access to Mobile LINK Card machines at Farmers Markets.
- Make sure stores that accept LINK cards stock fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Encourage Healthy Corner Store programs and provide incentives for installing fresh produce shelves. As in a CSA program, local farmers could sell grocery shares.
- Ensure that the City of Chicago Farmer's Market program has adequate staff and resources to support emerging markets in areas needing improved food access. The City's program should provide support for promotions and equipment as well. The City can help match new markets with farmers.
  - Should develop a farmer's market advisory council, which should be made up of farmer's market managers from private and public markets, farmers, neighborhood organizations, and representatives from the Mayor's Office of Special Events, and City departments such as, Housing and Economic Development, and Family Support Services.
  - Need to improve the current system in place for waiving permit fees for independently run farmer's markets (Currently, the markets must re-apply every year to get their fees waived).
- Look into funding for the placement of an individual (or group) to help manage, streamline, and oversee all markets.
- Fund the purchase of produce and healthy foods grown via urban agriculture so that they can be distributed to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other food distribution avenues for low-income families.
  - Effectively utilize surplus produce by encouraging donations to emergency food providers.
  - Encourage policies that establish and clarify the liabilities to the growers, and reduce barriers for donation, which allows urban agriculturists/farmer's markets to donate their yield.
- Develop a micro-loan, revolving grant, and/or mini-grant program to help start-up healthy food enterprises (including farm stand, mobile food vendors and farmer's markets).



#### Expand the production of fresh, healthy food across the City:

- Implement Chicago's new urban agriculture ordinance and advocate for new laws expanding access to and development of outdoor aquaponics, apiaries, and small livestock.
- Advocate for increased urban livestock, including the raising and production of goats, poultry, fish, honeybees, and other small livestock.
- Reduce barriers for urban grown food to be used in community institutions, allowing hospitals, schools, soup kitchens etc. to grow produce in on-site gardens that can be consumed on-site (i.e. served in their cafeterias). Establish regulations for on-site growing and serving that encourages consumer confidence, but does not burden institutions who wish to grow and serve their own produce.
- Offer incentives for food to be produced on rooftop gardens, including food for donation and emergency food providers.
- Advocate for more infrastructure for food storage, distribution, warehouse, and wholesale places in areas of the city that lack such infrastructure.
- Support the development of gardens and farms (including those that work with youth and teens) at schools, parks, public housing and other City and Sister agency owned and leased land and facilities.
- Develop co-op incubators (markets/grocers, producers, processors, buying clubs).
- Increase opportunities for lower-income families to gain access to nutritious foods. This will lead to an educational component in discussing cooking classes, which is part of the educational section.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT**

Within Chicago's neighborhoods, community gardens provide fresh produce, exercise, social capital development, and eyes and ears for safer streets. Commercial farms do all this while also adding jobs and economic opportunities. However, neighborhood and community development plans involving urban agriculture need to reflect the neighborhood context and scale. The City must actively engage local communities, policy makers, Aldermen, farmers, and gardeners when determining zoning, permitting and land use changes and needs more and better transparency in use of public space or government-owned properties.

#### **Policy recommendations:**

##### Engaging communities in the land use and development planning process:

- Require community buy-in when planning and approving transformative or large-scale urban agriculture food system project for projects in residential zones.
- Urban gardens and farms should be considered part of any community development activities.
- Food system projects should engage with all citizens of the local communities, including the youth, elderly, jobless, etc.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Urban agriculture provides a wide variety of economic opportunities for Chicago businesses and residents. A comprehensive food system can provide economic benefits from the micro to the City scale: it can provide supplemental income to part-time home businesses, jobs and social benefits to non-profit enterprises, and jobs and tons of food to large indoor and green house production. As comprehensive food policy ventures grow and multiply, they expand the local economy by helping to generate tax revenues, increase the value of surrounding areas, buying goods and services from other business, and attracting talent to the Chicago area. The City needs to recognize the economic potential of urban food production and support its expansion.



### **Policy recommendations:**

#### Support the development of enterprises related to urban agriculture and food enterprises:

- Allow for the sale of produce and value-added products on site at gardens and farms, including residential areas and home-based businesses.
- Publicize and engage in outreach efforts regarding resources available for urban agriculture such as, TIF funds, Open Space Impact Fees, Let's Move federal grants, Go for the Gold (USDA School Wellness Committees), IL grants, etc.
- Prepare workers for food service industry opportunities.
- To support the development and implementation of urban agriculture and food enterprises, provide a coordinated and streamlined permitting and licensing process in a manner that is easily accessible to the community, such as at resource fairs and community education classes. In addition, advocate for the city to create tax incentives for urban agriculture and sustainable food businesses.
- Develop a simple, straightforward, and transparent process for leasing City and sister agency- owned land for commercial projects.
- Engage local businesses in partnering with and supporting local urban agriculture and healthy food system projects.
- The City will develop and/or increase markets on city-owned or public land, and find funding to help coordinate the markets.

#### Support comprehensive food system and urban agriculture job training and placement programs:

- Efforts should be made to reuse red tape in bureaucratic processes. Workforce development programs can collaborate with non-profits, farms, and city colleges to train and prepare workers.
- Support and create job training programs that work with the formerly incarcerated, homeless, and other economically and/or socially disenfranchised citizens.

### **CREATING INFRASTRUCTURE**

By creating a farming industry within the city, Chicago can become a leader in food production. The cycle must include planting, growing, harvesting, storing, preserving, distributing, and the replenishment of soils through a viable compost system and seed sharing.

### **Policy recommendations:**

#### Provide opportunities for growing within the City of Chicago:

- Re-think open spaces and green spaces to include gardens.
- Advocate for the City to donate and lease land to non-profits for farming and gardening purposes.
- Create more community gardens, including those on park district land, and set a goal for creating a certain amount of community gardens within the foreseeable future.
- Increase the number of sites for urban farms through coordinated planning and development.
- Support the development of incubator and community kitchens, with incentives, loans, and community farming spaces.

#### Use vacant buildings to create vertical farms.

#### Support the use of rain barrels and cisterns to capture rain water.

#### Encourage the use and purchase of hoop houses as a low-cost extension of the growing season:

- Allow for hoop houses to cover large portions of community and commercial gardens and farms.



Create scientific and research based protocols for reuse of “brownfields” for urban agriculture:

- Have clear guidelines and policies in place that are scientifically sound and economically viable for producers to use. Protocols by the city should be designed using input from producers and community members.

Support the development of food processing sites (community and incubator kitchens) and food accessibility through preserving, storing and distribution of local city-grown crops.

Across City Departments, coordinate support for urban agriculture, grants, land use, regulations, incentives, licenses, inspections, etc.

- Create an agriculture model for the city.
- Create City staff positions focused on expanding urban agriculture in Chicago.
- Develop pilot projects to understand potential policy changes.
- Develop a forum for bartering and exchanges of materials and labor.

## **EDUCATION**

Kids and youth in Chicago are increasingly struggling with food-related health issues. Chicago Public Schools, Charter Schools, the Chicago Park District, and the City can provide support for healthier eating and lifestyles in their students and families. Gardens on school campuses are good starting place. Many studies show that students who grow produce in gardens are much more likely to consume it. The City and CPS should commit to increased nutrition education, improved school meals and snacks, and connecting families to community resources.

### **Policy recommendations:**

Develop gardening and nutrition education and curriculum for every school:

- All students should be granted the opportunity to learn how to cook.
  - Develop gardening, culinary, and nutrition education for all secondary schools.
- Professional development should be provided for teachers who use gardening as an effective teaching tool.
  - Wide-spectrum food education should be incorporated into school curriculums.
- Support urban agriculture and a healthy food system on school campuses by utilizing nutrition and compost programs, and by cultivating gardens, green houses, and rooftop gardens.
- Connect parents and students to healthy food resources through LINK/WIC, Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Food Care Program (CAFSP), cooking classes, nutrition education, garden plots, local fresh food vendors, and other programs.

Support education and job training pathways in urban agriculture for junior and high school students up through community college and university levels.

The City should actively promote and publicize efforts and programs related to food and food education.

Promote senior education/mentoring program that will help actively engage citizens of all ages in ways to garden and cook.

- Many seniors have vast life experience, especially in relation to gardening and cooking, and have beneficial knowledge that they can pass on to youth and other citizens.

Include healthy produce in school lunches including products from school gardens and other urban agriculture and healthy food system projects.

- Encourage policies that allow schools to use their garden-grown produce in school lunches.



Encourage the University of Illinois to continue offering Master Gardener training classes.

## **SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT**

A healthy and comprehensive food system can play a significant role in contributing to Chicago's environment. Composting to reuse organic waste cuts down on landfill costs and excess methane while generating fertility, products, and energy. Greenhouses can be located to use waste heat from buildings and campuses. Storm water can be captured and used to irrigate farms and gardens while reducing storm water in sewers.

### **Policy recommendations:**

The creation of a city-wide policy to compost organic waste:

- Initiate a city-wide composting program for both residential and commercial organic waste.
- Advocate for change in IL state law to allow compost systems in community gardens and commercial farms to accept vegetable and fruit food scraps.
- Actively encourage and support residents to compost.
- Support the development of using bio-waste for energy (methane gas, bio-diesel).
  - Encourage the practice of anaerobic digestion and advocate for a simplification of the permit process for placement of the digesters.

Locate urban agriculture on sites with waste heat for crop production in cold months:

- Institutions and large buildings have excess heat that can heat green houses and hoop houses on land and rooftops.

Smart water use, storm water management, and water re-use:

- Support and encourage projects to capture rainwater for irrigation in barrels and cisterns.
- Assist projects in design to maximize capture and re-use of rain water to help mitigate storm water run-off.
- Develop pilot projects and help influence state policy to separate and use grey water in landscaping and urban agriculture.

Reuse of vacant buildings and land into urban farms.

Establish city and community seed banks, giving growers access to locally grown, locally harvested seed.

Sustainable and organic practices must be encouraged at all levels.

- Encourage City attempts to procure sustainable products

Encourage urban agriculture projects to include natural areas to support local wildlife.

### **Participating groups and individuals:**

This document was crafted through an open process of meetings, workgroups, and on-line sharing of the draft. The Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council's associated seven (7) Neighborhood Food Policy Councils and other local urban agricultural supporters contributed input. Other participating groups include the Center for Elimination of Economic Disparities (CEED), Growing Power, Growing Home, Angelic Organics, the Glenwood Sunday Market, Neighborhood Nutrition Centers (NNC), University of Chicago, The Greater Chicago Food Depository, Cook County Farm Bureau, Chicagoland Green Collar Jobs Initiative, The Plant, The Experimental Station, and the Healthy Schools Campaign.