Building Resilient Local Food Economies in North Carolina through Small Agriculture & Food Entrepreneurship
RESILIENT LOCAL FOOD ECONOMIES

• What’s a local food economy?
• What’s happening with local food at the national and state level? Is local food really a trend we should consider in planning and development efforts?
• What motivates local food system development, and who’s involved?
• What are planning strategies that support food system development?
• What resources and tools are available to my region?
• What can I do if I want to get involved in local food economies at a local level?
North Carolina Growing Together is a five-year USDA-funded project aiming to strengthen and expand local and regional food supply chains and to model this work for other geographies in the U.S.

Born and raised in Western North Carolina, I received an MPA from UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Government and worked on a number of economic development & food systems projects across the East Coast.

I grew up on farms, owned a farm-to-table restaurant, ran a regional food policy council, and generally adore food in all its forms. Especially cheeses.

I currently live in the Triangle with my family, where I enjoy reading, traveling, and, of course, pulling for the Tarheels and the Green Bay Packers.

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Local food economies encompass everything that is associated with a local food system. This includes the entire food supply chain – from production to consumption – as well as affiliated businesses and structures.
So, what’s local?

USDA does not have a fixed definition of “local,” and NCGT considers “local” to be statewide. Localities and regions are encouraged to create definitions of local that account for regional geographic, demographic, and land influences. Custom definitions allow for effective place-based planning & development solutions.

*Data sources are provided on the final slide.*
$84 billion in Agriculture, Food, and Forestry Industries (July 2016)

Data provided by Mike Walden, Reynolds Distinguished Professor and Extension Economist, N.C. State University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

*Data sources are provided on the final slide.*
INTEGRATING PLANNING & FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Local food systems need the unique skills, capacities, and abilities of local and regional planners.

- Skills in spatial and data-based analysis
- A deep knowledge of the communities served
- Awareness of the connections between and across communities
- Partnerships at multiple decision-making levels
- Knowledge of community input & feasibility processes
- Access to technologies and innovations to simplify and engage at each step of the planning process

Food systems offer solutions to many significant social, cultural, and built environment issues that can help planners better meet the needs of their communities.

Food systems offer economic benefits that are place-based, specific to a region’s existing natural, built, and human resources.

Food system placemaking is on the leading edge of innovative, multi-disciplinary planning strategies & ideas.
Motivations & Impacts of Asset-Based Development of Local Food Systems

- Land use & land protection, particularly in conflict smart growth situations on the urban/suburban fringe and for place-based development
  - 1997: 4.8 million acres of farmland lost to development
  - 2012: 24.5 million acres of farmland lost to development
- Rural & urban partnerships: markets & values
- Farmer age gap & transition planning for farmland
  - Average age of North Carolina farmers: 59
  - Average age of US farmers: 55
- Emergency/crisis planning
  - Ensuring access to food is a critical risk management strategy in crisis situations
- Opportunities for rural youth (the “brain drain” problem)
- Health and wellness and increased social capital
- Food insecurity & food access
- Revitalization of downtowns, vacant land, and urban centers
- Economic development recruitment & expansion strategies
  - Economic impact of agriculture & food entrepreneurship
  - Get your “mojo” back!

PARTNERS

- Traditional partners (other local government staff, councils of government)
- Ag partners (Extension Service, NCDA)
- Nontraditional partners (public health, transportation & infrastructure, small business centers & workforce development)
- Community partners (food councils, nonprofits, faith-based groups)
- Higher education partners (universities and community colleges)
- Nonprofits & NGOs
- Social networks
PLANNING STRATEGIES FOR FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

**Zoning & Regulations**
- Ag-supportive zoning: setbacks, infrastructure
- Working with the bona fide farm exemption
- Community gardens, urban agriculture, and farmers’ markets

**Development Strategies**
- Conservation development
- Incentives for farmland conservation
- Farmland protection plans & programs

**Strategic & Long-Range Planning**
- Whole-systems approach to food & supply chains
- Infrastructure planning for supply chain expansion

**Economic Planning**
- Local food economies as a recruitment tool
- Local food economies as a creation, retention, and expansion tool
**FOOD SYSTEMS PLANNING PROCESS**

- **Assessment**
  - Data, GIS
  - Food System Assessments
  - Farmland inventory
  - EQUITY

- **Economics**
  - Local gov purchasing
  - Market analysis & support
  - Agricultural economic development
  - Business & entrepreneurship development

- **Regulations**
  - Zoning updates
  - Farmland preservation plan
  - Bona fide farms

- **Community**
  - Food policy councils
  - Community partners
  - Bridging social capital

- **Make it Last**
  - Comprehensive plans are just the start
  - Adopted policies and programs
  - Committed funds

**MAKE IT LAST**

**COMMUNITY**

**REGULATIONS**

**ECONOMICS**

**ASSESSMENT**
RESOURCES AND TOOLS

National Resources

- USDA’s Economic Impact of Local Foods Toolkit
- USDA’s Farm to Fork Resources
- American Planning Association
- Southern SAWG
- National Institutes of Health

North Carolina Resources

- NCGT has infographics for each county and COG with easy-to-understand data points about local agriculture.
- NCGT maintains the Local Food Supply Chain Infrastructure Map.
- The Local Gov, Local Food Toolkit, with specific ordinances, planning strategies, and economic development tools, will be available August 1, 2016.
- NCGT has case studies on successful projects in North Carolina.
- NCDA & NC Cooperative Extension provide regional and statewide assistance.
- NC DHHS and other statewide health
COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENTS

- One of our presenters could not be here today, so I’ll be talking with you about community food system assessments and how to implement them in your community.

The data on the following slides was prepared for this panel by:

- Wes MacLeod, AICP, ASLA
  - Cape Fear Regional Council of Governments
  - wmacleod@capefearcog.org
WHY COMPLETE A FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT?

• Understand relationship between food and public health within a defined study area
• Inventory farms/roadside stands, farmers’ markets, and food assistance resources
• Establish baseline data for local food economy
• Understand strengths, weaknesses, and areas for further study
• Tell story of the way our food system impacts our health and economy
WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT?

• No set amount of components
• Can be driven by particular local emphasis, such as public health, food security, or agricultural economic development
• Must identify a study area
• Must establish baseline data
• Local factors and influences should determine the components of your community’s Food System Assessment
• Public input from diverse stakeholders
• Advisory or steering committee
DEVELOPING A STUDY AREA PROFILE: HOPE YOU LIKE DATA!

2. Poverty Rate
3. Diabetic Rate
4. Obesity Rate
5. Leisure time Physical Activity
6. Food Insecure Population
7. Food Waste (annual tons)
8. Health Priorities (from local Community Health Assessment)
9. Full-service Grocery Stores Per Capita
10. Fast Food Restaurants Per Capita
11. Number/Acres/Size of Farms
12. Number of Farms by Agricultural Product
13. Value of Agricultural Products sold Per Farm
14. Livestock Inventory
15. Local Farms & Roadside Stands
16. Farmers’ Markets
17. Food Assistance Resources
18. Prime Farmland Soils
Map 3: Brunswick County Food Outlets

Legend
- Municipalities
- Brunswick County
- USDA Food Deserts*
- Full-Service Grocery
- Community Garden
- Food Pantry
- Farmers' Market
- Discount Retailer (Dollar Store)

* The USDA defines food deserts as areas in which a high proportion of residents are over 1 mile (in urban locations) or over 10 miles (in rural locations) from a full-service grocer.
LOCAL FOOD COMPONENT

1. Define Local Food for Context of Assessment (50 miles/100 miles)
2. Identify key participants
3. Identify farmland preservation efforts
4. Identify Supporting Infrastructure & Programs
5. Summarize input from local farmers
6. Summarize Local Food Economy Statistics for the study area
FOOD SECURITY COMPONENT

1. Who are the food insecure?
2. Identify food insecure ineligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
3. Identify Food Waste in study area
4. Analyze the Socioeconomic Status (SES) of households within the study area
5. Identify barriers to accessing healthy food
6. Identify full-service grocery stores in the study area
7. Locate zero-vehicle households
8. Identify Supporting Programs

Households that lack adequate and consistent access to the wholesome foods necessary to lead an active, healthy lifestyle.
1. Healthy Eating & Nutrition Trends
2. Environmental Factors that influence choices
3. Retail Food Environmental Index
4. Barriers to Healthy Eating in the study area
5. Confronting Price as a Perceived Barrier
6. Consumption data
SETTING GOALS & STRATEGIES

1. Establish an overarching goal for each component of the Food System Assessment

2. Identify Evidence-Based Strategies
   
   Optional: Identify geographic priority areas

Evidence-Based Strategy: Evidence-based public health is the practice of incorporating scientific evidence about what works into management decisions, program implementation, clinical services, and policy development.
UTILIZING THE FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Support agricultural land uses in a growing county or town
- Identify strategies and goals for Food Policy Councils
- Involve stakeholders in collaborative goal-setting processes
- Provide groundwork for a needs assessment for Cooperative Extension staff
- Help determine priorities for Health Departments
- Reinforce agricultural economic development goals
THANK YOU!

https://cefs.ncsu.edu/food-system-initiatives/local-food-economies/

www.ncgrowingtogether.org

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Agriculture not only gives riches to a nation—but the only ones she can call her own.

Samuel Johnson

APA has an On-Demand option for “The Now and Future of Agriculture” session:
https://www.planning.org/events/course/3030947/.

Data sources used in this presentation include:


- UNC School of Government Local Food Resources: https://www.sog.unc.edu/search/#/search/local%20food

- Farmland Information Center, 2016: http://www.farmlandinfo.org/statistics

- APA Food Systems Planning Working Group: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3930672/profile

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American Planning Association
North Carolina Chapter’s Webinar:
Planning for Prosperity: Local Food

The Healthy Living Collaborative model in Alamance County
North Park Farmers’ Market

Mission: To increase access to fresh food in North Park and the surrounding community.

Vision: The North Park Farmers’ Market is a healthy, educated community that engages authentic relationships among our farmers and neighbors.
Why in North Park?
What is Healthy Alamance & Impact Alamance?
Alamance County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Access to Care - Alamance County will implement policies and programs that improve residents’ access to high quality comprehensive health care services.

Education - Alamance County will engage and align our community to create pathways so that every child has the opportunity to thrive in their education.

Economic Issues - Alamance County will implement policies and programs that are aimed to improve the local economy and reduce disparities.
Healthy Living Collaborative model – a Health in all Policies approach

**Wellness**
Mission/Vision Development
Review of plans and best practices for built environment
Strategic plan development
Action step workgroups

**Food**
Retreat
Mission/Vision Development
Food Assessment
Strategic plan development
Action step workgroups
Strategic Plan
Alamance Wellness Collaborative

Wellness Collaborative: Five Themes Working Together

- Increase access to active transportation and trails in Alamance County
- Improve and support healthy school environments
- Increase community access to healthy food in Alamance County
- Identify and apply for funding for built environment initiatives
- Increase advocacy at local government level for policy change

Slide created by Active Living by Design
What does a vibrant local food system mean for Alamance County?
Usual & Unusual Suspects

Alamance County Health Department
All Planning Departments
All Recreation & Park Departments
Farmers
Consumers
Cooperative grocery store
Local government (city councils/commissioners)
Entrepreneurs
Farm to Fork restaurants owners & chefs
Non-profits
Homeless shelters
Food pantries
Elon University
Students

“Now I understand how hard it is for farmers to make a living and I am happy to support them”
A Process -

- Community Health Assessment
- Baseline Data
- Consultation
- Strategic Plan
- Engagement
- Tools
- Action Steps
- Feasibility
- Outreach
“The Alamance County Food Collaborative creates a sustainable local food system by supporting local farmers and businesses to improve access to healthy food options and education”
“Alamance County is the leader for local, affordable, healthy foods in North Carolina.”
– a local food assessment

Utilize available resources and supports
Engage the community
Engage stakeholders
Share results and make recommendations
Include in CHA and CHIP

Assessment tool developed by Center for Whole Communities
Key Findings:
Increase in SNAP participation and # of authorized retailers
Approximately 30% of acreage is owned by farms
Several school gardens in operation
New public transportation – linking residents to resources
Obesity and Diabetes rates have decreased
Increase in farmers’ markets and grocery stores
Goals

Justice & Fairness
- Improve community access to a just food system

Vibrant Farms
- Improve healthy school food environments

Strong Communities
- Increase opportunities for farms to connect to consumers

Healthy People
- Increase vegetable intake in residents 2 years and older

Thriving Local Economies
- Increase the number of short food supply exchange retail opportunities

Sustainable Ecosystems
- Increase advocacy with local government for policy change
Strategies

- Increase # of female farm operators
- Increase # of farms that benefit from NC Farm to School Initiatives
- Increase # of farmers’ markets accepting SNAP/WIC
- Increase advocacy for built environment initiatives
- Increase efficiency of farmers’ markets and farm to fork initiatives
- Advocate for policies which support organic conversion and pollinator conservation
Projects & next steps

Explore methods for creating infrastructure

Include planning and local government in development and design

Share results and convene conversations with the community

Utilize Community Based Participatory Research to engage community and determine next steps at the neighborhood level

Offer opportunities to educate residents on issues regarding food and built environment
Contact info

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