

Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council

Year End Report 2011



Village Market

Ten years ago, the topic of sustainable local food systems did not top the political agenda in Portland and Multnomah County. Elected officials were not thinking much about how small-scale, local and urban agriculture could promote economic, environmental and community health. Portland Community Gardens were well-established, but under appreciated. Non-profits, farmers, retailers, academics and activists were working diligently and seeing linkages, but were not yet speaking in a collective voice. The Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council (FPC) helped to change that.

Since its citizen-lead inception in 2002, the FPC has enabled informed citizens working in areas related to food, planning, sustainability and community health to educate their elected officials. These efforts have substantially moved the dial around food issues and placed them towards the top of the region's political agenda.

Today, food holds a prominent place in guiding regional planning documents. Both the Portland Plan and the Multnomah Food Action Plan prioritize creating a vibrant, sustainable and equitable food system. City and County programs and partnerships, such as the Community Gardens Initiative, the Multnomah Food Initiative, County Diggs, Diggable City, the Healthy Retail Initiative, the Grocery Store Project and the Multnomah County/OSU's Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship Program are just a few efforts that illustrate this increased awareness and prioritization.

Thanks in large part to FPC leadership, there are *vegetable gardens* at both City Hall and the County Building. Thanks to a swelling national food movement, there is even one on the lawn of the White House. These small projects illustrate a big shift in social norms around urban food production. We have moved into an era where sustainable local food systems issues are a big part of local and national conversations.

The Year in Review

FPC Role and Structure

While the FPC has successfully helped the City and County choose to prioritize a sustainable food system, the FPC still has a critical role to play in informing *how* the work is done and *who* benefits.

In 2011, the FPC's role centered around three themes:

Advising: Providing targeted expertise to city and county staff in implementing and refining food-related programs and policies

Convening: Convening and participating in community conversations to advance understanding and promote positive change in the food system

Promoting Equity: Increasing a focus on equity and justice in the food system



FPC work is accomplished through a number of work groups. The work groups are identified and agreed upon collaboratively by City and County staff and FPC members. Some workgroups have short-term assignments and some have on-going responsibilities.

Some examples of 2011 FPC work groups include:

- Regulatory Barriers
- Urban Food Zoning Code Project
- Healthy Retail
- Outreach and Membership
- Member Nominations
- Food Justice
- Wild Foods
- 20-minute Neighborhood Food Hubs
- Sustainable Food Metrics/Mayors Innovation Project
- Multnomah Food Summit Planning
- Community Food Resource Mapping Workgroup

Food Policy Council as Advisor

FPC members were called-on to lend their expertise to a variety of city and county efforts throughout the year. Whether through formal or ad hoc work groups or as individuals, FPC member contributions were essential. Some examples of advisory work include:

- Multnomah Food Action Plan – provided support and feedback.
- Portland Plan – provided monitoring, technical assistance and feedback for food and health related issues.
- Multnomah Food Summit Planning Committee- assisted in the planning of the 2nd annual event.
- Multnomah County Health Department’s Community Transformation Grant Leadership Team – assisted with framing food-related issues.
- Office of City Commissioner Nick Fish - reviewed the city’s efforts on food as it relates to health and parks.
- Mayor’s Innovation Grant – contributed to creating measurable metrics for food systems, so that local governments are able to monitor indicators.
- Let’s Move – brainstormed opportunities for the City of Portland to participate in the national Let’s Move campaign.

The FPC also provided letters of support for two community projects that are poised to increase food access, community health, and economic vitality in diverse areas of the city:

- Village Market
- James Beard Public Market

The Multnomah Food Initiative Steering Committee was awarded a Multnomah County Health Department Public Health Heroes Award for Best Team Achievement. This effort started with FPC recommendations to create a healthy, equitable, and prosperous local food system.

Urban Food Zoning Code Project - Recognizing the connections between food and the community's environmental, economic and physical health, the FPC, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and Communities Putting Prevention to Work partners are working on a project to update the City of Portland zoning code. Code changes will be designed to promote and provide guidance for traditional and emerging ways of producing and distributing food within the city.

The project addresses five topic areas related to urban food production and distribution:

- Farmers Markets
- Community Gardens
- Urban Food Production (aka Market Gardens)
- Community Food Distribution Points
- Animals and Bees

Drawing on work done by the FPC's Urban Food Production and Distribution Committee in 2010, BPS staff and FPC committee members convened an advisory group to better understand the types of food production and distribution currently taking place in the city, and to ensure that all related zoning code issues had been identified. Work included:

- Five topic-specific discussions with stakeholders to identify the critical zoning-related issues around urban food production and distribution.
- A concept report, summarizing the issues, benefits and possible impacts of zoning code changes as well as research on how other municipalities have addressed these issues.
- Submission of the report for public review at three community discussions and via a public survey which garnered more than 800 responses.
- Formation of a Code Development Advisory Group composed of 18 members (including three current FPC members) to advise BPS staff as they develop recommendations and code language for each of the five topic areas.

Regulatory Barriers Work Group - The purpose of the Regulatory Barriers Work Group is to explore the existing regulatory barriers to food access and production within Multnomah County, with an emphasis on promoting equity and economic development.

The work group developed and distributed an online survey to about 1,000 individuals in Multnomah County. The survey asked residents about the barriers they face around food access, production, processing, and distribution.

Some key barriers and challenges identified include:

- Lack of community kitchens/processing facilities
- Inability to utilize vacant land for food growing
- Organic certification
- Zoning barriers

The group also increased their understanding of the local food regulatory framework. Work group members interviewed select staff people from Multnomah County Health Department, the Oregon Department of Agriculture and the City of Portland who work on food safety, land use planning and environmental health issues. Based on this information, the work group formed three small subgroups to further investigate barriers and issues and to develop next steps around community kitchens, alternative food distribution hubs, and Multnomah County's land use framework.

Healthy Retail & Related Initiatives - In 2009, the Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council convened a Healthy Retail Work Group in order to identify policy strategies that would increase the availability of healthy food in retail settings and support the County Health Department's effort to develop and implement its Healthy Retail Initiative.

Some areas of recommendation from the Healthy Retail Work Group included: Healthy Retail Fund development, joint purchasing and coordination, technical assistance for retailers, and healthy food standards. These recommendations were echoed by other community groups such as the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Coalition and the ACHIEVE Coalition.

In 2011, the Health Department launched the *Healthy Retail Initiative* which has implemented many of the earlier recommendations. This year, FPC members have volunteered with the Healthy Retail Initiative as grant reviewers, have provided TA and training to retailers and have assisted with outreach.

There continues to be momentum for improving access to healthy affordable food through neighborhood corner stores. For example, policy and environmental change strategies to improve food access are included in the Draft Portland Plan as well as in the City's Neighborhood Economic Development strategy.

Tied to both of these city strategies, Mayor Adams provided direction in his State of the City Address that lead to the launch of the *Grocery Store Initiative* by the Portland Development Commission. The Grocery Store Initiative addresses the needs of Portland neighborhoods where access to affordable, healthful food and other convenience products is limited. The PDC has formed an Advisory Committee to provide advice and guidance on policy implementation, project objectives, and potential public/private partnerships. Food Policy Council staff from the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the Health Department as well as the FPC Chair are members of that Advisory Committee.

Food Policy Council as Convener

Monthly FPC meetings served in-part as a public forum to highlight and discuss important food system work happening around the region. The newly-created Outreach and Membership committee allowed FPC members to play a critical role in advancing local and national conversations about food issues through presenting at and co-hosting an array of conferences and community events.

Guest speakers at FPC meetings:

- Patricia Allen, Director of the Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, Food Policy & Culture masters program at Marylhurst University discussed program goals and vision.
- Greg Archuleta, Grand Ronde Tribes discussed First Foods and the history and work on environmental restoration in the Portland Metro area.
- Dr. John Kallas, an author who has published books and articles on wild edible plants talked about wild food foraging in Oregon.
- Village Market Leadership Team shared their progress in opening a full-service corner grocery store in New Columbia.
- Ron Paul of the James Beard Public Market talked about the plans for the market and timeline for possible development.

Presentations and Events:

- Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) Food Policy Conference
- Coalition for a Livable Future 2011 Regional Livability Summit
- Green Chef Challenge at OHSU
- County CROPs Farm Tour
- Northwest Neighborhood Association
- Portland's Better Living Home and Garden Show
- Second Annual Multnomah Food Summit
- Food Day /City Club of Portland
- Food Matters
- Food Hub discussion with USDA
- University of Portland

Food Policy Council as Promoter of Equity

As the food movement gains traction locally and nationally, and as institutions like farmers markets, community supported agriculture and community gardens become more popular, questions like *Who benefits?*, *Who is at the table?*, and *Who decides?* are critical.

Are City and County policies and resources proportionately benefiting communities of color and low-income communities? Are the voices of marginalized communities represented in decision making about food issues? There are no easy answers to these questions but the FPC has laid the groundwork for addressing these issues.

Initial progress

- The FPC’s evaluation of this year’s Multnomah Food Summit led to a shift in focus for the 2012 Multnomah Food Summit towards *food justice*. The FPC is positioned to play an active role in planning, recruiting for and hosting this event.
- FPC members discussed critical questions about equity that highlighted the need for a definition of food justice to guide the FPC and investments of public dollars.
- The Food Justice Work Group has drafted a working definition of food justice and will vet the definition with the community during a series of focus groups in early 2012. These focus groups will also serve as a vehicle for the Food Justice Work Group to listen to community experiences and priorities as they relate to food justice.
- Because equity depends on transparency in decision-making, FPC members worked with City and County staff to revise the member recommendation process. Now, a committee of staff people and FPC members review and score FPC applications and prepare recommendations for the elected officials who make the final FPC appointments.

2012 Priorities



Village Market

- Participate in convening the Multnomah Food Summit in March 2012.
- Continue to advise Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff on policy recommendations and zoning code language.
- Develop recommendations to address regulatory barriers to food production, processing, distribution and access.
- Finalize a guiding definition of food justice and hold a series of focus groups to listen to community experiences and priorities.

The FPC continues to provide a valuable public service by conducting in-depth research and analysis of food system issues, and focusing on equity and sustainability.

The FPC is stepping up to convene public conversations that deepen our shared understanding of our food system and illuminate opportunities for shaping this system to best nourish people and the land.

2011 Food Policy Council Members

- Dave Barmon
- Monica Cuneo
- Eliza Davenport
- Shawn DeCarlo
- Jean Fike
- Amy Gilroy
- Katy Kolker
- Hannah Kullberg
- David McIntyre – *Vice Chair*
- Will Newman II
- Charles Robertson
- Robin Scholetzky
- Bruce Silverman
- Tammy VanderWoude
- Mark White
- Tera Couchman Wick
- Anita Yap – *Chair*

Contacts

Rachael Banks, Multnomah County Health Department (503) 988-3663 ext. 22975
rachael.m.banks@multco.us

Steve Cohen, City of Portland, Office of Planning and Sustainability 503.823.4225
Steve.Cohen@portlandoregon.gov

Katie Lynd, Multnomah County Office of Sustainability (503) 988-6150
katie.lynd@multco.us