Improving Community Food Systems: Food Councils in the Charlotte Region
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Community Food Strategies
Strengthening Partnerships, Aligning Results

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Session Take-Aways

• Food councils are examples of the importance, opportunity and benefits of **cross-sector collaborations**.

• **Best Practices** for Food Councils – 5 years in:
  – Diversified leadership is essential for a sustainable food council.
  – Food council best practices include having **at least part time paid coordination**.

• **Intentional networking as successful action:** Successful food councils create and enliven a space for collaboration. (And sometimes food councils take action).
What is a food council?

Food councils are community organizations that help promote stronger local food systems. They assess the current food situation, make recommendations on how to improve it and communicate recommendations to policymakers and organizations that can take action.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dpe8dURgHsA
WHY

...are food councils needed?

Collaboration  Shared View  What Works?
Food councils provide a shared way of thinking about the whole community food system.
Food System Elements

- Food Production
- Distribution & Aggregation
- Food Processing
- Preparation & Consumption
- Markets & Purchasing
- Resource & Waste Recovery
Blind Men and the Elephant By John Godfrey Saxe (1816–1887)

It’s a Fan!

It’s a Wall!

It’s a Spear!

It’s a Snake!

It’s a Tree!

It’s a Rope!
We See The Forest . . .
And The Trees.
WHAT

...do food councils DO?

Facilitate Connections  Provide Focus  Drive Action
Facilitate Connections

Provide Focus

Drive Action
HOW

…do food councils succeed?

Attend to People  Attend to Purpose  Attend to Process
Food councils hold themselves and the community accountable to the question:

*What does a vibrant community-based food system look like for our community?*
35 Councils representing 43 counties are existing or emerging in NC.
Some best practices are emerging:

- Strategically cross-sector (whole measures)
- Baseline assessments to set priorities and focus
- Diversified leadership is essential for a sustainable food council
- Champions and relationships in local government and in community groups
- Food council best practices include having at least part time paid coordination.
Three Charlotte Region Food Councils are improving our community food systems:
Our Top Food Policy Issues

- Food Access & Distribution
- Lack of Current Data: Research/Studies
- Farmer Succession Planning
- Childhood Nutrition
- Barriers to Local Food Entrepreneurs

Lack of Current Data: Research/Studies

Childhood Nutrition
CMFPC Vision, Mission, Focus & Goals

**Vision**
Good, affordable, healthy food for all

**Mission**
Advocate for policies that build a sustainable, equitable, & healthy local food system

**Focus Areas**

**Healthy Food Access Policy**
Advocate for policies to increase access to healthy foods for all Charlotte residents, focusing on low-income citizens

**Local Food Policy**
Advocate for policies to strengthen our local economy & environment by supporting our local farmers, food producers & entrepreneurs

**Goals**
- Enhance health of Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents
- Strengthen local economy & market opportunities
- Reduce hunger & food insecurity
- Strengthen connections & networks between people and groups
**CMFPC’s Role in the Community**

**Examples of our Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advocate</th>
<th>Educate</th>
<th>Convene</th>
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</table>
| Identify food-related policy issues; work with policy makers throughout the community to amend and alleviate. | Engage and empower through communities with information about nutrition, cooking and local agriculture. Key groups include:  
- West Blvd Neighborhood Association  
- Stratford-Richardson YMCA  
- Barringer Academic Center  
- Reid Park | Bring together the right people at the right time to recognize and address the need.  
- 2013: Health Department nutrition educators, teachers and gardeners came together from Friendship Gardens to launch the School Garden Network  
- CMFPC Experts’ Panel |

- 2010 Food Assessment identified areas of need
- 2013 discussion with City Council Economic Development Committee
- 2015 new zoning ordinance allowing Mobile Farmers Markets access to under-served neighborhoods
## CMFPC Roadmap Summary

### Key Activity Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Food Businesses/Start-Ups</th>
<th>Farm-to-School</th>
<th>Advocacy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Hosted Local Food Entrepreneurs Panel (May 2014)</td>
<td>• GAP certification for small, local farmers</td>
<td>• Lead annual Charlotte-Meck State of the Plate – food assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Design &amp; conduct survey/interviews to explore barriers for small food businesses &amp; outline 2015 scope of work based on findings</td>
<td>• Partner with CMS to apply for a feasibility grant to purchase local foods for cafeterias</td>
<td>• Design system for leveraging Experts Panel &amp; members in advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partner with Queen City Forward on Innovation Challenge FOOD</td>
<td>• Leverage FoodCorps Service Member for research &amp; planning</td>
<td>• Create “knowledge hub” – digital research archive on the local food system</td>
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### In Progress

- 2014 Strengthen our Foundation, Refine Focus Areas
- 2015 Strengthen Advocacy, Build Momentum
- 2016 Go-To Food Policy Influencer
## CMFPC History & Accomplishments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Notable Achievement</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 2010 | • Volunteer group began formal operations  
      • Meck County Community Food Assessment Phase 1  
      • Saved Barbee Farm |
| 2011 | • Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy, Inc formed as 501(c)(3)  
      • 1st Mobile Produce Stand with Friendship Gardens  
      • Meck County Community Food Assessment Phase 2  
      • Mobile Farmers’ Markets’ Advocacy  
      • West End Food Assessment |
| 2012 | • Formed Experts’ Panel  
      • CATS Transit Center Fruit Stand with Friendship Gardens  
      • CONNECT Our Future Regional Plan  
      • Public roundtable “Local Foods as a Business Development Tool”  
      • Webinar “Local Food & Food Policy in Meck: Primer for Parents”  
      • Co-hosted NC Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council  
      • Published Mecklenburg Urban Agriculture Guide |
| 2013 | • Burt’s Bees Grant to form the Charlotte School Garden Coalition  
      • Participated in Funds to Farms  
      • Charlotte City Council Economic Development  
      • On Community Leadership Council of Toxic-Free NC  
      • Bank of America Environmental Group  
      • Self Help Credit Union Open Meeting: Healthy Food Financing |
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</thead>
</table>
| 2014 | • Advised on City Mobile Markets Policy  
      • Presentations to Health Dept, City Staff  
      • Helped shape state-wide FPC network  
      • Launched CMFPC Membership Program  
      • White Paper: Food Insecurity  
      • Outreach & Community Building  
      • Healthy Kids, Healthy Families program in 5 CMS schools  
      • Secured first FoodCorps Service Member in region  
      • Local Food Entrepreneurs Forum  
      • Partnered with Queen City Forward on Innovation Challenge FOOD  
      • Partnered with AARP on Hunger Forum  
      • 2014 Food Day event |
| 2015 | • 2015 Food Day event  
      • Connected CMC Northeast to help establish an onsite Farmer’s Market  
      • Second FoodCorps Service member began service year  
      • GAP certification of the Garinger High School Urban Farm begins  
      • Teacher workshops on cooking with students  
      • Presentations to community groups  
      • Queen City Forward THINKPLENTY  
      • State of the Plate food assessment & Action Council |
Thursday December 3rd, 2015
Centralina Council of Governments

Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council

Aaron Newton
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association
aaron@carolinafarmstewards.org
Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council

- The group charged with continuous improvement of local food economy revitalization
- 21 Members holding 3 years terms
- Diverse group of stakeholders
Cabarrus County Farm & Food Council

- Open meetings every 2nd Thursday
- County assistance includes meeting space and other support
Locally Grown Campaign

- CCFFC early achievement
- Open for use by local food business
- Banner for the cause
Cabarrus County-focused
Local Food Website & Facebook

- CCFFC early achievement
- Features information regarding multiple components of the food system
- http://www.cabarrusfpc.org/

![Cabarrus County Food Policy Council Website](image-url)
Collaborative Effort!

+ + = Success

GROWING Jobs and Our Economy | CONTROLLING Cost of Government | IMPROVING Quality of Life
Vision – A sustainable, locally-based, economically resilient farm and food system.

Mission – To encourage, support and coordinate the local farm and food system through: Agriculture, Economic Development, Education, Accessibility and Heath
What are the “5 Bold Steps”?

- Establishment of a farm and food council
- A public awareness and education campaign about our local farm and food system
- Agricultural business and workforce training, with emphasis on small farms
- Processing and distribution infrastructure to best aggregate and distribute food to market
- Farmland preservation and food waste management
Who leads the council?

• Five representatives from each county: (Anson, Montgomery, Stanly)

• Farmer
• Government Official/Economic Development
• Public Health/Medical Professional
• Education Representative
• Interested Individual
• Plus: One non-voting Union County Rep.
Roles and Responsibilities of UPFFC

- **Assess** local farm and food system [health, opportunities]
- **Recommend** improvements based on assessment
- **Communicate** recommendations to community leaders
Examples of “Action”:

- **Farm Tours and Food Guide**
- Farm and **Food Fest 2014** at Lucky Clays Farm
- **Booths** as local County Agricultural Days and MDI Food Show
- **Presentations** to County Commissioners
- **Farmer tour** at MDI (Merchants Distributors Inc.)
- Drafted **letters of support** for Albemarle Downtown Development Corporation and the Stanly County Department of Health in their efforts to expand the customer bases of their respective farmer’s markets.
Get Involved! Share your voice.

• *How can the public be involved?* – The public is invited to email us to receive monthly farm and food updates around our region, and to visit our website and Facebook.

• Email: [info@upffc.org](mailto:info@upffc.org). Website: [www.upffc.org](http://www.upffc.org). Facebook: [@Upper PeeDee Farm and Food Council](https://www.facebook.com/UpperPeeDeeFarmFoodCouncil/). Call 704-617-0852 for more information.
Session Take-Aways

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• Best Practices for Food Councils – 5 years in:
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Comments and Questions?
Thank you!

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