Baltimore Food Policy Initiative: Food Access Strategies & Urban Agriculture

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Baltimore Food Policy
Overview
Establish Baltimore as a leader in sustainable local food systems

BOS Greening Goal #2
To improve health outcomes by increasing access to healthy affordable food in food deserts
**Definition:**

- ¼ mile from grocery store
- Low vehicle availability
- At or below 185% federal poverty level
- Low Healthy Food Availability Score based on the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey

**Impact:**

- 20% of city residents in food deserts, (120,000 or 1 in 5 residents)
- 1 in 4 school aged children (31,000, 23%)
- 1 in 4 of African American (105,000 - or 26%)
- 82% of residents are employed
Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI)

- Inter-governmental collaboration:
  - Baltimore Office of Sustainability, Department of Planning, Health Department & Baltimore Development Corporation

- Food Policy Advisory Committee (Food PAC)
  - Provide Advisory Capacity to implement Food Policy Taskforce recommendations
  - 60 Diverse stakeholders (such as Anti-hunger community, extension, city government, community nonprofits, schools)
Food Policy Recommendations

1. Promote and expand farmers markets
2. Support community gardens and urban agriculture
3. Expand supermarket home delivery program
4. Develop a targeted marketing campaign to encourage healthy eating among all Baltimoreans
5. Support street vending of healthy foods
6. Promote and expand community supported agriculture
7. Support a central kitchen model for schools
8. Support research on food deserts and collaboration with policy makers
9. Improve the food environment around schools & recreation centers
10. Create healthy food zoning requirement or incentives
Best Practices:
Implementation of the Food Policy Taskforce Recommendations
Homegrown Baltimore
Grow Local, Buy Local, Eat Local
Support & Expand Farmers Markets

- 20 farmers markets in Baltimore City
- 7 EBT machines at Farmers Markets
- Change in State Farmers Market Policy to accept SNAP benefits in first year markets
- Created a Farmers Market Permit Guide
- Simplified the city permit process for farmers markets
Support Urban Agriculture

- **Vacant Land Assessment**
  - Approximately 20 acres

- **Developed & issued RFQ for urban farmers**

- **Updated Animal Husbandry Regulations**
  - Miniature Goats, Bees, Rabbits and Chickens

- **Updated City Building Code**
  - Hoop houses
Animal Husbandry

- **Chickens**
  - 4 chickens on 2,000 square feet

- **Goats**
  - 2 dwarf goats on 20,000 square feet

- **Bees**
  - 2 hives on 2,500 square feet

- **Rabbits**
  - 4 rabbits on 2,000 square feet
Zoning

- **Community Managed Open Space:**
  - Permitted use in all districts
  - Includes community gardens and farm stands

- **Urban Agriculture:**
  - Conditional use in most districts
  - Requires submittal of Management Plan
Agronomic Characteristics for Sites

- **Size:** Minimum of 1 acre
- **Lease Agreement:** Minimum of 5 years
- **Vehicle Access:** Daily sprinter vans and box trucks, Semi-Annual 18-wheelers
- **Buildings:** Uses for storage, distribution, processing
- **Resources:** Water (2 inch lines), Electricity
- **Shade Coverage:** Minimal shade coverage
- **Surface:** Any surface is farmable
- **Grade:** Less than a 5% grade
- **Sun Exposure:** South facing
Terms & Finances

- 5-year leases (with 2-year notice to vacant), terms based on farm type
- Rate of $100/year
- No taxes on non-profit farms
- For-profit farms may be eligible for tax breaks
- Funding for initial capital costs
  - Seed Money – General Obligation Bonds $160,000
Farm to School
Healthy Food In Schools

- Green Schools Network: Sustainable Food System Action Team
- Healthy Food Challenge Grants
  - 11 schools
- Let’s Move Salad Bar Initiative
  - 10 New Salad Bars
- Fruit and Vegetable Program
  - 86 schools
Get Fresh Baltimore

- **Goals**
  - Fruit & Vegetable campaign by youth, for youth
    - Food media literacy
- 2,000 Elementary Students
  - 250 ads in Metro buses
- 5 Public Service Announcements
- Funded by Kaiser Permanente
Healthy Food Retail in Food Deserts
Virtual Supermarket

- Order groceries online anywhere
- Accepts SNAP Benefits
- Pick up at local library, school or Senior Housing
Public Markets

• Retail strategies for carryouts to provide & display healthier choices
  – Create healthy menu labels & menu displays
  – Change menus to include healthier sides & combo meals
  – Pilot healthy carryout certification

• Increase demand for healthy food purchasing
  – Cooking demos & nutrition education
  – Coupons and incentives for healthy choices

• Local Farm Stands
  – Day stalls for local farmers
Thank You

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