

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS:

A Resource Guide

Incorporating food systems planning into local government decision-making indicates an investment in public health and the local economy. To grow our local food system, it's vital that government officials evaluate existing policies and make updates that support the community's evolving needs

Navigating the policies that direct community food system infrastructure can be a challenge for local decision makers as they balance the public's demand for a local food identity and agricultural production regulations.. This resource outlines the components of a local food system, gives examples of work in the Upper Peninsula, and demonstrates how participating in this movement can be beneficial for your community.

We have a tremendous opportunity to improve our quality of life by working to strengthen our local food system. Across the state, individuals and organizations are coming together under the goals of the Michigan Good Food Charter to provide and

promote good food – food that is healthy, sustainable, fair, and affordable. By focusing on these values, we can build a healthier, more prosperous and more equitable future.

Consider the following types of questions: Do your local policies and regulations address the importance of local food supply? Has your municipality supported or identified locations for community gardens? Is a food processing facility a permitted use in multiple zoning districts? Can your residents grow vegetables and raise hens in their backyard? Is produce permitted to be sold in residential districts? Explore documents like your local Master Plan and zoning ordinances to find answers to these questions and much more to get started.



BENEFITS OF A LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

DEVELOPING A LOCAL FOOD IDENTITY

The Marquette Food Co-op & Upper Peninsula Food Exchange offers Farm to School Fundraising. Through this program, schools can raise money by selling high quality items from small, local producers. This offers students a more meaningful fundraiser with interesting products, supports school wellness programs, can be connected to school gardens and food curriculum, and keeps money in the local economy. In 2018, \$12,044 was purchased from local vendors for this program, and \$10,133 was raised for area schools. Contact Alex Palzewicz, 906-225-0671, ext. 726 or localfood@upfoodexchange.com

FOOD SECURITY

The UP Food Exchange hosts an Online Marketplace website where UP farmers can sell their products directly to local institutional food buyers. This site broadens where local farmers can market their products and gets more locally produced food into our grocery stores, restaurants, schools, and hospitals. The Online Marketplace strengthens the UP local food economy by increasing the access and availability of food produced by farms in our region. Increasingly interdependent webs of farms and institutions are bolstering our region's ability to meet our own food needs. This ability is a central part of what food security means in our remote northern climate.

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Marquette County Conservation District (MCCD) oversees several conservation-related grant programs, including forestry, invasive species, soil conservation, water management, produce safety, and urban agriculture. The produce safety program employs a technician to work with produce farmers across the U.P. to increase on-farm food safety practices free of charge. Practices focus on water quality, soil management, handling and distribution, and worker health and hygiene. As part of the urban agriculture program, the MCCD hosts a free series of community workshops focused on the aspects of urban agriculture that city ordinances allow. Contact Landen Tetil at 906-226-8871 ext. 105 or landen.mqtcondist@gmail.com

CREATING JOBS

The Downtown Marquette Farmers Market began in 1999 with only two determined vendors. The market expanded under the leadership of the Marquette Downtown Development Authority, growing to 18 farmers and accepting three forms of food assistance by 2009. In the 20 years since its inception, the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market has grown to be the largest farmers market in the U.P. and is one of the best ways for farmers to connect directly with customers. During the 2018 season (May through December), there were 35 participating farmers, 14 of which were new within the last five years. More than 2,000 customers shop at the market each week, providing financial support for area farmers and food producers. The economic impact of the market is felt throughout town, with spending by market customers in downtown Marquette businesses estimated at about \$2 million annually. Contact Myra Zyburt, (906) 362-3276 or marketmanager@mqtfarmersmarket.com

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Delta County may soon be home to a nonprofit group, Northern Natural Cooperative. This collaboration, sparked by Happy Day Farm, is starting small with just a few area producers and one motivated community member. Small niche area farms find it hard to reach the right market for their products, so they've decided to join forces. The goal is to maximize small farmers' ability to sell their food products in the local market and earn a fair and reasonable rate of profit for their efforts. This nonprofit cooperative is still in the works but will be run by a board of directors made up of farmers. The services they hope to provide are vast but calculated, and the real value is that this will give small scale growers, farmers, and producers a way to share skills sets and resources. For more information, contact Ivy Netzel at northernnaturalcooperative@gmail.com.

GROWING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Eastern U.P.
Wiisnidaa Mnomijim "Let's Eat Good Food" Coalition is a community-wide collaboration of tribal families, community members, and area agencies to create a sustainable food system within the Brimley and Bay Mills Community. Wiisnida Mnomijim works to create a more sustainable, thriving, and sovereign localized food system. The goal of Wiisnida Mnomijim is to produce and provide access to nutritious traditional and local foods that improve the quality of life, economy, and environment through cultural and traditional practices, education, and policies. Key partners include Bay Mills Community College, Waishkey Bay Farm, Bay Mills Health Center, and Michigan State University Extension. Coalition meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month starting with a potluck dinner at 5:30 p.m., followed by the business meeting. Contact Kat Jaques at (906) 280-1786 or odonne94@msu.edu

Western U.P.
In 2018, the Western U.P. Food Systems Council was formed using a community-based mission development process. The Council will continue to meet in each county through 2019 and support projects throughout the six-county Western Upper Peninsula Development & Planning Region. Working with Michigan Tech University students, the council has produced a set of starting recommendations and are leveraging funds through the 2019 Regional Prosperity Initiative to publish a pilot community foods assessment for the Keweenaw area. The group hopes to tackle a range of community projects supporting a regional food system, including commercial kitchen space, gardening and forage education, and more. Contact Rachael Pressley at 906-482-7205 ext. 116 or rpressley@wupppdr.org

Central U.P.
Partridge Creek Farm is an educational farm based in downtown Ishpeming that is dedicated to improving local access to fresh produce, building a healthy community, and promoting education on sustainable food systems. Utilizing community partnerships and a large volunteer network, Partridge Creek administers a school garden and maple syrup program with Ishpeming Middle School and the Great Lakes Recovery Youth Program, hosts community garden centers, and runs seed saving and worm composting programs. This is in addition to hosting large farm centered events and a weekly booth to support the Power of Produce Program at the Downtown Marquette Farmers Market. In 2019, the start of a community Inspiration Orchard was made possible through the work of Partridge Creek Farm, the Marquette County Land Bank, and Marquette Breakfast Rotary Club. Contact Dan Perkins, Dan@Partridgecreekfarm.org or Rose Chivens, Rose@Partridgecreekfarm.org.





“If each U.P. resident purchased \$5 of food each week directly from farmers in the region, this would generate \$80 million of new farm revenue for local farms [annually].”

- Ken Meter

President, Crossroads Resource Center

SAMPLE APPROACHES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

COUNTY PLANNING

The Local Food Supply: A Chapter of the Marquette County Comprehensive Plan is an educational tool developed by Marquette County that addresses the importance of a strong local food system and discusses challenges and possible solutions. Goals and policies are listed and intended to guide communities in Marquette County in strengthening their local food system by supporting local farmers, providing opportunities for new farmers, and connecting producers and consumers.

ZONING

Michigan’s Right to Farm Act (RTFA), PA 93 of 1981, as amended (MCL 286.471 et seq.), was enacted to protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits initiated by non-farm neighbors. In primarily residential areas, however, local governments have greater zoning authority over agricultural practices, and may even prohibit agricultural activity. Many communities recognize that citizens in urban areas can and should be part of a flourishing community food system and have adopted language that allows some agricultural activity.

In February 2019, the City of Marquette adopted an entirely new zoning ordinance. The new ordinance allows for the limited keeping of chickens, rabbits, and bees, plus creates allowances for season extension structures. In low and medium density residential districts, a maximum of 6 hens and 6 rabbits per single-family or two-family dwelling unit may be kept. Animals must be confined to the lot and enclosed animal housing must meet the same setback requirements for accessory buildings and are prohibited in the front yard. For bees, a maximum of 10 hives is permitted on a residential lot. Hives can be as close as 10 feet from a property line if a 6 foot high flyway barrier surrounds the hive (Section 54.639). Marquette’s new zoning ordinance also expressly allows temporary hoop houses up to 8 feet high and plant covers for early start-up plants as close as 3 feet from property lines. Gardens and season extension structures are allowed in rear, side, and front yards, subject to the 3 foot setback (Section 54.619). Chocolay Township, just outside of Marquette, has

also made changes to zoning to support limited agricultural activity in a residential zone. In 2017, Chocolay replaced its Animal Control Ordinance (Ordinance # 45) with a new version (Ordinance #62). The new ordinance includes language that permits up to six chickens that are enclosed in the backyard at least 20 feet from a neighboring dwelling.

AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EDUCATION

The Michigan State University Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) in Chatham conducts research to identify best management practices for crop and livestock production that reduce input use, enhance soil health, and generate added value for producers. Integration of crop and livestock systems supports a low-input model that is well-suited to the U.P.’s climate and economy. Promoting soil health is a cause both producers and consumers can support, as good soil provides a critical foundation for success in farming and environmental stewardship. UPREC also works to create locavores early on, offering agricultural education to area school children, including school garden support. Contact James DeDecker at 906-439-5176 or dedecke5@msu.edu

FARMLAND CONSERVATION

Farmland provides multiple ecosystem services in the form of food, wildlife habitat, open space, etc. Farmland is also vulnerable to development because it’s easy to build on and is often taxed at higher rates than farming can support. Fortunately, there are a variety of ways to ensure the long-term existence of productive agricultural lands. Protection of farmland through the sale or donation of a conservation easement to a land conservancy legally guarantees that the land can never be developed for other uses and that conservation-oriented farming practices are used. Agricultural conservation easements often include non-farmland acreage that is also protected from development in perpetuity. The conservation values of both the farmland and the non-farmland are defined in the easement and monitored annually by the land conservancy to ensure that they are protected. See back page for local contacts regarding land conservation.

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS RESOURCES

WHO TO CONTACT

U.P. Food Exchange (UPFE) & Marquette Food Co-op

Sarah Monte | www.upfoodexchange.com | 906-225-0671 x723 | info@upfoodexchange.com

Western U.P. Food Systems Council

Rachael Pressley | www.wupfoodsystems.com | (906)482-7205 x116 | rpressley@wupcdr.org

Michigan State University Extension (MSUE)

Brad Neumann, Government & Community Vitality Educator | 906-475-5731 | neuman36@msu.edu
Abbey Palmer, Extension Educator | 906-439-5058 | palmerab@msu.edu

Taste the Local Difference

Alexandria Palzewicz, U.P. Local Food Coordinator | www.localdifference.org | 906.250.4507 | alex@localdifference.org

Regional Planning Agencies

Central Upper Peninsula Planning & Development Commission | www.cuppad.org | 906-786-9234
Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning & Development Commission | www.eup-planning.org | 906-635-1581
Western U.P. Planning & Development Region | www.wupcdr.org | 906-482-7205

Elected Officials & Zoning

Contact your local officials to learn about local laws and policies related to community food systems

LAND PRESERVATION FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

Little Traverse Conservancy

www.landtrust.org | 231-347-0991 | Chippewa, Mackinac Counties

Keweenaw Land Trust

www.keweenawlandtrust.org | 906-482-0820 | Western U.P.

Upper Peninsula Land Conservancy

www.uplandconservancy.org | 906-225-8067 | All of the U.P. except Houghton & Keweenaw Counties

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FOOD PRODUCTION & PROCESSING

Michigan Conservation Districts

www.macd.org

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

www.nrcs.usda.gov

Fresh Systems, LLC

Phil Britton | 781-514-9855 | phil@freshsystemsllc.com

MSU Product Center

Parker Jones, Innovation Counselor | 614-893-6191 | Jonesp28@anr.msu.edu

WEBSITES

Michigan Good Food Charter

www.michiganfood.org

Michigan Association of Planning Community and Regional Food Systems Planning Policy

<https://www.planningmi.org/map-policies>

Marquette County Local Food Supply Plan

http://www.co.marquette.mi.us/departments/planning/local_food_supply_plan.php

Crossroads Resource Center

www.crcworks.org

Growing Food Connections

<https://growingfoodconnections.org/tools-resources/policy-database/>

Municipal Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa

<https://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/planningBLUZ/files/2012/01/ZONING-FOR-LOCAL-FOODS-GUIDEBOOK.pdf>

Zoning & Right to Farm Resources

https://www.canr.msu.edu/planning/zoning_ordinance_resources/agricultural-right-to-farm

TAKE ACTION!

1

Talk to local governmental officials/staff from your city, township and county about issues that are important to you. Remember to listen more than you talk. You need to establish yourself as a credible and reasonable person with the best interest of your community at heart.

2

Attend regularly scheduled city, township and county meetings as well as planning commission meetings to learn about current issues and get to know your elected officials.

3

Connect with the Food Hub in your region by serving on a committee, attending trainings, or acting as a local.

4

Subscribe to weekly/monthly electronic newsletters and newsfeeds from the entities listed in the "Who to Contact" listing on the left.

5

Grow and purchase local food to the best of your ability.

**U.P. FOOD
EXCHANGE**
growing local food systems

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