

Portland-Multnomah County Food Policy Council 2004 Highlights

From farm to table, good food grown well nourishes the heart, the soul, the soil and the pocketbook. Food is at the core of a livable, sustainable community.

That's why it made sense for the City of Portland and Multnomah County to form the Food Policy Council (FPC). Since 2002, the FPC has invited to its table farmers and planners, hunger advocates and chefs, environmentalists and government agencies, citizens and experts. Together, we are advancing an ambitious menu of collaborative projects.

We invite you to share our vision of a community where healthy food is available to everyone, grown with respect for land, air and water, produced and consumed by our neighbors and eaten with joy.

“The Food Policy Council has raised the profile of community food issues among local government, business and citizens.”

**Brian Rohter, President
New Seasons Market
Co-chair, Food Policy Council**

How often can we say that the solution will actually taste good?

Fresh local food – it's a simple idea with profound potential.

- Avoidable conditions of obesity, diabetes and heart disease are time-bombs for already escalating health care costs, particularly considering their growing incidence among children. Part of the prescription? More fresh produce.
- Food purchases are an easy way to redirect dollars into the local economy. Food is a major budget item and the Northwest has an abundance of great local products.
- The energizing weekly ritual of farmers' markets transforms public space by bringing people together as a community in urban neighborhoods.
- Prosperous working farms are a key part of Oregon's tradition of a thoughtful, planned approach to growth.
- Giving kids the nourishment they need to learn is one of the best investments a community can make.
- Local food reduces reliance on fossil fuels. The average fruit or vegetable travels 1500 miles to market.

A partner in local government.

Through its work in health, economic development, recreation programs, solid waste, purchasing, and urban planning, local government can influence how food gets from farm to the table and how food waste gets from table to farm.

FPC is working to ensure that policies and actions are directed toward creating a healthy food system, where residents and businesses make informed choices and where strong local market networks help farmers and food entrepreneurs grow their businesses. FPC brings public and private partners together to identify opportunities and develop solutions.

Food Policy Council Efforts Bear Fruit in 2004

Healthy, affordable, accessible:

Lessons in Lents create neighborhood model

What can be done about Oregon's high rates of food insecurity and obesity? To answer that question, FPC convened a broad-based coalition to address the needs of one low-income neighborhood. As a first step, the group completed a community survey and market study to identify challenges and opportunities in improving nutrition and food security for residents of the Lents neighborhood of Southeast Portland.

"We're excited to continue working with FPC to bring food stamp access to more markets."

**Sasha Pollack, Co-manager
Eastbank Farmers' Market**

We're buying local:

County Corrections purchases local food

Multnomah County Corrections, food service vendor Aramark and local wholesaler Rinella Produce increased purchases of fresh foods from local farmers during a four-month pilot project. More than \$30,000 that would have otherwise left the region was redirected to local farms, and the program expanded to an additional seven Oregon counties.



Fifty Hmong, Latino, Cambodian and Somali-Bantu farmers attended an FPC workshop on farm-direct marketing.

Preserving local farms:

Expanding tools for farm protection

Regional, local, state and federal land use experts helped FPC assess how conservation easements might be used to protect farms within and at the fringe of the Urban Growth Boundary. While no substitute for statewide land-use planning, expanding the tools of farm protection is even more important with the passage Measure 37.

Direct from the fields:

FPC projects link producers and consumers

Workshop expands opportunity for immigrant farmers

Market open for food stamp recipients

FPC partnered with Eastbank Farmers' Market in its pilot effort to accept electronic food stamp benefits. Over the season, a total of \$2,380 was spent at the market, with a growing amount each week.

Farmers' market needs highlighted

FPC gathered input from eight farmers' market organizations in the county and hosted a brownbag lunch on farmers' markets needs for City staff working on design and management of public space.

Setting the Table for 2005

Turning information into action

Lents neighborhood team to create action plan

Based on the research completed in 2004, FPC will convene hunger relief programs, government agencies, community partners and neighbors to collaborate on nutrition and food security initiatives in the Lents neighborhood. This process will create a blueprint for food planning in other neighborhoods.

A network of urban farms

Creating a cultural and historic resource

Imagine a network of small urban farms dotting the region. Laboratories for teaching and learning, these pockets of history would connect neighbors of all ages to both the heritage of food and the future of sustainable agriculture. FPC is preparing to present this urban farm concept to local government agencies, farming organizations and community groups.



The market connection

Farmers markets as focal points for revitalization

Markets form the thriving centers of cities around the world. Our own farmers markets can awaken the same vibrant energy. The Food Policy Council will work with planners, local governments and businesses on ideas from simple site improvements at existing farmers markets, to the development of new public plazas to house markets and other functions.

Local purchasing takes root

Multnomah County to formalize pilot project

When Multnomah County's food service contract comes up for renewal, the Food Policy Council will work with managers to incorporate local purchasing, institutionalizing the relationship between local agriculture and local government.

Room to grow

Portland to inventory available land

FPC will consult with the City of Portland as it completes an inventory of city-owned lands that may be available for community gardening or other agricultural uses.

Neighborhood Food Project Launched

What can be done about Oregon's high rates of food insecurity and obesity? The Food Policy Council (FPC) decided to start by conducting a food planning project to make a difference in one low-income neighborhood. Bringing together a coalition of hunger relief programs, government agencies, community partners, and neighbors, FPC launched a project in the SE Portland neighborhood of Lents, with the goal of creating a model process.

2003 Recommendations

Develop community-based solutions for areas with inadequate food access.

- Identify areas with food access barriers
- Conduct a pilot planning effort in a low-income neighborhood with inadequate food access.

Results

√ GIS Map

To identify areas with food access barriers, the FPC Food Access committee partnered with Metro in 2003 to map food resources such as grocery stores, emergency food sources, farmers markets, and community gardens, along with census data. In 2004, transit lines and automobile access were added.

√ Lents Advisory Committee

Based on review of the map and concentrations of low and very low-income residents, FPC chose the Lents neighborhood for the pilot food planning effort. FPC formed a steering committee to guide the program. Participating partners:

Oregon Food Bank	Lents residents	Friends of Zenger Farm
ROSE Community Development	Neighborhood Pride Team	Portland State University
Portland Bureau of Planning	Portland Parks & Recreation	Multnomah County
Office of Neighborhood Involvement	Health Department	Bureau of Housing & Community Dev.

√ Community Survey

Survey Explores Lents Food Needs

As a first step toward a food action plan for the Lents neighborhood, FPC and its partners initiated a survey of local residents. The questions explored perceptions of grocery stores and food programs, investigated shopping and cooking habits, and gauged interest in healthy eating, gardening and other potential solutions.

The Multnomah County Health Department managed the project, drawing upon volunteer survey design assistance from Portland State University and funding from the Northwest Health Foundation and the Oregon Food Bank.

Interviewers from the neighborhood administered the survey to 200 Lents residents, including Spanish and Russian speakers, at locations throughout the neighborhood.

Selected findings:

- Nearly one quarter of respondents (23%) agree "I sometimes worry about where my next meal will come from."
- Three quarters of respondents agree that they would like to eat a healthier diet (79%) and get their families to eat healthier diets (75%).
- Cost and lack of time are seen as the primary barriers to eating a healthier diet.
- Nearly half (48%) say they would grow their own food if they had the space.
- Half (51%) express dissatisfaction with the available selection of organic produce.
- Of parents whose kids had participated in the summer food program, the vast majority are satisfied with the activities (96%) and locations (85%).
- Most residents (61%) had not heard of the neighborhood farmers' market.

√ **Market Basket Survey**

FPC enlisted a PSU student and support from Oregon Food Bank to investigate the price and availability of food products at grocery stores in Lents. Using a nationally-tested “market basket” survey tool, the study compared six Lents stores and three stores in other parts of the city. It found a cross-section of common grocery items to be available and slightly less expensive in Lents, suggesting that Lents is not a “food desert” where affordable groceries are not available.

Next steps

Neighborhood Food Action Plan

Continue neighborhood assessment, and use the results as the basis for a neighborhood food action plan, potentially including a combination of food assistance programs, community gardens, education on food preparation and nutrition, expansion of retail options, or improvements in transportation.

Document the Model

Document this process to provide a blueprint for planning food access in other neighborhoods. FPC’s intent is that the food planning process can then be integrated in the work of Portland Planning Bureau and other agencies.

FPC Investigates Strategies to Protect Farms

Without strong land use protections, Oregon has no guarantee that agricultural land will be preserved for the future, and no control to avert the uninterrupted urban corridors of the East Coast. FPC’s land-use committee monitors local land use issues to identify ways to maintain and strengthen protections for farming. Despite special farm tax assessment and statewide land use planning, continual expansion of the urban growth boundary (UGB) drives land speculation and development pressure that threatens farming at the edge of the UGB.

2003 Recommendation

Investigate an agricultural easement program for small farms in the fringe areas along the existing urban growth boundary by identifying specific properties and exploring various funding sources.

Results

√ **Conservation Easement Report**

FPC’s land use committee prepared a report on using agricultural conservation easements to protect farms in the region. In its investigation, the group collected information on programs in other areas and discussed the concept with land use experts from a number of organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon

American Farmland Trust

Metro

Oregon Department of Agriculture

Multnomah County Planning

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Portland Bureau of Planning

Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

The group concluded that conservation easements could be useful in two contexts:

- Providing an added layer of protection to important agricultural lands outside the UGB.
- Preserving a limited number of farms to enhance livability within the UGB (see sidebar).

In both cases, the committee felt strongly that these strategies are a complement to, not a substitute for zoning protections.

The findings were discussed with the Food Policy Council and with City and County representatives to the Metro Policy Advisory Committee.

Next Steps

Urban Farm Concept

Present the urban farm concept (see sidebar) to local government agencies, farming organizations and community groups.

Metro “Big Look” Study

Encourage City and County to advocate at Metro for additional land protections.

Metro is currently undertaking a study to analyze the regional impacts of permanent farmland preservation on lands surrounding the Urban Growth Boundary. FPC encourages the City and County to advocate with Metro for any land-use tool, including conservation easements, to place additional protection on those special agricultural lands that are part of the Portland metropolitan region.

Urban Farms: A Contradiction?

Imagine a network of small urban farms dotting the region. Laboratories for teaching and learning, these pockets of history and commerce would connect neighbors of all ages to both the heritage of food and the future of sustainable agriculture.

Can this vision fit with the region’s urban growth plans? The Food Policy Council is preparing to present this urban farm concept to local government agencies, farming organizations and community groups.



Zenger Farm

County Buys Local

Responding to a recommendation from FPC, the Multnomah County Corrections Department ran a pilot project to increase purchases of local food. From June through September 2004, Aramark, the County’s food service vendor, worked with Rinella Produce to source vegetables and eggs from six farms located in Oregon and southern Washington.¹

2003 Recommendation

- Incorporate sustainability criteria into food purchasing contracts issued by City and County agencies.
- Focus on criteria that will help build connections with regional food suppliers.

¹ Fuji Produce, Delta Farms, Kern Ridge, Cal Farms Oregon Onion, Art Burns, Dickey Farms.

Results

√ Economic Impact

During the pilot project, a total of \$57,000 was spent on the local products, and Aramark estimates that 45%-65% of this would otherwise have been purchased from outside the local area. That means approximately \$30,000 was redirected to the local economy.

√ Cost

Aramark reported that no additional costs were incurred.

√ Scope

The project took on a more expanded scope than was initially planned. When FPC's institutional purchasing committee first met with Aramark, the plan was to source three crops locally (carrots, cabbage and bok choy), but additional crops were later included.

√ Leverage

The pilot expanded to include other correctional institutions served by Aramark. This includes institutions in seven other Oregon counties (Columbia, Linn, Benton, Polk, Marion, Umatilla, Deschutes).

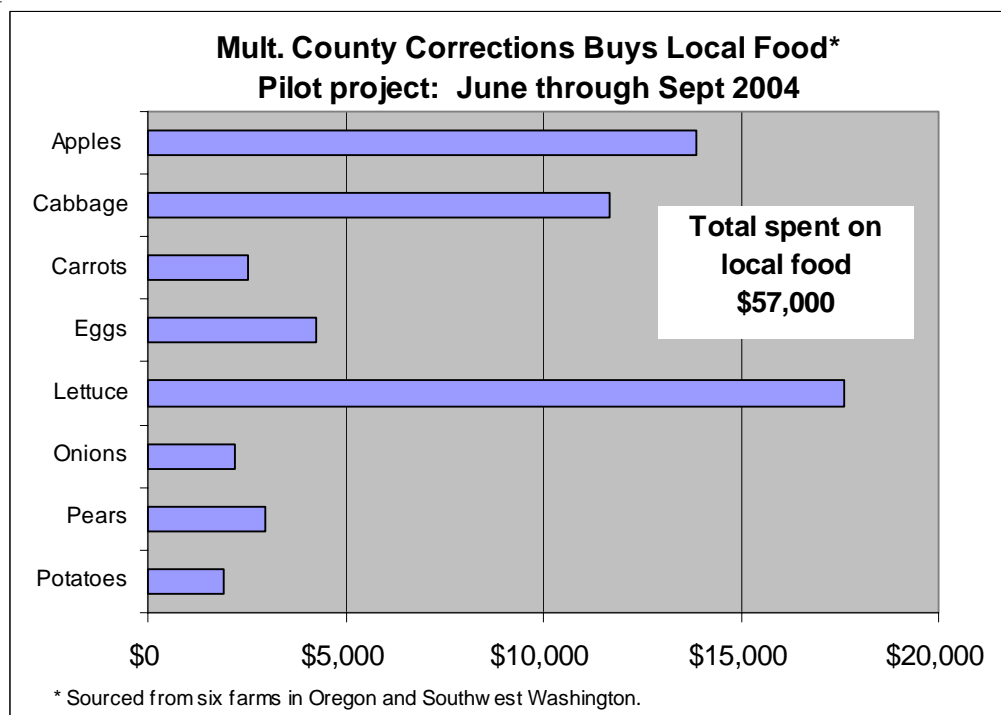
Next steps

Review Results

Review the results of the pilot and recommend how the local purchasing program could be modified or continued.

New Food Service Contract

Work with County to incorporate local purchasing in new food service contract.



FPC Promotes Farm-Direct Sales

While they represent a relatively small segment of Oregon agriculture, farm-direct sales such as farmers' markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture play an important role in raising the visibility of local agriculture and in expanding economic opportunity. For 2004, FPC's focus was creating a vision of Portland and Multnomah County as a place where farmers' markets flourish.

2003 Recommendations

- Create policies supporting use of public space for farmers' markets. Review site requirements for farmers' markets when developing public spaces.
- Plan for a network of permanent market sites throughout Portland and Multnomah County.

Results

√ **Market Needs Assessment**

FPC gathered input by visiting the farmers' markets, meeting with market board members, and convening a roundtable of area market managers. FPC made contact with all eight organizations operating markets in the county.

√ **Partnership With City Staff**

In August, FPC hosted a brownbag lunch for city employees working on design and management of public space. The goal was to share information so that staff would be able to partner with farmers' markets on projects as opportunities arise. Thirty people participated, and a written summary of the event was distributed to a wider audience. Following the workshop, Bureau of Planning provided a review of city codes related to farmers' markets.

√ **Town Center Working Group**

FPC formed a working group to explore how farmers' market sites could be integrated into a larger vision of developing town centers. Two markets, Hollywood and Hillsdale, are located in town centers designated by the Metro 2040 Plan and neighborhood plans envision a plaza that would house the farmers' market and other activities.

√ **Access for Food Stamp Recipients**

FPC worked with a Portland State University student to compile information on use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT), which allows food stamps to be spent at farmers' markets. This work was shared with the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force which will do further analysis on how to promote EBT at farmers' markets and farm stands. This will help build on an Eastbank Farmers' Market pilot project which processed \$2,380 in food stamp benefits over the past market season.

√ **Immigrant Farmer Workshop** *(see following page)*

Next steps

Sites Issues

Work with public agencies to address the site issues of farmers' markets

- Clarify city code related to farmers' markets.
- Promote town center vision and identify resources.
- Serve as an ombudsman to build partnerships between the markets and the city.

Promotions

Work with public agencies to help publicize the markets. In particular, publicize the availability of EBT at markets.

Immigrant Farmer Workshop

Convene community partners to host a second farm-direct workshop for immigrant farming communities

Workshop Expands Opportunities for Immigrant Farmers

FPC convened a workshop to assist immigrant farming communities to participate in farm-direct marketing.



Participants: 50 farmers (39 Hmong, 5 Cambodian, 5 Latino, 1 Somali-Bantu) and 40 other community partners.

Topics covered: Community supported agriculture, farmers' markets and sales to institutions

Input from farmers: Create further networking and events. Provide assistance on farming and gaining access to land.

Partners:

- Heifer International
- Mercy Enterprise
- Portland State University, National Somali-Bantu Project
- Friends of Zenger Farm
- Portland Farmers' Market
- USDA Risk Management Agency
- Drake University Agricultural Law Center
- Washington State University
- OSU Extension Service
- Hmong Association of Washington
- Food Innovation Center
- Oregon Farmers' Markets Association

Local Government Supports a Healthy Food System

FPC monitors implementation of local government efforts to support a healthy food system. FPC appreciates that local government has shown leadership through the following programs:

Food Access

- √ Portland Parks and Recreation and the Multnomah County Commission on Children and Families worked with Portland Public Schools to expand the number of sites and days when summer lunch programs are provided to low-income youth.
- √ PP&R opened two new community gardens, one at Pier Park in North Portland and one at a Bureau of Environmental Services pump station in Sellwood. There are now 29 community gardens in Portland. Last season, they donated 10,000 pounds of fresh organic produce to emergency food programs. PP&R continued to offer its Children's Garden Program at three locations. This summer camp targets lower-income kids and teaches them about food and gardening.
- √ Metro launched the "Fork It Over" food donation program which will increase the amount of surplus food available to emergency food programs.
- √ Within the last year Multnomah County Health Department's WIC program increased the number of unduplicated clients served by 3,318. In the same period, the value of WIC Food Vouchers redeemed at local grocers increased from \$9,629,302 to \$10,063,553.
- √ City Council passed an urban agriculture resolution directing bureaus to identify city owned land that may be suitable for community gardens or other agricultural purposes. FPC will consult with the City as this is implemented.

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture

- √ Several City agencies contributed to Friends of Zenger Farm, an urban agricultural park in Southeast Portland, located on property owned by the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES). BES, the Water Bureau and the Office of Sustainable Development supported use of sustainable building techniques in construction and renovation of Zenger's facilities.
- √ The City continues to support planning for the Portland Public Market, which will be an important venue for promoting Oregon agriculture.
- √ Metro authorized signing a contract with a facility that can process commercial food waste. In January the City will be initiate a voluntary program aimed at the largest commercial food generating businesses (groceries, manufacturers, cafeterias, institutions, hotels, and large restaurants). Food scraps and trim, food-soiled paper, cooked meats and breads will all be accepted.
- √ The Office of Sustainable Development implemented FPC's recommendation to create a new Sustainable Food Business Award as part of the Businesses for an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow (BEST) Awards. (see following page)
- √ Portland Parks & Recreation announced that it became certified by Salmon Safe, an organization that recognizes agricultural operations that protect water quality. This was the first time that Salmon Safe standards had been applied in an urban setting.

✓ Commissioner Rojo de Steffey worked with state and federal legislators, farmers and residents of Sauvie Island to secure \$35 million to replace the Sauvie Island Bridge, a critical farm-to-market link in our region.

City Recognizes Business Innovation in Sustainable Food



City Commissioner Dan Saltzman introduces the BEST Awards.

The 12th Annual BEST Business Awards included a first – a new award recognizing metro-area businesses for innovation and leadership in developing a sustainable food system.

Hosted by the Portland Office of Sustainable Development, the BEST Awards also honor businesses for excellence in energy efficiency, water conservation, transportation options and solid waste & recycling and sustainable products.

The new food award was created in response to a recommendation from the Food Policy Council. In addition, food-related projects were honored as winners in two other categories.

The breakfast also set a good example with local and sustainably produced menu items, donation of excess food to food rescue programs, and composting of food waste.

Sustainable Food Awards

Burgerville USA was recognized for being the first fast food restaurant in the Pacific Northwest to serve natural beef, tapping small co-op Oregon Country Beef as the primary source for its annual supply of 1.75 million pounds of beef.

Big City Produce was chosen for its commitment and success in providing local, quality, culturally appropriate food to a previously underserved population in North Portland.

Waste Reduction and Recycling Award

The **Port of Portland** won for their food waste recycling program at the airport.

Small Business Innovation

Hot Lips Pizza earned special citation for implementing a broad array of sustainable business practices including installing a system that uses waste heat from pizza ovens to heat water, using hybrid vehicles for pizza delivery, and sourcing wheat from Northwest farmers who use no-till practices.