Howard County, Maryland

# FOOD POLICY TASK FORCE

## Report and Recommendations

**December 2014**

# Howard County Food Policy Task Force Members

*(Positions refer to those held by members at the time of the Task Force appointments)*

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## Message from the Co-Chairs

Food - like air, water, and shelter - is a basic human need. Working closely with a talented group of folks we have impacted our community by providing access to healthy, affordable, fresh foods in low-income neighborhoods. The Roving Radish was a successful pilot to test our methodology and increase access to supporting a local food system. Fostering relationships between all areas of the community allowed this test to become a reality in a short period of time.

Howard County has long been a national leader in Agricultural Land Preservation. The County was the first in the nation to begin an installment purchase program for agricultural preservation easements. As a result of these efforts more than 21,000 acres of productive agricultural land and woodland are preserved in the County. We are blessed with some of the most innovative and successful farmers in the nation. The County supports the business of agriculture through Howard County Economic Development Authority. More young farmers are supplying food directly to the consumer - local farmers markets have proliferated throughout the County, restaurants are using more local food, and urban farms are a reality in the County.

We can build among this success by implementing and adding resources that support and enhance our local food system. The County can strengthen the sustainability of our local food system by aggregating/distributing food from local farms, initiating food retail solutions in food dessert areas, and supporting hunger assistance program for qualifying families. The food policy recommendations clearly support and justify the actions needed to provide healthy food access to our Howard County residents.

We have the land, the farmers and the markets to make this work. The recommendations of the task force provide the roadmap to provide fresh, healthy food to all residents while strengthening the agricultural economy.

Sincerely,

Wendy Webster

Wendy Webster

Ann H. Jones

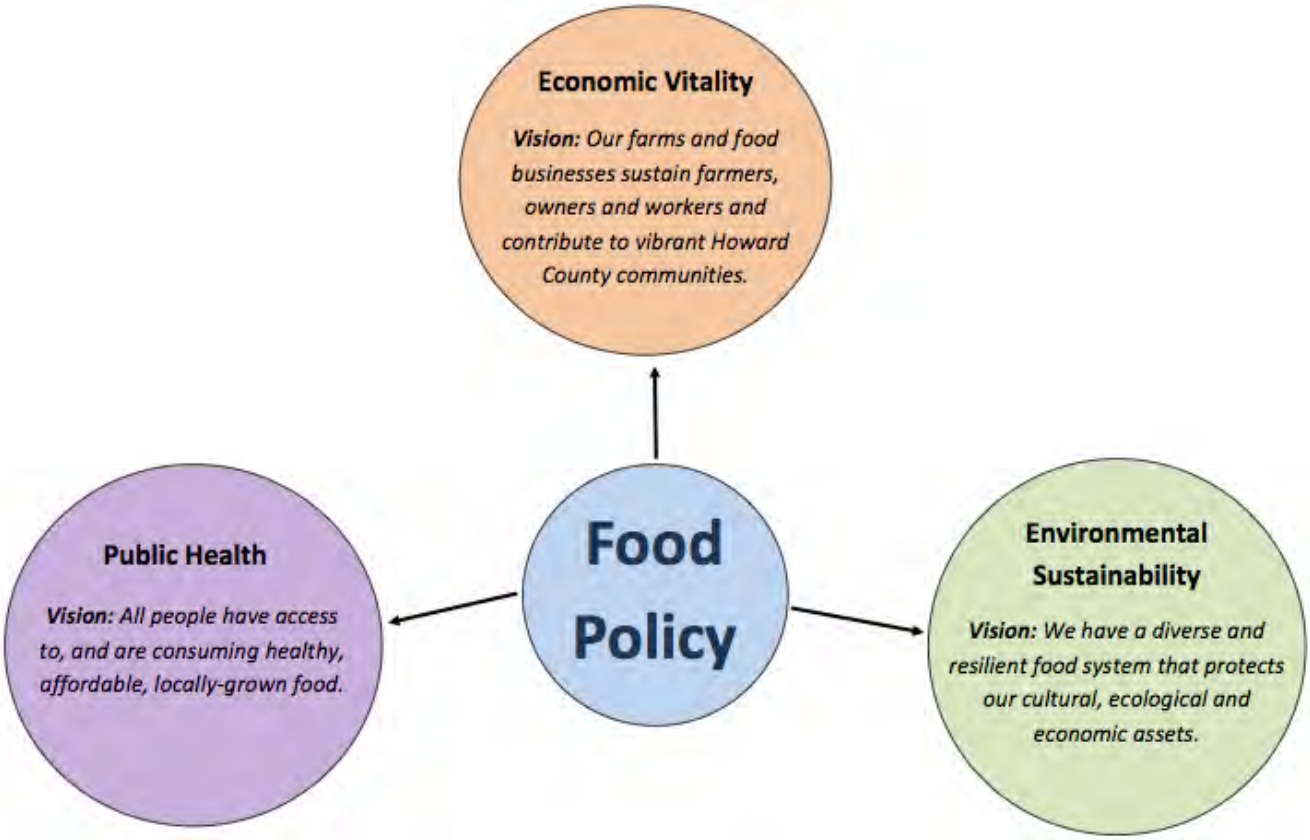
Ann Holmes Jones

# Introduction

Food is an integral part of any society and is closely related to public health, economic and social well-being, local self reliance, and sustainability.

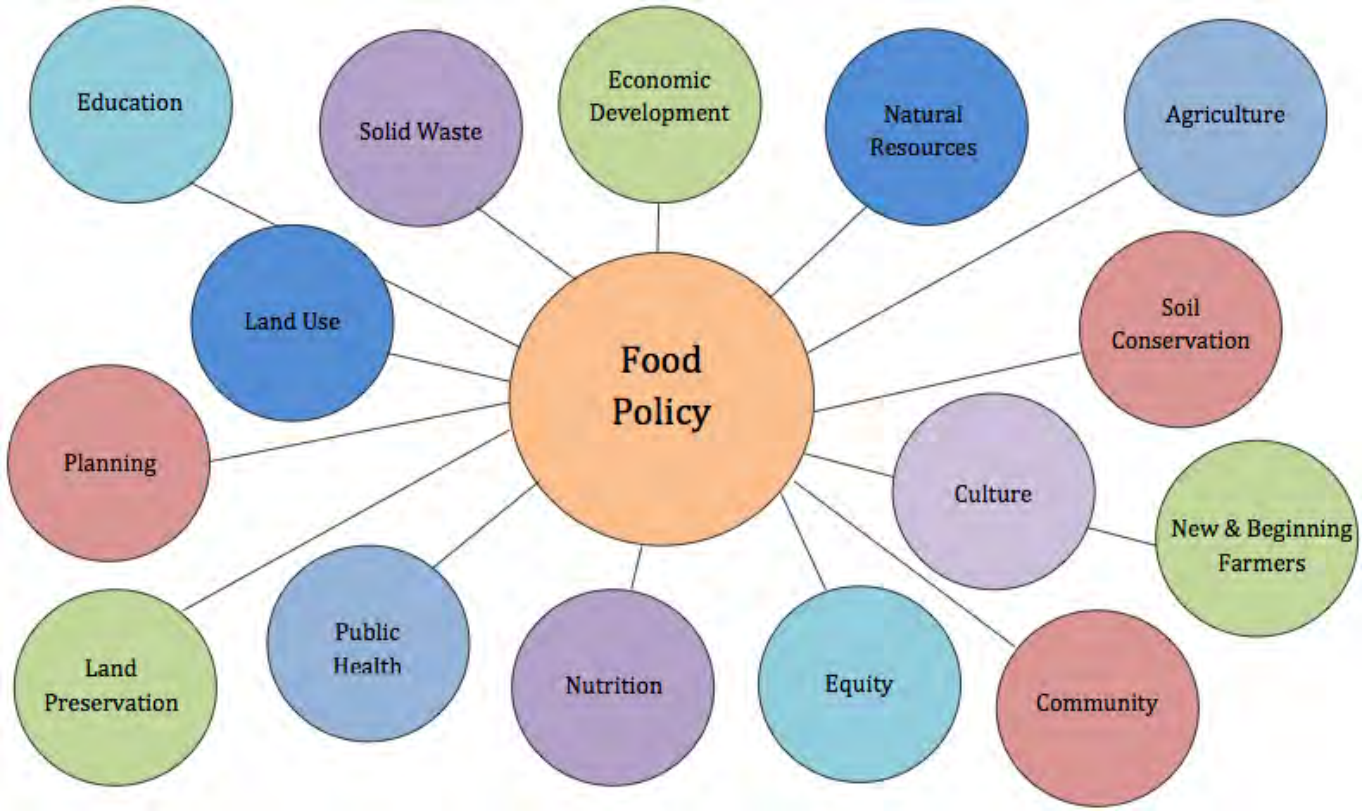
The recent rise in food policy councils and similar entities across North America, including eight that have formed in Maryland over the last five years, reflects the growing recognition that food policy is an all-encompassing issue that affects everyone and touches upon almost every field. These groups bring together representatives from health, economic development, agriculture, environmental sustainability, anti-hunger, faith, and labor organizations to come up with cross-sectoral solutions to the greatest challenges in their local and regional food systems.

Recognizing the value of such a group, former Howard County Executive Ken Ulman convened a food policy task force in December 2013 to make recommendations for how to support a community based food system in Howard County where food is healthy, fair, affordable and sustainable.



## Background

A food system encompasses all of the activities, infrastructure, and people involved in the growing, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of foods. The large scope of a food system means that it stands at the crossroads of many community concerns – land use, economic vitality, food security, environmental sustainability, public health, and transportation access, to name a few. Until recently, local policies and programs related to food have mostly operated in silos amongst city and county departments throughout the country, leading to structural inefficiencies and inequalities, as well as fragmented decision-making.[1] Meanwhile, our globalized food system has become increasingly consolidated without the input of the local communities most directly affected by some of its worst consequences.




These consequences of this current food system are vast and disconcerting. Over 24 million acres (an area larger than the size Indiana and Rhode Island combined) of America's farmland was lost to development between 1982 and 2010.[2] Nearly an acre of agricultural land was converted per minute between 2007 and 2010.[2] The consolidation of the food industry has contributed to the decline of mid-sized farms (50-999 acres) – the size of most "working

farms," or those in which farming is the chief source of income and primary occupation.[3] Nationally, 56,000 farms of this size were lost between 2007 and 2012.[4] Consolidation has also led to the loss of many small slaughterhouse facilities and other processing/distribution infrastructure which support farmers seeking to sell their products locally.[5,6]

Conventional agriculture depends on high external inputs (pesticides, fertilizers, and fossil fuels) that contribute over 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions, in addition to its role in eroding topsoil, escalating antibiotic resistance, reducing biodiversity, and polluting our air and water.[7] While the United States has a stable and abundant food supply, poverty and poor physical access to healthy foods primarily contribute to food insecurity, which affects close to 15% of Americans.[8] Meanwhile, the transition over the last few decades towards nutrient-poor diets high in processed foods, animal products, and refined sugars and fats has contributed to escalating rates of chronic diseases, including type II diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers.[9]

> ***Food insecure households**, which most of the time are not physically starving, are often unable to afford healthy balanced meals, worried their food will run out before they have money to buy more, or forced to skip meals because they can't afford enough food.*

Many efforts have arisen to address these problems. Recognizing the need to connect the disparate elements of their local, regional, state, and/or tribal food systems, stakeholders from various segments of the food system have been coming together to form food policy councils (FPCs). FPC members work to break down the silos on food systems issues to share information and coordinate their efforts to enhance the social, economic and environmental vitality of the area. While some operate as independent grassroots coalitions or 501(c)3 organizations, others are launched through state legislation or executive order by a mayor, governor, or other executive.[10]

Food policy councils (and similar entities that may go under a different name such as "food advisory council," "food and farm coalition," and "food system council") work on many levels, from the federal Farm Bill and state processing regulations to local zoning ordinances and farm-to-institution procurement policies.[11] Successful efforts achieved by FPCs have included making farmers markets more accessible to SNAP recipients, increasing locally grown food sourced by public schools and agencies, passing farmland protection ordinances, and permitting urban chicken-raising and beekeeping. Many councils also pursue programmatic efforts, such as education and outreach events.

While food systems research is still in its infancy, some of the proposed benefits of supporting local and regional food systems include improved public health and food security, economic development, and reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.[12]

Since the first FPC was established in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1982, the number of FPCs has escalated, most rapidly over the past five years. In 2009, there were 127 identified in North America. By September 2014, 263 North American FPCs (200 in the United States, 57 in Canada, and 6 in tribal nations) had been identified at the state, provincial, regional, county, local, and tribal levels.[13]

## Food Policy in Maryland

Following national trends, food policy councils in Maryland have been forming over the last five years. The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, formed in 2009 following the recommendations of a year-long mayor-appointed Food Policy Task Force, has brought food access to the top of the City – and consequently state and national – agenda. Some of its successes over the past five years include updating its zoning code to support urban agriculture; pursuing innovative healthy food retail projects; initiating a CSA option for employee benefits programs; and advocating for changes in state and federal policy to increase EBT acceptance at farmers markets, allow for online SNAP benefits, and support food access provisions in the Food Bill.

Montgomery County Food Council officially launched in 2012 after a series of conversations held throughout 2010-2011 among stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities facing the local food system. The independent council's current work includes providing input into the rewriting of the county's zoning ordinance, mapping areas where food access issues exist, building partnerships with Montgomery County Public Schools and local non-profits to promote garden-based educational opportunities and healthy eating, studying possibilities for composting in the county, and researching culinary incubators.[14]

Prince George's County endorsed the formation of a Food Equity Council in July 2013 to develop and support policies and practices for improving the county's food system. This initiative is funded and supported with technical assistance from the Institute for Public Health Innovation through a Community Transformation Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The council's work is concentrated in three areas: Healthy Food Retail, Local Food Production, and Nutrition Education & Anti-Hunger. Proposed policy changes the council is considering include an amendment that expands zoning in residential

and multifamily areas to enable agricultural uses like urban farms and legislation permitting farm stands, food trucks, and other mobile vending entities to sell fresh produce and healthy prepared foods in food deserts.

The Southern Maryland Food Council was launched in 2014 by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) to make its work more inclusive to the food and farm community. SMADC had already established a land preservation program and buy local campaigns locally. At the state level, industry development, food mapping, and policy work had emerged as priorities from the community, childhood obesity, public education and outreach – but all through the lens of farming and increasing access to fresh locally grown food.

A Harford County Food Policy Council and an Eastern Shore Food Alliance are also in development at this time.

Energy around food policy in Maryland has been particularly high recently. Just in the past several months there has been a Convening of Maryland Food Hub's, a Clean Food Roundtable, an Eastern Shore Food & Community Resilience Convening, and the Washington Regional Food Funders Conference. Most recently food policy leaders from the state joined others from our Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia at the Chesapeake Food Policy Leadership Institute in October 2014. This four-day institute led by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future's Food Policy Networks project, trained participants in organizational development, policy interventions and policy strategies, and communication to effectively influence food policy development and implementation. It also helped create a network of food policy leaders that is working collaboratively across state and municipal borders to rebuild the regional food system.

## Howard County by the Numbers

Even in prosperous areas such as Howard County, significant numbers of people still struggle to access and or afford the foods essential to a healthy diet. According to the American Community Survey, 10,742 individuals were living in poverty in 2013. As of September 2014, 19,120 individuals participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is a 98.1% increase from the SNAP rate five years ago. In addition, 46% of residents in Howard County that are eligible for the program are not enrolled. 3,968 participate in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). 10,142 (19.2%) Howard County students qualify for Free or Reduced Price Meals.

3,151 households (2.9%) do not have a vehicle for transportation[15], which could present challenges to accessing a supermarket where healthy foods are typically offered. Officially, 3.47% of Howard County residents live in Designated Limited Supermarket Access Area, which means they must travel longer distances to reach a supermarket compared to the average distance traveled of non-low/moderate income areas[16].

Howard County is, overall, the healthiest county in Maryland. However, our relative affluence and high educational status have not led to obesity statistics much better than the state or national average. 56% of Howard County adults are overweight or obese.[17] African American/Black residents reported having the highest rates of overweight/obesity in the county at 70%; Native American residents rank second with a rate of 62%, followed by Caucasian/White at 55%, Asian at 45%, and finally Hispanic/Latino at 39%[18]. 59% and 20% of residents over the age of 65 also report having been diagnosed with high blood pressure and diabetes, respectively.[19]

While many factors contribute to chronic diet-related diseases and unhealthy weights, diets high in fruits and vegetables and low in added sugars, processed foods, oils, and meats contribute to can reduce the risk for these health conditions.[20] Howard County residents still have room to improve on these preventative measures. One survey found that 54% of those earning less than $50,000 in Howard County are eating less than one serving of fruit daily and 39% are eating less than one serving of vegetables daily.[21] African Americans, Asians, and Native Americans are more likely to report eating less than one serving of fruit and vegetables daily.

Howard County is also experiencing a population boom – a growth from 118,572 residents in 1980 to 304,580 in 2013. This increased population, and the development that comes with it, has added pressures to develop our farmland. Although agribusiness remains one of the top five industries in the County, it is continually under threat of loss – and with it, our ability to support a local agricultural economy and resilient food production in the future. From 2007 to 2012, Howard County lost 40 farms. The County still has 293 farms, 21 of which are over 500 acres and make up about 16,000 acres while the rest, smaller than 500 acres, make up the other 16,000 acres. As of September 2014, a total of 21,972 acres in the County have been purchased or dedicated as agricultural preservation easements, which restrict development on prime farmland and woodland forever.

The major crops produced on these farms include turkeys (the County is 2nd highest producer in the state), corn, soybeans, and wheat. We are seeing a growing interest in agritourism operations, as well as nursery, greenhouse, and landscape enterprises. It is also important to note that the average age of farmers is 59, representing the growing challenge to maintain farming as a viable occupation among young people.[22]

# Howard County Task Force

In December 2013, former Howard County Executive Ken Ulman announced the creation of a food policy task force to bring people together to make recommendations that will impact the local food and agricultural system.

## Mission

The mission of the Howard County Task Force was to **support a community based food system in Howard County where food is healthy, fair, affordable and sustainable.** This task force – composed of leaders in the fields of food production, restaurants, the community college, and the corrections systems, as representatives on behalf of our vulnerable populations – met monthly through 2014. The group partnered with the Horizon Foundation, an independent philanthropy dedicated to improving the health and wellness of people living or working in Howard County, as well as the Howard County Economic Development Authority and Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future to enhance its efforts.

## Vision

The task force members decided that they would approach their recommendations with three visions in mind:

1. **Economic Vitality:** Our farms and food businesses sustain farmers, owners and workers and contribute to vibrant Howard County communities.
2. **Public Health:** All people have access to, and are consuming healthy, affordable, locally-grown food.
3. **Environmental Sustainability**: We have a diverse and resilient food system that protects our cultural, ecological and economic assets.

To achieve its vision, the task force started with four different committees: Production & Distribution, Economic Development, Healthy Access, and Data, Metrics and Evaluation. The Data, Metrics and Evaluation committee was eventually dissolved, as those members were absorbed by three other groups and data/metrics became an underlying part of each of the three groups.

## Projects

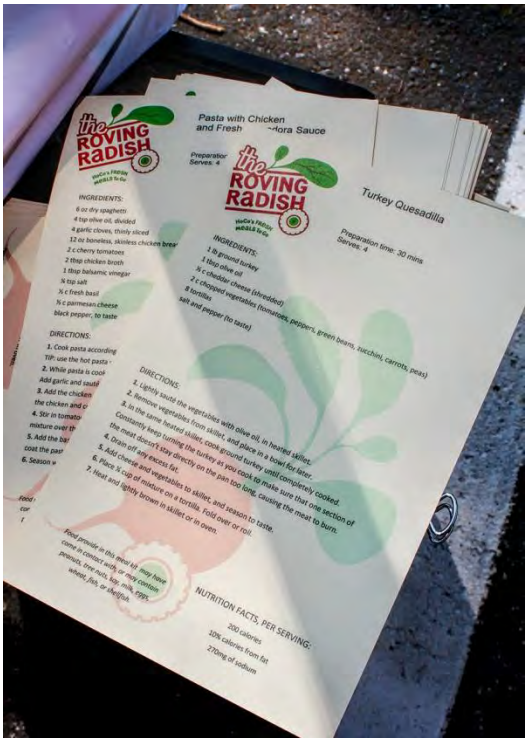
Besides working on a set of recommendations, the task force was also very involved in the development of The Roving Radish, a mobile market pilot program, and helping to conceptualize a regional food hub and kitchen incubator.

The Roving Radish was a pilot program offered by Howard County – with strong support from the Horizon Foundation and The United Way of Central Maryland. The mission of the

Roving Radish was to promote farm to table healthy eating habits to our community while creating sustainable markets for our local and regional farms and providing job training for inmates at the Howard County Detention Center. The Roving Radish accomplished this by selling to the community affordable healthy meal kits sourced from regional farms and package by the Howard County Detention Center.

Produce and proteins where primarily provided by Common Market in Philadelphia from regional farms. Common Market, a nonprofit organization, was selected for procurement because their mission matched well with the pilot program and they had the ability to provide the majority of produce and proteins needed. The relationship the Roving Radish had with Common Market helped foster business relationships between two local Howard County farms, leading to purchases of their produce. Common Market has indicated that they would like to continue these relationships in the coming year as well as creating some more relationships with more Howard County farms. When produce or protein could not be obtained through Common Market the Roving Radish ordered from local farmers.

The meal kits included two recipes to prepare two meals for a family of four. Customers placed their orders for meal kits online by midnight Thursday, for pick-up the following week. The customers were able to see the two recipes and ingredients before placing an order. Once they decide to order, they selected where they wanted to pick and how they would like to pay. Customer had the option to pay with credit card online, or in person using cash, credit or EBT.




The food for the kits was ordered on Friday from Common Market – a food hub in Philadelphia, working with regional farmers including farms in Maryland – for delivery on Monday. Food is also purchased directly from Howard County farmers. Any dry goods included in the meal kits were purchased from Wegmans, Giant Foods or Performance Foods.

Monday morning, the food was delivered to the Howard County Detention Center for a workforce development program. Throughout the day, the produce was washed, dried, processed according to the recipe, and packaged. Any other dry goods included in the recipe were also measured and pack at that time by the inmates. Proteins provided in the meal kits packaging was never altered or tampered with for food safety reason. The meal kits include as

much ingredients as possible to add to the convenience of the kits. After all the ingredients were ready for packing, the meal kits were packaged in assembly line fashion and stored in the detention center walk in refrigerator for delivery. Meal kits were prepared and packaged the night before deliver to ensure freshness. The Roving Radish kits were delivered on Tuesday and Wednesday to five pickup locations. These deliver locations were determined by their ease of access and food access needs of the community.

- 496 Total households served
- 2481 Total kits sold
- 51% of kits sold have been subsidized.
- Our First week subsidized sales were 33% and have increased on average 1.9% every week to 55% on week 20 with our great percentage of subsides of 65% on week 19.
- 154 Total EBT Sales
- $48,890 of regional and local produce and proteins purchased.
- 162 Donated Kits (HopeWorks / Bridgeway Community Church Cupboard)

*Additional information on the Roving Radish 2014 Pilot Program can be obtained in the Howard County Roving Radish 2014 Pilot Program Final Report.*

With help from American Communities Trust, the Task Force developed a plan for bringing a regional food hub to Howard County. The proposed regional food hub would likely aggregate food produced from a 150-mile radius, and distribute it to schools, restaurants, hospitals, grocery stores, etc in the area. The food hub could also house a kitchen incubator – a commercial size, shared-use kitchen available for rent or lease, but also with a small business development component available.

More information is available in the Howard County Regional Food Hub Study.

## Recommendations and Strategies

After meeting monthly throughout 2014, the Task Force came up with the following set of recommendations which are described in detail in this report:

1. Establish a food council of food system stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations and have a leadership team that can develop new policies and procedures as needed.
2. Secure appropriate staffing to lead the food council, provide guidance and assistance to county government on food issues and other groups as needed.
3. Cultivate strategic partnerships with government, non-profit, health care, education and small businesses to leverage funds, knowledge, and efficiency to improve food access and farm viability.
4. Identify and connect to vulnerable populations to ensure that all eligible residents have access to nutrition and food programs.
5. Determine where transportation barriers exist within current food access programs to better serve Howard County residents.
6. Develop a marketing and outreach strategy to increase public awareness of our regional food system to facilitate a return to conscious food consumption.
7. Explore opportunities to sustain and expand the Roving Radish program that brings fresh, regionally grown food to residents.
8. Support the development of a robust food industry by establishing a regional food hub and/or food incubator in Howard County to create a synergy between growers, restaurants, institutions and consumers, and to provide opportunities for new jobs and markets.
9. Create new policies and legislation that encourage growth and expansion of food and agricultural business opportunities, increase markets, and create jobs.
10. Support agricultural and food entrepreneurial development to strengthen production and distribution and maximize county revenue and job retention.
11. Retain current agricultural infrastructure and develop needed framework to support new and emerging markets.
12. Develop educational programs for both farmers and entrepreneurs, to support the creation of niche products for new business development.
13. Provide tools and resources for farmers and consumers to expand local food infrastructure, and encourage, as well as promote, new business development.

The co-chairs would like to thank the members of the Task Force for contributing their time and expertise to the preparation of these recommendations and this report.

| | Recommendations | Strategies | | |
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| | | Short Term | Mid Term | Long Term |
| 1. | **Establish a food council of food system stakeholders to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations and have a leadership team that can develop new policies and procedures as needed.** | 1) Establish guidelines and mission for council<br>2) Determine criteria for membership<br>3) Ensure adequate staffing | 1) Recruit and retain a broad membership base of community partners<br>2) Establish quarterly meetings with policy makers to discuss priorities | 1) Establish a line of communication with policy makers to ensure continued growth and development |
| 2. | **Secure appropriate staffing to lead the food council, provide guidance and assistance to county government on food issues and other groups as needed.** | 1) Continue funding for full time food policy director and market manager<br>2) Better connect Food Policy with Economic Development Authority, Soil Conservation and the Agricultural Land Preservation Program | 1) Hire part-time food council facilitator and part-time Roving Radish employee | 1) Hire outreach coordinator for our aging and vulnerable populations<br>2) Hire a marketing & communications coordinator to help create strategic and impactful messaging |
| 3. | **Cultivate strategic partnerships with government, non-profit, health care, education and small businesses to leverage funds, knowledge, and efficiency to improve food access and farm viability.** | 1) Identify strategic partners by reviewing existing programs and services | 1) Seek broader buy-in, cooperation and understanding from all local *(or regional)* government offices on the goals and objectives of the task force<br>2) Integrate food access opportunities and education with existing health and social services | 1) Build public/private partnerships to leverage resources to expand healthy food access<br>2) Develop education and outreach materials for use in engaging various stakeholders |
| 4. | **Identify and connect to vulnerable populations to ensure that all eligible residents have access to nutrition and food programs.** | 1) Enable SNAP to be accepted at all farmers markets<br>2) Investigate and work to remove any policy barriers that exist for food donations | 1) Map data on poverty, SNAP registration, emergency food sources and information to prioritize need and opportunities<br>2) Secure funding to incentivize SNAP benefits at farmers markets and explore | 1) Improve access to and expand outreach for enrollment in SNAP, WIC and other food assistance programs<br>2) Identify government resources to augment federal SNAP benefits |

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| | | | tax incentives for farmers to assist | |
| 5. | **Determine where transportation barriers exist within current food access programs to better serve Howard County residents.** | 1) Conduct a survey of current food programs serving the homebound | 1) Expand access to food assistance programs | 1) Expand access of regional agricultural products for seniors |
| 6. | **Develop a marketing and outreach strategy to increase public awareness of our regional food system to facilitate a return to conscious food consumption.** | 1) Develop and publish online a list of food, nutrition and gardening resources in the County<br>2) Increase publicity, events, promotion of local healthy eating (e.g. iron chef)<br>3) Encourage events where farmers share experiences with children/citizens<br>4) Promote Healthy Howard Restaurants/Homegrown Howard<br>5) Partner with Horizon Foundation to coordinate outreach message<br>6) Promote families eating together through faith-based organizations (healthy & local)<br>7) Develop an outreach strategy that reaches various ethnic communities incorporating the use of ethnic foods | 1) County-wide campaign effort to increase healthy, regional eating - and decrease unhealthy eating - with links to current programs on a return to home cooking<br>2) Connect Roving Radish to schools<br>3) Increase and promote things such as school gardens, community gardens, and school cooking clubs<br>4) Promote intergenerational cooking with seniors to teach canning-cooking, menu planning<br>5) Create TV and radio marketing campaigns that show the value of local farming, buying local foods, and home cooking<br>6) Develop a strategy for increasing and/or enhancing existing farmers markets<br>7) Increase funding of programs that impact schools, such as Days of Taste | 1) Increase knowledge about the origin of foods and how to prepare food in the home<br>2) Lower overall obesity rate in Howard County<br>3) Develop an agricultural education program in HCPSS, connecting with ARL (Applied Research Lab)<br>4) Partner with advocacy organizations to improve child nutrition standards at federal level |

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| 7. | **Explore opportunities to sustain and expand the Roving Radish program that brings fresh, regionally grown food to residents.** | 1) Ask Apple Ford to extend the vehicle lease<br>2) Identify new location for Roving Radish, staff and vehicle<br>3) Identify dedicated space for prep and storage<br>4) Identify population where Roving Radish would be most needed and expand program into those areas | 1) Secure long term use of vehicle<br>2) Identify local agencies that may be able to share labor<br>3) Model menus after farmers growing seasons<br>4) Create flexible bid process for food purchase/use current contract for aggregator<br>5) Create ongoing recipe development collaboration | 1) Select a long-term aggregator<br>2) Expand program options to other locations<br>3) Change packaging plans for sustainability<br>4) Farmer supply program/pre buy items<br>5) Blended cost contract for food purchasing |
| 8. | **Support the development of a robust food industry by establishing a regional food hub and/or food incubator in Howard County to create a synergy between growers, restaurants, institutions and consumers, and to provide opportunities for new jobs and markets.** | 1) Conduct feasibility study to determine programs to include in the food hub<br>2) Obtain good supply & demand data to support regional food hub<br>3) Determine the best governing structure of the food hub<br>4) Meet with food council groups from surrounding counties, to gain support and collaborate where we can<br>5) Consider promoting the food hub with efforts that include demonstrations, such as Days of Taste<br>6) Reach out to businesses and institutions to garner support | 1) Contract pre-buys for farmers with local institutions (schools, businesses, restaurants), like a CSA for businesses | 1) Connect with surrounding counties food policy and economic development staff to help plan for regional expansion and determine Howard County's role in expansion<br>2) Research and pilot local food programs to complement the food hub and/or incubator |

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| 9. | **Create new policies and legislation that encourage growth and expansion of food and agricultural business opportunities, increase markets, and create jobs.** | 1) Create official workforce development program with Howard County Detention Center, in relation to The Roving Radish<br>2) Review current policies that could impede new food and agricultural opportunities<br>3) Review farmland preservation policies and, if necessary, make recommendations to allow agricultural processing, production and distribution on preserved farmland | 1) Remove policy barriers to farms and food businesses<br>2) Encourage policies that benefit institutions sourcing locally<br>3) Develop Farm to Table county guidelines/certification regarding local food origin | 1) Review agricultural land taxing policies and encourage changes to the taxing policy that support local food and agricultural business opportunities |
| 10. | **Support agricultural and food entrepreneurial development to strengthen production and distribution and maximize county revenue and job retention.** | 1) Obtain more licenses for raw milk cheese processing<br>2) Support efforts for brick & mortar and mobile processing units<br>3) Support beginning farmer training programs<br>4) Encourage and support more regional butcher shops, as well as training<br>5) Support local farmers and food business, including CSA's | 1) Promote regional eating in school curriculum<br>2) Increase local procurement opportunities<br>3) Encourage institutions to buy regionally grown or prepared foods and provide healthy food education programs to its students, faculty and staff<br>4) Incubate new farm and food business ventures<br>5) Start program like Farmlink to improve land access for farmers<br>6) Pilot pop-up events such as holiday or ethnic events to promote locally produced or value added foods | 1) Address the supply shortage of locally produced food<br>2) Improve market access to municipalities and larger consumers<br>3) Encourage grants for local food production, processing and distribution<br>4) Establish shared use-kitchen<br>5) Improve workforce development for production & distribution |

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| **11.** | **Retain current agricultural infrastructure and develop needed framework to support new and emerging markets.** | 1) Conduct a study to identify where Howard County residents spend their food dollars<br>2) Conduct a feasibility study of flash freezing/mobile freezing unit and support development as warranted | 1) Determine need for a local incubator for food processing | 1) Connect with surrounding counties food policy and economic development staff to help plan for regional expansion and determine Howard County's role in expansion |
| **12.** | **Develop educational programs for both farmers and entrepreneurs, to support the creation of niche products for new business development.** | 1) Identify and encourage business/education institutions to support food hub<br>2) Coordinate with Howard Community College and their educational programming on agriculture and food<br>3) Coordinate with the Maryland Center for Entrepreneurship to develop small business development programs for the food industry | 1) Explore technological opportunities (e.g., a mobile app tracking supply and demand) | 1) Develop the Maryland Center for Food Innovation as a resource for both farms and entrepreneurs<br>2) Provide a position that would help guide farmers and food entrepreneurs through county, state and federal regulations |

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| 13. | **Provide tools and resources for farmers and consumers to expand local food infrastructure, and encourage, as well as promote, new business development.** | 1) Diversity assistance, niche markets, ag grant increase<br><br>2) Develop and host a Buyer-Grower conference<br><br>3) Establish a program to encourage shared equipment for farmers<br><br>4) Offer GAP certification funds (who can help/who is already providing assistance -Wegmans)<br><br>5) Investigate increasing educational efforts for best use of food resources, both at K-12 and higher education institutions<br><br>6) Establish or connect with existing Farmlink program, connecting new/beginning farmers with available land and mentors | 1) Create and fund grant/loan program for farmers (new, beginning, value added, diversifying)<br><br>2) Provide deer management assistance/education to reduce crop loss<br><br>3) Improve connection between Roving Radish and local farms<br><br>4) Investigate sustainable farming practices, including the use of compost/composting and LEED certification of the food hub | 1) Develop a farm incubator program in Howard County<br><br>2) Create programs including training and education for new and beginning farmers |

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