RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
FOOD POLICY TASK FORCE
Report and Recommendations to improve food access in the City
July 2013
Cover photographs courtesy of Tricycle Gardens.
WHEREAS, one in three children in the City of Richmond live below the federal poverty level;

WHEREAS, one in four citizens of the City of Richmond currently participate in the federal nutritional assistance program;

WHEREAS, there are a number of “food deserts” in the City of Richmond, particularly in lower income neighborhoods of color;

WHEREAS, access to affordable, fresh, nutritious food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, especially for children, is a serious problem facing many families and is a leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity; and

WHEREAS, there is significant health, economic, and environmental benefits to the city and its residents from establishing a local food system plan and expanding the availability of locally and organically grown foods.

THEREFORE, the Food Policy Task Force is hereby established to give the Administration advice on food policy and land use planning issues in the City of Richmond to include urban agriculture, development of markets for locally-grown food, food education, child nutrition, and the development of inner-city supermarkets;

The Food Policy Council is hereby charged with:

Conducting and/or reviewing existing assessment data from the Virginia Food Policy System Explorer, a project of Virginia Cooperative Extension, on the availability of quality, fresh and affordable food, particularly in lower income neighborhoods;

Producing and disseminating a City of Richmond Food System Report that assesses the state of the city’s food system, including activities in production, distribution, consumption, marketing, nutrition and food assistance program participation and innovative food system programs;

Drafting a Richmond City Food System Plan to include recommendations for the promotion of innovations in land use, economic development, and health policy to include: a) removing barriers that limit access to quality, healthy and fresh foods; b) increasing the use of farm to school and farm to consumer programs; c) expanding the development of local food-based businesses including farmers markets; d) expanding urban agricultural production of locally-grown and organically-grown foods to include school and community gardens; e) enhancing food security of city residents.

AND

Further, the Food Policy Council shall develop a strategy for implementation of Richmond food policies including measures and benchmarks for determining progress towards achievement of the objectives; and make recommendations consistent with making Richmond a Tier One City.
# Mayor’s Food Policy Taskforce Members

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

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<td>Pizza Tonight</td>
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<td>Jalana McCasland</td>
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<td>Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Human Services</td>
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<td>Gardener, Radio Producer, Sustainability Educator</td>
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<td>City of Richmond Department of Planning and Development Review</td>
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<td>Project Management Analyst</td>
<td>Virginia Food System Council, Executive Committee</td>
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<td>Debbie Hinton Lead Staff Support Operations Manager</td>
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<td>Charles Lee</td>
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<td>Richmond City Health District</td>
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<td>Alicia Zatcoff</td>
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<td>Tricycle Gardens Board of Directors (co-chair)</td>
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<td>Sustainability Manager City of Richmond</td>
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<td><strong>Honorary Member:</strong> Councilwoman Cynthia Newbille</td>
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"The wise man should consider that health is the greatest of human blessings. Let food be your medicine." - Hippocrates
Richmond is a city divided in many ways. Though numerous residents have extremely high quality of life and myriad advantages, many of our residents live in isolated poverty with little or no access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. Almost a third of Richmond’s neighborhoods are considered “food deserts”, areas where low-income residents have no access to grocery stores. What food is available in these neighborhoods comes from fast food restaurants and convenience stores, ensuring that it is highly processed and contains high levels of fat and salt, leading to high rates of food-related diseases.

Of all the disparities between Richmond residents, lack of access to fresh, healthy food is certainly the most poignant, since this exacerbates other barriers to health and quality of life.

Recognizing that these problems represent dire setbacks to these residents and to our City, Mayor Jones formed this Food Policy Task Force so that food advocates, working on these issues every day, can advise the administration on how it can do its part to support food-access and food-advocacy efforts currently underway in the city. This document isn’t a starting point; it’s a way of building on the momentum already in our community by formalizing a structure through which the City can provide support for these efforts.

The Task Force was made up of a group of passionate, knowledgeable, capable food-access advocates. Representatives from non-profits, food-based businesses and state agencies joined city staff to discuss their vision of a city in which all people have a right to fresh food and their ideas for making that vision a reality, and to do the research needed to make the case for change. The result was this document, meant to be a guide to the administration in alleviating food access and health disparities in the City. This group should be commended for their energy, their commitment, their expertise and their enthusiasm in approaching this problem. They should also be commended for the work they do each and every day to make this city a better place to live and eat.

In approaching this, Richmond became part of a national movement working on these issues, for our city is not alone in this predicament. Step by step, cities across the U.S. are recognizing that food access is paramount to quality of life and central to creating healthy, vibrant places to live.

Following the steps outlined in this document the City hopes to make healthy eating, as part of a healthy lifestyle, accessible to all Richmond residents. With the projects recommended here, we can begin to break the barriers which isolate people in food deserts, and move forward to our goal of becoming a world-class, Tier-one city.

Sincerely,

Anne W. Darby
Executive Summary

From the beginning of Mayor Dwight C. Jones’ administration, he articulated a vision for Richmond that included a healthy and sustainable community - a Tier One City. To realize tenets of the vision, in January 2010 the Mayor established a Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Policy that resulted in creation of specific issue-focused commissions and task forces to address some of the city’s most pressing needs. Among the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Commission adopted by the Mayor was branding his focus on health and wellness through a community-wide promotional campaign, now broadly recognized as the Healthy Richmond Campaign. With the launch of the Mayor’s Healthy Richmond Campaign, the city embarked on a broader, more concerted approach to health and wellness. This campaign has grown to include: the Breastfeeding Commission, the Pedestrian Bicycling and Trails Planning Commission, the city’s adoption of the nationwide “Let’s Move!” initiative, the Office on Aging and Persons with Disabilities, and the Food Policy Task Force. Below is a graphic display of the interconnectedness of related task forces and commissions.

**Graphic – Interrelationship of Healthy Richmond Campaign and Related Initiatives**
Executive Summary

In July 2011, Mayor Jones established The Food Policy Task Force. At the core of this initiative is the will to ensure all residents have access to healthy foods and an understanding of the impact this has on both an individual’s health and the health of the community at-large. The Mayor’s Food Policy Task Force was comprised of community food advocates representing local government, non-profits, community advocates, urban planners, urban farmers, community gardeners, chefs, public health officials, and others with interests and expertise in the local food system. Each member was invited to participate based on his/her commitment and contributions to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables to disadvantaged communities in Richmond. Given the breadth of the Mayor’s charge and the range of factors contributing to deficiencies in the local food system, the task force created a structure of issue-focused work groups. These work groups examined available research and key studies of existing and promising programs, and citizen input to tailor their final recommendations for the city. The focus area work groups were:

- Food Security – examining the availability and access to nutritious food
- Education and Awareness – promoting healthy eating and its impact on individual and community health and well-being
- Health and Nutrition – examining the relationships between diet, health and disease
- School and Community Gardens – reviewing existing initiatives that support the city’s food system
- Quality of School Food – assessing the quality and nutritious value of school breakfast and lunch
- Community Assessment – developing an assessment of the city’s food system

To inform the work of the task force and the strategic development of recommendations to address an equitable food system for all, the FPTF reviewed existing related data, including information from the Virginia Food Policy System Explorer,¹ and conducted a Community Assessment of the city’s food system. The Community Assessment confirmed what many in the food, nutrition and health communities believed; within Richmond, there are communities and populations without convenient access to healthy foods and for whom a nutritious diet and good health are out of reach. Many

¹ The Virginia Community Food System Explorer is a project of Virginia Cooperative Extension.
residents living in low-income neighborhoods live in the equivalent of “food deserts.” Far too many Richmonders are “going hungry” and wondering where their next meal will come from. Others do not have access to foods that provide their bodies with the necessary nutrients, vitamins and minerals necessary to be healthy.

The first section of this report contains the Community Needs Assessment. This assessment uses local data from multiple sources to quantify the level of food insecurity and resulting health impacts affecting many Richmonders. Following the Community Needs Assessment, research findings and related key presentations used to guide the final recommendations are discussed. Through review of key studies and presentations, data in this report show that when both economic and geographical barriers are taken into consideration, the city’s low-income populations are especially vulnerable to food insecurity and related chronic diseases. Partly as a result of food insecurity, many Richmond residents suffer with chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. The research clearly concludes that eating an abundance and variety of fresh fruits and vegetables has a significant positive impact on health. However, access to fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables is frequently not an option in lower income communities. Commonly in these neighborhoods, there is no grocery store and residents have limited, costly and cumbersome transportation to or from the nearest full service food retailer. As a result, residents shop at the local corner convenience store. Many of these stores are stocked with highly processed, high fat, high calorie, often low nutrient and more costly foods. Finally, the assessment clearly demonstrates that food choice influences the health and well-being of our citizens.

The next section of the report provides greater detail of the task force’s structure and organization and is followed by the presentation of the findings and recommendations. Each work group, with the exception of the Community Assessment group, developed a list of top five (5) recommendations related to their focus area. A total of 30 recommendations advanced from this process and were presented to the public in a community forum held February 2012. Forum participants were given the opportunity to vote for their top recommendations. Also to expand citizen engagement and participation, an online survey was announced by the Mayor’s Press Office and hosted on the city’s

2 Food Deserts are typically defined as neighborhoods where residents often travel distances of greater than one mile to the nearest full service grocery store and where these same residents do not have access to readily available transportation.
Executive Summary

official website for two weeks. The FPTF reviewed and incorporated the input and feedback from both citizen participation activities; combined similar and related themes found in the recommendations; and, developed 17 final recommendations which are presented in this report.

At the center of this report is the section that details the results of the Community Forum, followed by detailed description and justification of each of the report’s final 17 recommendations. The conclusion ties the recommendations back to the Mayor’s charge, with discussion of next steps. Finally, there is an Appendix that includes a Matrix and Prioritization of Recommendations, brief bios for the task force members, additional resources for the reader, Food Policy Task Force Presentation.pptx, Women, Infant Children (WIC) Food Desert Map, Healthy Corner Store Initiatives, and Food Policy Community Forum.

The Food Policy Task Force members believe this document lays the foundation for increased public awareness, future decisions and actions that will play an integral role in creating a more equitable and sustainable food system for city residents.
INTRODUCTION

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), “[m]any factors contribute to an individual’s overall diet, body weight, and the risk of developing diet-related diseases, such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease.” Researchers have found that individual behaviors can explain some but not all of the factors that impact differences in diet and health. Recent studies have also found difficulty in establishing causal links to other factors commonly thought to have direct impact – for example, socioeconomic status (SES) or ethnicity. For example, some health disparities linked to socioeconomic status – such as diabetes – are complicated by studies showing equally high rates among higher income populations; similar results have been found in recent studies in racial disparities when looking at income. However, what is clear is that people experiencing food insecurity – either due to lack of access to healthy foods or barriers to choosing them, such as affordability – are at a much higher risk of experiencing diet-related health problems. Even if direct causes are not certain, population groups shown to have greater risk or vulnerability to diet-related health problems, i.e., low income and minority families – especially children and mothers, need additional attention to ensure greater access to healthy foods. Residents who are disabled, without health insurance or with special dietary requirements should also receive special attention in any efforts to address food insecurity. Food choice and availability influence the physical condition and well-being of individuals. Dietary concerns include the overconsumption of calories, added sugars, and saturated fats and/or the underconsumption of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, which has an impact on health conditions such as obesity.

The reality that many Richmonders do not have access to healthy food is the primary reason for the establishment of the Mayor’s Food Policy Task Force. According to the Alliance for Progressive Values (APV), Moving Richmond Forward: Policy Recommendation for the City of Richmond, a robust local food system would increase Richmond’s food security. “Treating urban agriculture as an economic and community development tool will lead to greater diversity in Richmond’s economy, ensure the safety of

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4 Institute of Medicine, 2003; National Research Council, 2004
Richmond’s food sources, and it will also contribute to public health and public safety, among other benefits.6

Many Richmonders are going hungry – if not in quantity of available food, then in quality of food with sufficient nutritional value to keep them healthy. Our city’s population includes large percentages of residents known to be more susceptible to diet-related health problems. These factors combined contribute to rates of chronic and serious health problems, including obesity and heart disease, which are higher than both regional and state levels. With this in mind, the task force gathered local data to:

1) quantify the number of city residents who are currently experiencing or are especially vulnerable to food insecurity, and examine health disparities that are partially linked to poor diets; and
2) identify and visualize the areas of Richmond where the population lacks adequate access to healthy foods.

The resulting Community Needs Assessment presents data used by the FPTF to inform the policy and program recommendations contained in this report. This community assessment represents the beginning of what will optimistically become an evolving more comprehensive, ongoing community assessment of the local food system. This assessment will hopefully be useful in informing policymakers and advocates to direct future resources and efforts to close the gaps.

**FOOD INSECURITY AND HEALTH DISPARITIES IN RICHMOND**

In the U.S., the phrase “going hungry” has expanded over time to not just refer to people who do not have enough money to buy food regularly but also to those who do not have sufficient nutritional food to sustain themselves. Our assessment of diets and nutrition in this country show that “going hungry” more often than not- means, there are people who are not getting adequate nutritional value from the food they are eating – so even people who have enough food to eat can in a real sense “go hungry” when the foods they consume are bad for them. Therefore, we use the term “food insecurity” to

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Community Needs Assessment

describe people who suffer from hunger as including those without access to affordable healthy food or those with limited resources who lack access to a sufficient amount of nutritious food. There is no recognized standard measure for food insecurity. In response to Mayor Jones’ charge a range of measures, specific to Richmond and affecting the level of food insecurity and related health effects, were examined. The task force also considered the level of health disparities in Richmond compared to the nation, state, and region.

According to Feeding America, a national non-profit dedicated to eradicating hunger, Richmond has 40,020 food insecure residents – residents who lack access to or have uncertain availability to adequate nutritional food necessary for an active, healthy life. This figure represents 19.9 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally. These estimates come from the organization’s Hunger 2010 study. This study used two customer surveys to arrive at conclusions about the local regional population. The task force believes this is an important study to highlight, especially since the data was derived from those persons actually experiencing food insecurity and without consideration of income.

**Graphic – Feeding America’s – Hunger Study 2010**

![Hunger 2010 Comparison](image)

Given the economic disparities in Richmond combined with geographical and transportation barriers to accessing healthy foods discussed in the next section of this report, the task force believes that the actual number of City residents who are currently or at risk of becoming food insecure is significantly higher than reported in 2010 by the Feeding America Hunger study.
Community Needs Assessment

**Poverty as a Reasonable Proxy Measure for Food Insecurity** - While the federal poverty calculation is based on research and methodology from the 1960s, it is a useful statistical yardstick that links annual household with self-sufficiency, including having the financial resources to buy enough food. According to the most recent Census estimates (2010 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates), the poverty rate in Richmond is 25.3 percent -- representing more than 51,000 people living in poverty. The rate is even higher for children – nearly 40 percent of all children (under 18) in the City are living in households that earn below the federal poverty guidelines. Most social scientists and the federal government agree, the current poverty thresholds are significantly lower than what families actually need to earn for subsistence. In view of this information, it is reasonable to believe that Richmonders struggling to maintain subsistence is even higher than the estimated 25.3 percent. Therefore, it is useful to look at other measures of income.

**Income and Housing** - The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculate the low-moderate income (LMI) measure for localities and states. Published annually, this calculation uses Census income data adjusted for locality medians and considers the amount it costs to secure housing. In 2011, nearly 60 percent of all households in Richmond –more than 110,000 residents – had incomes that were 80 percent or less than the area median income. While earning less than median income does not mean all of these households are currently experiencing food insecurity, they must be considered as at-risk of experiencing food insecurity. Geomaps presented in this report graphically depict low income households in poverty are largely concentrated in neighborhoods in the East, North, and South of the city. The maps also show the absence of grocery stores in these same neighborhoods. The absence of grocery stores represents increased probability that a majority of these households are currently or also are at high risk of experiencing food insecurity.

As previously noted, various socio-demographic factors are shown to correlate with food insecurity and diet-related health problems. This means while all members of a certain population group will not necessarily experience food insecurity and related health problems, they are at higher risk to suffer from these conditions at some point in their lives. Finally, individuals who are members of multiple high risk groups have increased vulnerability to food insecurity and associated health problems.
Community Health Impacts

Susceptibility to Poor Nutrition - In looking at populations susceptible to poor nutrition and its adverse effects, the task force gathered national, state, and local data on high risk groups and found the following:

- Obesity and other food-related health issues are serious public health problems. Recent estimates indicate that the national annual medical cost for obesity is over $145 billion, with Medicare and Medicaid assuming a significant part of the burden (Finkelstein 2009). In Virginia, obesity accounts for $1.6 billion in annual health care costs (Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth). In the United States according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 3 adults are obese and approximately 1 in 6 children are obese. Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years, exposing children to greater risks for health-related illnesses and diseases both in childhood and adulthood. Obesity in adults and children is linked to increased risk for Type II Diabetes, stroke, heart disease, and some types of cancer (CDC).

- Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of unhealthy eating, and have a decreased or no ability to make their own food choices. Childhood obesity and being overweight has quickly become a significant public health problem across the nation. Obesity rates have more than tripled among children and adolescents, making this generation of children the first to potentially have shorter life spans than their parents. In Virginia, the statistics related to overweight and obesity, particularly among children and youth, are startling.

- Nearly 1 in 3 children in Virginia is overweight or obese. Only 25 percent of children ages 2 to 11 years consume three servings of vegetables a day, and less than 50 percent consume two daily servings of fruit. Obesity rates among preschoolers ages 2 to 5 have doubled in the past four decades.

- Just as at the national level in Virginia, childhood obesity disproportionately affects low-income and minority communities. Studies show that 24.7 percent of white children ages 10 to 17 are currently overweight or obese, compared to 35.4 percent of African-American children and 29.9 percent of Hispanic children.

- Research has found that children of single-parent households are significantly more overweight than children of two-parent households. On average, African-American children in single-parent
households are more overweight than other children. The strains of being a single parent often equates to meals that are often quicker and cheaper; fast food and frozen meals more likely are consumed while watching TV and not at the table together. The study found that children of female-headed households consumed more total fat, saturated fat and sweetened beverages than children of two parent households. Study results imply a strong relationship between single-parent status and excess weight in children.\(^7\)

- Related to the health of children raised in single parent households, a study found that mothers who give birth to their first child out of wedlock are more likely to experience poor health at age 40 compared to other women. Researchers speculate that the cause may be related to the financial strain and stresses connected to being a single mother.\(^8\)

- The CDC states that children and adults with physical (especially mobility limitations) or with intellectual or learning disabilities are at greatest risk for obesity\(^9\).

The table and following graphic below show the percentages of some population groups previously referenced in studies as at greater risk for obesity and health problems stemming from socioeconomic status and overall poor diets. This table compares the high risk groups in Richmond to those in adjacent counties (Chesterfield and Henrico combined), the state, and the nation.


\(^8\) American Sociological Review, June 2011

\(^9\) http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/obesity.html
# Community Needs Assessment

## Table 1 - US Census 2010 At-Risk Group and Graphic Depiction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
<th>Adjacent Counties Combined</th>
<th>Richmond</th>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of total population that are minorities</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of total population that are under 18</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of children being raised in single-parent households</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of total population that are females ages 15 to 44</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
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<td>Of women who gave birth in the past year, the percent who were unmarried</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
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<td>Percent of the total population who are disabled</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
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<td>Percent of the total population who have no health insurance</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
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Source: US Census Bureau 2010 Census

## Graphic Depiction of US Census 2010 At-Risk Group

![Graph showing the distribution of at-risk groups across different categories](image)
Community Needs Assessment

**Food and Health Disparity** - Based on the disproportionate vulnerable populations in Richmond and considering the severe economic disparities, it is no surprise that the City has higher rates of food and nutrition-related health problems and/or factors that contribute to continued disparities. Table 2 on the next page shows health conditions and their prevalence in the City, as compared to the adjacent counties, state and national levels. Studies have shown that infant mortality and low birth weight are greatly impacted by the mother’s diet. The city continues to have significantly higher rates than at the region, state, and national levels. Asthma is another condition impacted by diet. Unfortunately in 2010, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) ranked Richmond as the Number One Asthma Capital in the U.S. This designation was based on a study finding that Richmond is the most challenging environment for asthma sufferers due to high pollen counts, air pollution, poverty, and other factors. While studies continue to examine the extent to which diet plays a role in asthma, those suffering from it should follow a nutritious diet as among other things, they are susceptible to obesity due to a more sedentary lifestyle often adopted to deal with the disease. As shown in the next table, the city also has higher rates of cancer and heart-disease mortality, than in the region or state as a whole.
### Community Needs Assessment

#### Table 2 - Rates of Food and Nutrition Related Health Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
<th>Adjacent Counties Combined</th>
<th>Richmond</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality per 1,000 live births-2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low birth weight, percent all live births-2009</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma, primary diagnosis up hospital discharge, rate per 10,000</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asthma deaths per 100,000-2005-2009 (VDH)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer-age adjusted death rate per 100,000 from 2003-2006 (VDH)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>209.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Obesity</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood Obesity</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Disease age adjusted mortality rate, 2009 (VDH)</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>170.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Health Insurance</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Asthma Coalition, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and US Center for Disease Control and Prevention and Prevention
Additionally, the City of Richmond has a larger percentage of the population that is physically, emotionally, or intellectually disabled. This population may have even greater barriers to access food, while also being more likely to require special diets. Similarly, the city has higher rates of people who lack health insurance. To the extent these citizens suffer diet-impacted health problems, they may forego medical treatment or have their finances further depleted in seeking needed medical care. Lastly, although the methodology of the report and stigma attached to Richmond is reason enough to minimize it, the Newsweek, Daileybeast.com\(^{10}\), and ranked Richmond as the “second fattest city in the country.” The data source for this report, the *Gallup’s Well-Being Index*, tracks with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) data showing that 29.4 percent of our population is classified as obese. The economic and risk factor data, shows that there are multiple, interrelated reasons why many Richmonders are obese. We know that an improved diet is one way to counteract obesity and we know that access to fresh fruits and vegetables is a struggle in many areas of the city. In view of this information, the remainder of this community needs assessment examines food access issues.

**FOOD DESERTS AND FOOD ACCESS**

The term *food desert* has been used in recent years to describe low-income neighborhoods with limited or no access to fresh healthy foods, specifically a supermarket or large grocery store. Though there are various methodologies used to identify food deserts the most commonly accepted is used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2009, USDA created the *Food Desert Locator*, a website used to display a national map of areas with low access to food as part of First Lady Michelle Obama’s *“Let’s Move! “* initiative. The food desert locator primarily uses income and locations of grocery stores to determine food access, and is displayed by census tract. Census tract is a commonly used geographical unit determined by the US Census Bureau. The objectives of mapping food deserts are:

1) to present a spatial overview of communities with low-access to healthy food in order to show their correlation with other factors,

\(^{10}\) http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/galleries/2012/05/07/america-s-10-fattest-cities-from-memphis-to-new-orleans.html
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2) to provide indicators to the populations affected by low food access,
3) to make the data available for community planning or research purposes, and
4) to generate community action to improve access to healthy foods. Knowing where the gaps in food access are in Richmond is the first step to addressing the problems and creating the solutions for them.

Mapping Food Deserts

Because the USDA food desert locator map was created for the entire United States and was created using Census 2000 (decennial census) data, the resultant maps do not reflect present reality in our city. For the purposes of this report, maps were created using the most current data available at the time, the American Community Survey 2005-2009 5-year estimates, a dataset the US Census Bureau uses to track changes in demographics between decennial censuses. For the purposes of this assessment, the task force created maps using the most up-to-date data available -- the American Community survey 2005-2009 5-year estimates. This survey contains a dataset which the US Census Bureau uses to track changes in demographics between decennial censuses. A simplified methodology was used to reflect the criteria used by the USDA and further refined to better display food access disparities in Richmond.

The USDA Food Desert Locator defines food deserts (by tract) in two ways, low income and low access. The definitions are as follows:

- **Low-Income** means having a poverty rate of 20 percent or higher or has a median family income at or below 80 percent of the area's median family income
- **Low-Access** means a population of at least 500 people and/or at least 33 percent of the census tract’s population residing more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store

The following map 1 shows census tracts in Richmond that have 20 percent or higher rates of people in poverty, with at least 500 people living more than one mile from a grocery store (highlighted in blue). The population distribution was calculated by census blocks (a much smaller geography than census tracts, giving a better indication of residents’ location within the tract).
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Map 1 - Food Deserts and High Poverty Census Tracts

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
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Food Deserts by Neighborhoods

There are multiple neighborhoods in each census tract. Map 2 shows residential neighborhoods which house significant populations and fall mostly or completely within food desert tracts as shown in purple. (Census tracts with 20 percent or higher poverty rates but fewer than 500 people living more than a mile from a grocery store are outlined in purple.) Those living in neighborhoods that are food deserts or high poverty neighborhoods with some residents without near access to a grocery store encompass more than 40 percent of the city’s population.

These neighborhoods include:

**East End:** Whitcomb, Eastview, Fairfield, Upper Shockoe Valley, Mosby, Brauers, Creighton, Woodville and Fulton.

**North of the River:** Randolph, Maymont, Highland Park, Gilpin,

**South of the River:** Swansboro, Blackwell, Oak Grove, Reedy Creek, Swansboro West, Belt Center, Broad Rock, McGuire, Cofer, Midlothian, Broad Rock Sports Complex, South Garden, Woodhaven, Southwood, McGuire Manor, Windsor, Davee Gardens, Jeff Davis, Hickory Hill, Cherry Gardens, Cullenwood, Deerbourne, Walmsley, Brookhaven Farms, Fawnbrook, Belmont Woods, Brookbury, Piney Knolls
Map 2 - Food Deserts and Poverty by Neighborhood

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
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**High Poverty Tracts**

Richmond also has tracts with far higher percentages of people in poverty than the 20 percent that applies to the national food desert definition. In these areas, lack of access to fresh food is exacerbated by lack of access to privately owned motor vehicles and public transit. We will examine this factor in more detailed in a subsequent map.

The following **Map 3** shows (in red) the number of tracts in which 40 percent or more of the residents are below the poverty level and have 500 people or more living more than one mile from a grocery store. The neighborhoods in these tracts are Swansboro, Reedy Creek, Gilpin, Mosby, Whitcomb, Eastview, Fairfield, Creighton and Fulton. Residents of these tracts are overwhelmingly African American, with the poverty level ranging from 43 to 69 percent. Mosby has a poverty rate of over 50 percent, and Gilpin and Whitcomb have poverty rates of over 60 percent. In these neighborhoods, more than 80 percent of all children are being raised in single-parent households, which add to the risk – along with lack of access – for obesity and diet-related health problems.
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Map 3 - Extreme Poverty and Food Access

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
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Food Deserts, Poverty and Access to Transportation

One of the key reasons for USDA’s use of a one-mile distance in determining food deserts in an urban context is related to low income city dwellers frequently not having access to personal vehicles. In these instances, even a relatively short distance creates barriers to accessing food. The following Map 4 shows tracts in Richmond where 41 to 76 percent of all households have no access to a vehicle (car or truck) or GRTC bus service. While the tracts with high rates of no vehicle access are served by GRTC’s bus system, taking a bus to buy groceries is difficult, cumbersome, and often impossible given the limited bus routes and schedules combined with the location of grocery stores in the city. The task force does not believe that the provision of transportation alone is a viable solution for these families to buy healthy foods given the economic barriers, the stress and scheduling difficulties often faced by single parents. Availability and access to healthy foods must be increased in these neighborhoods if any improvement to diet and health is to be achieved.
Map 4 – Transportation and Food Deserts (GRTC Service Area and No Vehicle Ownership in High Poverty and Food Deserts Tracts)

Source: RRPDC, GRTC, US Census Bureau (ACS 5005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
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Availability of Food for Low-Income Residents

Since the prior data and discussion demonstrate the magnitude of barriers facing many Richmonders in accessing healthy foods, it is important to look at what foods are available in areas where vulnerable populations are concentrated. Map 5 below shows the number of people in food deserts (as percentage of total population by tract) in relation to convenience stores and fast food restaurants. People in neighborhoods with little or no access to affordable healthy food are often forced to rely on what is offered at convenience stores and corner markets. A majority of these markets offer food and beverages that are almost without exception highly processed, high in fat, sugar or high fructose corn syrup, contain few nutrients, and highly caloric. Available foods in corner shops are typically processed for long shelf life and with longer ingredient lists. These foods are also often more expensive than the same products in other stores and more expensive than the cost of cooking healthy meals at home. Fast food restaurants offer quick, seemingly inexpensive meals, are conveniently located and aggressively marketed, and have become an accepted part of all aspects of American society. However, the prevalence of this type of food has resulted in skyrocketing levels of obesity, overweight and other food-related chronic health conditions.

Residents of areas without access to fresh, nutritious and affordable are bombarded with fast food and processed convenience store food, putting them at a proportional disadvantage to other city residents. Areas in which unhealthy options far outweigh healthy ones are sometimes called “food swamps”.

Clinical nutrition studies provide convincing evidence that relying on fast food restaurants and the foods they serve has significantly contributed to the amount of calories that the average American consumes. Multiple studies show that adults and children, who regularly eat fast food, consume more calories, saturated fat, and sodium which are related to adverse health outcomes. And as previously discussed, children raised in single-parent homes are much more likely to have this kind of diet. Furthermore, fast food and formula type restaurants, serving low-nutrient, energy-dense foods tend to be more concentrated in minority and low-income neighborhoods with limited to no access to grocery stores.
Map 5- Fast Food and Convenience Stores in High Poverty and Food Desert Tracks.

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
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Children in Poverty

Map 6 shows the number of children in poverty as a percentage of total people in poverty in the tract. Children have special dietary needs, as their nutritional intake affects their immediate and long-term intellectual, emotional and physical development. Similarly, mothers of young children or expectant mothers have unique dietary needs to support healthy pregnancies and to feed their infant children. Furthermore, although links to economic and other factors are involved, it is clear from research conducted by Food Policy Task Force members that minorities have higher rates of diet-impacted health problems than the general population. It is therefore reasonable to consider these three groups (children in poverty, mothers of young children and expectant mothers) as being of greater risk for negative health outcomes that poor diet can contribute to, whether related to food access, behavior, or both. We can see in demographic data that this “sensitive population” in Richmond makes up a much larger proportion of the population than at the regional, state, or national levels. The table on the following page compares the three population groups and “sensitive population” totals.
Map 6 – Children in Poverty.

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
Area Grocery Stores

An important assessment question asked of the FPTF was to examine exactly where the city’s grocery stores are located. Research has identified 11 major grocery stores within Richmond as indicated on Map 7 below. It is important to note that while some areas of Richmond appear to have sufficient numbers of grocery stores—nearly all are located in the West End. Many areas are without a nearby full scale major food retailer. The areas lacking grocery stores are the same areas with the high concentration of fast food and convenience or corner stores as shown in Map 5. The grocery stores on Map 7 were used to determine the food deserts shown in the maps above.
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Map 7 - Grocery Stores in Richmond

Source: NAVTEQ
Community Needs Assessment

Dwellings with Inadequate Kitchen Amenities

With the link between lack of grocery store access and the profusion of convenience and fast food restaurants in low-income areas of Richmond clearly established, the task force also looked at additional high risk factors, which are presented in Maps 8 and 9 that follow. First, we examined data from the American Community Survey that asks residents whether or not their dwelling has a refrigerator, sink with running water and/or a stove or range. From this the Census Bureau determines whether or not a dwelling unit has a complete or incomplete kitchen. The map below (Map 8) shows the tracts where 9 to 31 percent of dwelling units have incomplete kitchens. Once again, the majority of these tracts are concentrated in an area without grocery store access and high access to convenience and fast food stores (in this case, the East End). Often, the healthiest and most economical way to eat is to cook at home. However, this is not a viable option for a family that does not have a complete kitchen. There are other barriers to healthy eating and cooking: people don’t know how to cook or don’t have time to, or don’t see the value in it. However, this map shows that for some people, cooking at home may not be an option even if they were motivated to do so and even if they had more direct access to affordable healthy foods.
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Map 8- Households with incomplete kitchens

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
Households Receiving SNAP Recipients

With the recent economic recession, record numbers of Richmond residents have become eligible for and subsequently enrolled in the federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly called food stamps. In order to be eligible for the SNAP program, individuals and households must meet certain criteria, including having a gross monthly income of 130 percent at or below poverty level. SNAP benefits help many Richmond families afford food, but participants are not required to purchase nutritious food. Given the disbursement of concentrated numbers of SNAP beneficiaries in the areas without grocery stores and the fact that participants likely have transportation barriers, the risk is heightened that they will purchase the high caloric food that is readily available in their neighborhoods. Next, Map 9 shows the concentration of SNAP recipients and food access.
Community Needs Assessment

Map 9: SNAP Participant Concentrations and Food Access

Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
Food Retailer Leakage

The final map in this section deals with grocery retail leakage. Retail leakage means that residents are spending their retail dollars outside of their local community which suggests that there is unmet demand in the community. Retail surplus indicates communities where retail sales exceed what is expected from local residents only (i.e., shoppers are coming from other communities). The retail leakage is calculated based on census data representing percentage of income spent on “food at home” compared to total grocery sales in the local community. Map 10 on the following page provides an interesting composite view of the city’s local food system, in particular the current failure to provide direct grocery access to a large percentage of low income Richmonders. In areas where the city has the majority of grocery stores – primarily in the West End – the data show that residents are much more likely to spend their money locally than in the gray and dark blue areas – which approximate the city’s food deserts. In food desert areas, dollars are being leaked to outside localities and their retail offerings, including grocery stores. Although building an economic case for grocery stores to locate in low income urban areas – such as Richmond’s food deserts – is a difficult “sell.” The leakage depicted in this map alone is insufficient to compel food retailers to locate in these neighborhoods; however, it may indicate that under the right circumstances, the dollars leaving the city might well be spent here. Remedies might include food retailers expanding store locations to neighborhoods in need of full service grocery stores or if corner stores began to expand their offering of fresh fruits and vegetables.
Map 10: Grocery Retail Leakage in Richmond; resources in food deserts are going to outside localities/businesses. Source: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEQ
CONCLUSIONS

The Mayor’s Food Policy Task Force completed this Community Needs Assessment to provide quantification and details of the problem it was established to address – identification of the areas of concentrated low income households in Richmond that do not have ready access to affordable healthy foods and the effect this has on public health. The assessment data and findings clearly demonstrate the following:

- While there is no set calculation for the number of people in Richmond who are currently experiencing food insecurity, several economic and other measures demonstrate that 20 to 60 percent of Richmond’s population – or between 40,000 to more than 120,000 of total residents – are going hungry or are at risk of food insecurity due to lack of healthy food access or consumption. Low income households, minorities, children living in single family households, mothers -- especially single mothers, the disabled and people without health insurance are all at risk for diet-related health problems, if they remain without access to healthy foods and do not develop nutritious eating habits over time. Given the high level of risk factors in Richmond, it is no surprise that the city currently has disproportionate levels of diet-related health problems among the total population.

- Those most at risk from becoming food insecure based on economic or socio-demographic factors are disproportionately living in neighborhoods that either are designated as food deserts by the USDA or are in areas with moderate to extremely high poverty rates and some portion of the population is isolated from healthy food.

- These at risk populations have ready access to convenience stores and fast food stores in their neighborhoods, but these retailers predominantly serve or sell high caloric, high fat, high sodium foods that are known to contribute to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. The city’s small inventory of grocery stores is almost exclusively located in the West End neighborhoods where income levels are higher.

- Analyses show that Richmonders most isolated from healthy and reasonably priced foods and grocery stores are most at risk from suffering due to poor diets. The impoverished -- children in single family households, households with no vehicle access, households without complete
Community Needs Assessment

kitchens, and SNAP (food stamp) beneficiaries are concentrated in areas where there are no grocery stores.

- There is an economic analysis of the retail habits in Richmond that indicates when grocery stores are present in neighborhoods, residents are much more likely to spend money locally rather than go to outside localities/businesses.
Key Studies and Presentations

As described in the Executive Summary, when the Food Policy Task Force convened and formed work groups, a key first step was researching issues surrounding healthy food access and policy. This research and relevant studies (citations included in the Appendices), were presented to the full task force to inform the group discussions and ultimately the task force and community recommendations. This section covers summaries of some of the more relevant best practices, studies, and presentations that guided the work and recommendations offered for the City of Richmond.

1. *Food Policy Council Questions and Answers, Drake University Agricultural La Center, The State and Local Food Policy Project, January 2005.*

The Drake Report provided answers to some of the basic questions about what a food policy council is, why they are created, how they are structured and what can be accomplished in local governments with a food policy council.

The report emphatically stresses that there is no right or wrong answer as to how a food policy council is structured. The structure of the council should fit the political culture and climate of the area. A council may be formal in that they are initiated through some type of Executive Order, Public Act or Joint Resolution. However, many food policy councils are formed through grassroots efforts and have no official government sanctioning. Food policy councils are formed to provide an opportunity for those that are concerned about local food system issues to make recommendations for public policy changes that would improve access to food.

Food policy councils have successfully influenced decisions on public policy, improving coordination amongst all segments of the food system (growers, producers, distributors, consumers, etc.); created policy to increase the purchase of locally grown fruits and vegetables for local systems; organized farmers markets; and, developed community hubs for canning, preserving and distributing local foods.

2. *What is a Food Policy Council?, North American Food Policy Council*

Similar to the aforementioned article, this article provides some guidance into the structure of food policy councils. The report provided a list of the known food policy councils around the country with contact information.

3. *Community Food Security Programs: What Do They Look Like?, Community Food Security Coalition*
Community food security is about making healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food accessible to all, including low-income individuals and families. Based on a definition cited by Mike Hamm and Anne Bellows, community food security is “a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound diet through an economically and environmentally sustainable food system that promotes community self-reliance and social justice”.11

Examples of community food security activities cited in the article include:

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) – a system that connects consumers directly with the growers in a co-op type arrangement. Farmers’ Markets – providing consumers a place to meet their local growers and to purchase a variety of fresh produce and food products. Many local farmers’ markets are now accepting WIC and SNAP EBT benefits.
- Community gardens – places where neighbors gather to grow their own food together. Community gardens are often located on vacant properties owned by cities. In this way, they serve a dual role of helping to ensure residents are food secure, but also in eliminating blight in neighborhoods while helping to renew the neighborhood.
- Farm to Cafeteria initiatives – programs that focus on connecting local growers to public institutions, such as schools, hospitals, etc. to increase the amount of locally grown produce served in the cafeteria and to provide a reliable source of income for local farmers.
- Community food assessments – a participatory process that examines a broad range of food system issues and resources in order to improve the community food system.
- Food policy councils – a group of interested stakeholders who advise government administration on policies related to agriculture, food distribution, hunger and nutrition.
- Community economic development – includes projects that provide opportunities for food related small business and efforts to bring supermarkets to underserved areas.
- Youth programs – offer opportunities to provide apprenticeship and leadership opportunities for youth in building community food security systems.


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11 Community Food Security Coalition. www.foodsecurity.org
This newsletter is provided as part of A Partnership Program of the University of Virginia Institute for Environmental Negotiation, the Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Forestry. This review furthered the term “local” as it relates to freshly grown produce and the benefits of a community food system.

Also included are examples of several local initiatives designed to improve the community food system, such as:

- Piedmont Environmental Council’s Resource Guide “Buy Fresh Buy Local” – designed to connect farmers to consumers
- Charlottesville’s The Local Food Hub – a non-profit established in 2009 to address some of the distribution challenges in Charlottesville
- Lynchburg’s “Lynchburg Grows” – a community garden that provides work opportunities for the mentally challenged and juvenile offenders

Other local community food system projects and a host of resource links were also included in this edition.

5. Introduction to Food Deserts, Food Security Learning Center, by Edwin Marty, Executive Director of Jones Valley Urban Farm

The article provides some information on what a “food desert” is and the impact they have on both rural and urban communities, particularly low-income and communities of color, as well as offer some examples of government, private and community based solutions.

For urban communities, industrialization impacted many individuals living and working in the cities. The situation was further compounded by racial and social tensions that led to “white flight” resulting in inner-city communities without the buying power to sustain local or chain grocery stores. Add to that the strategy by banks and zoning legislators to focus lending and developing in suburban areas or “redlining” and inner-city communities are left with limited access to healthy foods and no capacity for growing their own.
This lack of access to grocery stores and the over reliance on fast food and corner convenience stores has led to a health epidemic across the nation estimated to cost over $130 million each year in medical expenses – chiefly related to diabetes and obesity.

Potential solutions for both urban and rural communities include:

- Government focus on policy making decisions that promote and support healthy food system enterprise; such as tax incentives for grocery stores or higher taxes on high-fat fast foods and sodas.
- Private industry can provide start-up capital for businesses that supply healthy food options.
- Community gardens, Community food assessments, and food policy councils are examples of opportunities at the grass roots level.

6. Access to Affordable, Nutritious Food is Limited in “Food Deserts”, Amber Waves, March 2010

As stated in the article, “defining what lack of access to affordable and nutritious food means and estimating how many people are affected by living in food deserts is not straightforward.” In 2006, Economic Research Service (ERS) began to use a directory of supermarkets and local grocery stores to identify and map food deserts. Criteria such as nearest distance to the local grocery store, availability of transportation, average household income were evaluated. According to the 2000 Census, 8.4 percent of the US population live in low income neighborhoods and have to travel more than one mile to the nearest grocery store.

Access to a vehicle could be the best measure of whether someone living a good distance from a grocery store faces obstacles in accessing healthy affordable foods. Access to a vehicle provides an opportunity for residents to shop at supermarkets and grocery stores outside of their neighborhood.

For those without transportation, they often have no choice than to shop at the corner convenience store which may have some healthy options, but generally at a higher price than at a supermarket. In an ERS study conducted in 2009, researchers found that households with an average income of less than

12 The Economics of Food, Farming, Natural Resources, and Rural America. Amber Waves, March 2010
Key Studies and Presentations

$8,000 paid between 0.5 and 1.3 percent more for the same foods than those with a household income of between $8,000 and $30,000. However, research sponsored by USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) indicates that the average SNAP recipient may live 1.8 miles from the nearest supermarket and they traveled an average of 4.9 miles to get to the store most frequently used for grocery shopping.

Access to larger grocery stores may not be prohibited solely due to lack of income or available transportation. Often the costs of land, high crime rates, and/or zoning regulations make it expensive to operate a grocery store in food desert communities. In addition, the land space required for today’s “supercenters” such as Wal-Mart is not available in urban communities.


Anup Shah writes that hunger is an “effect of poverty and poverty is largely a political issue”. According to Ross Copeland, *The Politics of Hunger*, September 2000, “Access to food and other resources is not a matter of availability, but rather of ability to pay.” Shah believes that if we want to solve the hunger problem, we must address the root causes of poverty.

8. *Local Motive – a plan to strengthen the local food system of the Richmond, Virginia metropolitan area*, Anne Darby, Master of Urban and Regional Planning Candidate, Virginia Commonwealth University, Spring 2008

Darby states that only by identifying the barriers in the food system can we establish strategies and objectives to overcome them. The plan begins with an introduction to the global food system and then provides a more detailed look at the Richmond food system. Critical to the success of any food system is the availability of locally grown foods. Dollars spent on locally grown food products are retained in the community strengthening the local economy. The availability of locally grown food mitigates fluctuations in the global market, provides for a larger variety of foods and generally at a lower cost than offered at the grocery store.

Darby believes that a collaborative between local food policy councils and regional planners is the key to strengthening local food systems. Her plan provides background information that could be used by
planning organizations to begin to develop food system plans in their areas. Although her plan is designed with Richmond in mind, the concepts are transferrable to other cities and counties.

Darby’s plan focuses on the small producers as they have suffered the most harm under current legislation, sprawling suburban development, increased land prices and they are in a better position to change local food systems. The small farmer is more likely to grow fruits and vegetables that are consumed directly by humans.

Some of the barriers identified in Anne Darby’s plan to strengthen local food systems include:

- The global food system – as a result of the availability of all foods at all times of the year this perpetuates disconnect between the consumer and the local producer to occur as the result of the availability of all foods at all times of the year.
- Policy and legislation – The US Farm Bill primarily supports commodity crops which are generally grown on larger farms.
- Farmland disappearance – the value of land as a potential development site far exceeds the financial worth as a farm.
- Perception of food and local food – we have grown accustomed to purchasing foods in the grocery store and relying on fast foods that we have lost concept of where our food comes from. In addition, the few short hours that local farmers markets are generally open make it seem as if local produce is not available.
- Organization within the local food movement – there is no coordinated local food movement in the area. Several community based food organizations are operating, yet their efforts are not coordinated and they often re-invent the wheel. With regard to Restaurants – it is more convenient and economical for restaurants to purchase bulk quantities of food. Relying on local producers for a constant influx of food is risky. Not to mention that in order to meet demand; they may have to purchase from several different farmers, with different delivery schedules that are more disruptive and costly.
- Farmers markets – the locations and hours of operations of most farmers’ markets are not convenient for most shoppers. Also, if the farmers’ market customer base is not sufficient, the local farmer’s produce often goes to waste. In addition, many farmers markets have experienced an increase in the number of craft vendors and decrease in the number of farmers.
Key Studies and Presentations

- Keeping farms viable – farm labor is expensive and hard to find. Most people want the security of full time employment that is also less physically demanding.
- Community gardens – lack of funding, water and a designated “leader” for a community garden are challenges to the establishment of community gardens.

Darby also provides a list of goals and objectives that could be used by a local food system council to begin strengthening the food system.

9. **2005 San Francisco Collaborative Food System Assessment**, San Francisco Food Alliance, 2005

The idea of conducting a citywide food assessment began in 2004. The goal of the assessment was to provide a single data resource to drive public policy and decisions on food related issues. A working group from the San Francisco Food Alliance developed a list of key food system indicators that focused on areas such as government, charitable food programs, urban agriculture, organic recycling and food retail. Data was then collected from a variety of federal, state and local sources to measure how well the San Francisco Food System was performing against these criteria. Food system recommendations were developed and provided to city officials and local organizations.

According to the authors, “this ‘systems’ picture helps a society bring greater efficiency to its local food system, ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate goods, and ensure that the system functions with the principles of public health, social justice, economic stability, and environmental sustainability in mind.” (San Francisco Food Alliance Assessment Report, 2005)

While the majority of the data was specific to San Francisco, the document was useful in determining what aspects of the food system we needed to pay attention to in creating our own assessment of Richmond food systems.

10. **A Picture of Richmond Using WIC Data** - Mike Welch, from the Virginia Department of Health

Mike Welch distributed a GIS map to task force participants identifying WIC Vendors, Major grocery stores and WIC participants in relation to USDA identified food deserts. Dr. Welch presented information to the group on the basic eligibility requirements for WIC. The WIC Office is also responsible for the Child and Adult Care Program (CACP)--meal reimbursement programs including the Summer Food Program. Dr. Welch indicated that the state was concerned about the nutrition needs of
Key Studies and Presentations

Children during the summer since only 20 percent of participants in the Free/Reduced Lunch Programs participate in the Summer Food Program. For Richmond City, 50 percent participation in the Summer Food Program is much higher than the state average at 20 percent.

Dr. Welch discussed the USDA food desert methodology. In a study done on purchasing habits of youth in food deserts, it was determined that the average youth spends $1.10 and gets 350 calories worth of product—indicating that they are purchasing highly processed, low nutritional products.

Dr. Welch painted a picture of the economic impact that the WIC program has on the economy: 6500 WIC participants at an average of 3 vouchers with an average value of $50 over a 12 month period equates to $11.7M to the economy. He also discussed changes and future plans for the WIC program:

- Rearrangement of the vendor peer groups – vendor peer groups are defined, first based on whether they are located in a rural or urban environment and secondly by the number of cash registers. Vendor Peer groups have been used in the past as a mechanism of controlling prices and many small vendors felt they were unable to compete with larger vendors such as Wal-Mart within their peer groups. In addition, there will no longer be a limit to the number of WIC vendors in the peer groups. Currently there are approximately 800 vendors and an increase to over 1600 is expected.

- Future plans for WIC include a transition to an electronic debit card similar to that used for the SNAP Program. Dr. Welch indicated that much work needs to be done to implement this change. WIC is a commodity based program and not a cash value program so the transition to an electronic card will be more complicated. However, it is believed that it will help to alleviate the stigma associated with the use of WIC vouchers.

11. Community Food Service Programs, Colleen Keller, Vice President of Programs for FeedMore

Ms. Keller gave a brief history of how FeedMore came into existence when the Central Food Bank and Meals on Wheels decided to merge approximately four years ago. Their goal is to feed people who are food insecure with limited access to food, not enough food, reduced quality of food, reduced food intake and is not limited to those living in poverty. Many people live just above the poverty threshold or have recently become unemployed and do not necessarily have the cash flow to ensure a stable supply of food. FeedMore offers feeding assistance to children, families and seniors. FeedMore currently operates in 31 counties and 5 cities.
Some of the Children’s’ programs offered by FeedMore include: Summer Food Service - primarily in the City of Richmond and providing fresh food delivered daily from the Community Kitchen.

- **Kids Café** – provides a meal or snack at afterschool programs for children who might not otherwise have a third meal for the day.
- **Backpack Program** – provides shelf stable foods for the weekend for eligible children. This program is not for everyone that receives free/reduced lunch but is geared towards the chronically hungry. Referrals are often received from teachers to the program.
- **Backpacks for summer** – distributed through summer school programs.
- **School Pantry** – a new grant program funded for one year in Woodville, Fairfield and Chimborazo Elementary Schools provides food for the child’s family.

FeedMore is associated with the national organization Feeding America which is a great resource for data. Some of the information that Feeding America/FeedMore uses to determine food insecurity is now adjusted to allow for unemployment. This allows local operations such as FeedMore to react quicker to changes in need in the communities they serve rather than relying on previously received annual data.

**12. Food Trust Financing** – Jessica Zielonis, intern with the Richmond City Health District

Ms. Zielonis presented information on two healthy corner store Initiatives – one in Philadelphia and one in Baltimore -- that have had success in addressing food access problems similar to those in Richmond. In both initiatives, the primary goals were to:

1. Increase access to healthy foods
2. Education (benefits of eating healthy)
3. Cultural transformation (making healthy choices on their own and teaching others to make healthy choices)

Highlights from the Philadelphia program:

- Began in 2007 as a pilot program with 11 corner stores
- Now operates in over 600 stores with a goal of 1,000 stores
- Began by researching the purchasing habits of store customers
- Found that students visited the stores an average of twice per day (before and after school)
Key Studies and Presentations

- On average, students spent $1.07 and purchased two snacks with a caloric value of 350-400 calories.
- The initiative began with healthy snack days, where staff would distribute free samples of healthy snacks and ask customers to identify their top 3 choices of healthy snacks.
- An educational campaign was launched that was repeated in school, in after school programs and at the corner store.
- Store involvement may be at three different levels each with varying requirements.

Highlights from the Baltimore program:

- A pilot program from Feb – Nov of 2006, in 9 stores with low overhead and research conducted by Masters of Public Health (MPH) students.
- The pilot was implemented in 5 phases of approximately 2 months each. During each phase, emphasis was given to particular food items. Customers were given “freebies” in order to get them to try the products. Store owners were reimbursed for these items and given incentives to purchase the healthy products.
- Promotional materials were key to the success of this project.
- For more information, refer to the John Hopkins website.

Based upon the information garnered from the community needs assessment and key studies and research presentations, the task force work groups continued their deliberation specific to their assigned focus issue and assessing potential recommendations to mitigate the related identified current situation, barriers and gaps. The next section of this report elaborates on the structure and organization of the FPTF.
The Task Force first meeting was convened July 20, 2011. Dr. Carolyn N. Graham, then Deputy Chief Administrator for Human Services and Anne Darby, Senior Planner with the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission was named co-chairs of the Task Force. An overview of the food system issues in Richmond and discussion of the needs of the residents in our food desert communities were presented. This presentation also highlighted relevant Richmond statistics and an overview of the Mayor’s Healthy Richmond Campaign. Emphasis was placed on how the Food Policy Task Force was a critical component in the campaign strategy.

The structure of the taskforce was identified and the work groups were defined in relation to the Mayor’s charge and goals. Task force members were given the opportunity to select their preferred work group based on focus area.

The larger group convened monthly in meetings from July – September, 2011. Additional work group meetings were held to analyze and develop recommendations specific to their focus area. During the larger meetings guest presenters provided relevant research and data. These meetings also served as a forum for discussion related to stated goals and updates from the work groups on progress in selecting recommendations unique to Richmond City. Each workgroup defined the scope of their objectives and tasks. The groups included:

**The Enterprise Development Workgroup** led by Dominic Barrett, Director of United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond (UMUMR) and included: Billie Brown, President – EXCEL Management Services, Graham Evans, Manager -Relayfoods, Stephanie Lebow, RVA News, Alyssa Murray, VCU Urban Planning Professional, Patricia Stansbury, Proprietor Epic Gardens, and Ron Wood, Owner, Virginia Farm to Fork.

**Scope** - Focus on partnering opportunities with the Departments of Economic and Community Development and City Council to establish policies and neighborhood projects that support and promote local farmers and businesses that use and/or distribute fresh fruits and vegetables.

**The Food Security Workgroup** led by Mark Lilly, founder of Farm to Family and the FARMBUS (2009) and included: Alex Archarya. VDHS Prevention Specialist with Community Nutrition and Virginia WIC Program Vendor Compliance Team, Suzi Lily, co-owner of Farms to Family/The Farm Bus, Peter Sokol, Vice President of Operations, FeedMore, and Ron Wood, Owner, Virginia Farm to Fork.
Scope- Focus on developing strategies to increase access to healthy food to low income residents with food insecurity or living in food deserts.

The Education and Awareness Workgroup led by Patricia Parks, Richmond Public Libraries/Library Community Services Manager and included: Victoria Campbell, Richmond Department of Public Works-Survey Drafting Technician and City Community Garden Coordinator, Monica Esparza, Principal Partner in KII Industries, LLC dba AfroCity Tours, Marlene Sehen, Horticulturist and Landscaper and participant in RPS Garden Task Force, and Erin Wright, Educator and Gardener – Lewis Botanical Gardens.

Scope – Focus on increasing “food literacy” among Richmond residents, which may include developing a Richmond Food Policy Council (RFPC) website; partnering and/or hosting healthy nutrition workshops; and distributing informational flyers/brochures at farmers markets, community events, etc.

Health and Nutrition Workgroup led by Dr. Danny Avula, Deputy Director-Richmond Health District and Charles Lee, Chronic Disease Program Manager- Richmond Health District. Members included: Rachel Harris, Program Manager of Greater Richmond Fit4Kids, John Lewis, RBHA Prevention Specialist - Substance Abuse Division, Twandra Lomax-Brown, Family and Consumer Science Agent – Virginia Cooperative Extension, Jalana McCasland, VCU-Medical Center – Vice President for Ambulatory Operations and Executive Director for Regional Outreach, Jennifer Mellor, William and Mary Professor of Economics and Director of the Schroeder Center for Health Policy, Charlene Rodgers, Richmond Public Schools – Health Services, Jim Scanlon. Giant/Martin’s Food Markets – Regional Vice President, Valerie Waters, and Elizabeth Vestal, William and Mary – Research Analyst, Schroeder Center for Health Policy.

Scope— Focus on ways the food system affects the health of our citizens, particularly in lower income neighborhoods of color—with special emphasis on obesity and the link to high incidences of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer.

The School and Community Gardens Workgroup led by Victoria Campbell, Department of Public Works-Survey Drafting Technician and Richmond Community Garden Coordinator and included members:
Structure and Organization

Monica Esparza, Principal Partner in KII Industries, LLC dba AfroCity Tours, Jared Karnes, Founding Director – Renew Richmond, John Lewis, RBHA Prevention Specialist - Substance Abuse Division, Gabriel Reich, VCU Assistant Professor, Teaching and Learning, Marlene Sehen, Horticulturist and Landscaper and Participant in RPS Garden Task Force.

**Scope** – Identify school and community gardens in Richmond; develop strategies to increase the number of school and community gardens.

**The Community Assessment Workgroup** led by Anne Darby, Richmond Regional Planning District Commission and member Board of Directors of Tricycle Gardens. Members included: Erich Dietrich, City of Richmond Grant Writer and avid Gardner and Jonah Fogel, a Community Viability Specialist with the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

**Scope** - Encourage participation in the statewide Food System Assessment being conducted by the Virginia Food Policy Council, conduct a Richmond city food system assessment, identify and track qualitative and quantitative indicators of food system change, and package/present data in a format that is understandable for policy makers and the general public.

Following the initial meeting, the members of the Task Force identified an additional and critical work group:

**The Quality of School Food Workgroup** led by Stacy Luks, founding chair of Slow Food RVA and Susan Roberson, RPS Director of School Nutrition Services. Members included Molly Harris founder of Lulus Local Food an online farmers market, and John Lewis, RBHA Substance Abuse Prevention Specialists

**Scope**- Identify strategies to improve the quality of foods served on school property, to include before, during and after school; also identity strategies to update the infrastructure in school cafeterias to meet the updated nutritional guidelines from the USDA.

During October and November 2011, members dedicated their time to the scope of work defined for their assigned work group. The subgroups, with the exception of Community Assessment, were given the charge of presenting their top five recommendations that would be shared and prioritized by the community. The groups also developed strategies for implementing any recommended policy or
Structure and Organization

program, to include relevant agencies, potential cost, potential time for implementation, and measurable objectives/outcomes. This effort was intended to assist the community, task force members, the Administration and City Council in prioritizing the recommendations based on need and feasibility. These details are included in Section 5 – Task Force Program and Policy Recommendations that follows the Community Forum section.

The following section of this report provides details on the Community Forum where participants from the community were presented workgroup recommendations and were given an opportunity to vote on the recommendations. In addition, the feedback from the online community survey is also captured in finalizing the presented recommendations.
After several months of review, additional research and discussion the FPTF workgroups, with the exception of the Community Assessment workgroup, developed five recommendations to address each focus area. On April 4, 2012, the FPTF held a Community Forum to engage citizens in an opportunity to hear a presentation of the work of the task force. Included in this presentation were the 30 recommendations that the citizens would be asked to help prioritize. Mayor Jones attended and provided remarks on the work of the Task Force and the overarching Healthy Richmond Campaign.

A brief overview of the Richmond City’s food system issues was given by Co-chair Anne Darby and data was presented from the most recent American Community Survey from the Census Bureau (refer back to the Community Needs Assessment section). Following this presentation, each of the work group leaders presented a brief summary of their focus area and top five recommendations. Utilizing “clicker” technology made available through Human Resources, citizens cast their votes for the issues most important to them. Over 100 citizens participated in the forum.

Due to the location of the Community Forum, seating and clicker capacity was limited to 90. Given the importance of this initiative to the citizenry and community well-being, the FPTF facilitated an online survey to provide more citizens the opportunity to participate in prioritizing the recommendations. Following are the top five recommendations (not in priority order) resulting from the community engagement activities and review by the FPTF.

Top Five Recommendations of the FPTF and Citizens

1. Create a local food hub/community kitchen that includes the development of communication education programs around food preservation, preparation and eating on a budget
2. Revise city ordinances governing the raising of chickens
3. Hire a Food Policy Coordinator
4. Increase nutrition education in schools by expanding Healthier School Food workgroups
5. Increase the use of fresh foods from local farms in school meal/snack programs

A compilation of citizens’ votes at the community forum and the online survey and the top five recommendations of the FPTF and the community are reflected in bold print and yellow highlights in the following table.
### Table 3 – Tabulation of Citizen Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>Community Forum Votes</th>
<th>On Line Survey Votes</th>
<th>Total Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide vacant properties for food oriented projects</td>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement changes in laws to facilitate development of food oriented projects</td>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand efforts with MYA</td>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a grant application process</td>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a local food hub/community kitchen</td>
<td>Enterprise Development</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise city chicken ordinances</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create cannery/growers market</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide for local farm food bus stops</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand use of SNAP/EBT at Farmers Markets.</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise zoning laws.</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hire a Food Policy Coordinator</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ed &amp; Awareness</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>89</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement a branding campaign</td>
<td>Ed &amp; Awareness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand on use of libraries.</td>
<td>Ed &amp; Awareness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop certified community kitchens</td>
<td>Ed &amp; Awareness</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a social media campaign/forum</td>
<td>Ed &amp; Awareness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrict fast food zoning</td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare meal and snack requirement.</td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement purchasing/preparation programs</td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop community programs to teach food preservation and preparation.</strong></td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a consistent media message.</td>
<td>Health &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate or reduce water costs</td>
<td>School &amp; Community Gardens</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase number of schools that include food education in curriculum</strong></td>
<td><strong>School &amp; Community Gardens</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support “Green Career” job training programs</td>
<td>School &amp; Community Gardens</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt resolution on use of pesticides, on school and park properties</td>
<td>School &amp; Community Gardens</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize parks to develop orchards and/or edible landscapes</td>
<td>School &amp; Community Gardens</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish/expand community-based Healthier School Food workgroup</td>
<td>Quality of School Food</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding to support upgrades in RPS kitchens</td>
<td>Quality of School Food</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase use of fresh local foods</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quality of School Food</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure consistent nutrition standards</td>
<td>Quality of School Food</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following review of the comments received from both the community forum and the online voting, the Task Force noted some similarities and overlap in the recommendations. Based on this consideration, the Task Force reduced the 30 original recommendations to 17 and aligned them with Mayor Jones’ mandate using the following categories:

**Category 1 - Policy Implementation and Administration**

1. Hire a Food Policy Coordinator
2. Review ordinances, zoning laws, and local tax code

**Category 2 - Innovations in Land Use and Urban Agriculture**

3. Revise city law Sec. 10-88 regarding fowl (chickens)
4. Reduce or eliminate irrigation fees for community gardens
5. Use park, recreation and community facilities to develop orchards and edible landscapes
6. Disallow use of herbicides, pesticides, inorganic fertilizers on school and park properties
7. Establish competitive grant program to encourage healthy food-related businesses
8. Develop comprehensive job training program supporting urban agriculture and green career development
9. Make available vacant buildings and land for organizations or businesses wishing to start new food-oriented projects
10. Provide funds and resources to create community kitchens and food hubs in at-risk neighborhoods

**Category 3 - Access to Fresh, Healthy Food**

11. Mobile farmers Market and Public Transportation to local Farmers’ Markets
12. Advocate expansion of SNAP purchase points at Farmers’ Markets and local healthy food vendors to purchase plants and seeds and increase consumer education of local food and meal preparation

13. Implement 2 year moratorium on fast food expansion in designated food desert areas

Category 4 - Healthy Living Media and Marketing

14. Implement city-wide marketing campaign to promote healthy eating

Category 5 - Fresh, Local and Healthy School Food

15. Provide new funding to support upgrades for RPS kitchens

16. RPS expand use of fresh, raw, unprocessed foods and increase purchase of seasonal produce from local growers

17. Convene working group to provide forum for Healthier School Food

Below is a combination of the 17 recommendations, priority for each based upon the number of votes received and estimated implementation timeframe:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Recommendation</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Time to Implement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create Food Policy Coordinator position</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Revise zoning laws to facilitate urban agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Revise zoning laws for raising fowl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reduce/eliminate irrigation fees for community gardens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Create edible landscapes on city owned properties</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Establish policy regarding use of pesticides, herbicides, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Establish grant program for food-related businesses</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Create “green” career development program</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Use of vacant properties for food-oriented projects</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Establish community kitchens/food hubs w/ educational components</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Establish mobile farmers markets/bus routes to markets</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Expand use of SNAP benefits at Farmers Markets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Short Term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Implement moratorium on establishment of fast food restaurants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Forum

14. Implement city-wide marketing campaign promoting healthy eating 3 Mid Term
15. Provide funds to upgrade kitchens in RPS to meet new standards 2 Long Term
16. Expand use of local fresh foods in RPS to minimum of 10 percent 1 Long Term
17. Increase nutrition education with Healthier School Food Groups 1 Mid Term

Thresholds:

- Priority
  - 1 – Greater than 64 votes
  - 2 – 35 – 63 votes
  - 3 – 1 – 34 votes
- Time to Implement
  - Short Term – 0 – 2 years
  - Mid Term – 2 - 5 years
  - Long Term – Greater than 5 years

The next section of the report provides detailed descriptions for each of the recommendations, explanation of the issue, proposed intervention, cost, and expected outcome or measures within the referenced categories:

- Policy and Administration
- Innovations in Land Use & Urban Agriculture
- Access to Fresh, Healthy Food
- Healthy Living Media & Marketing
- Fresh, Local and Healthy School Food
Program & Policy Recommendations

This section of the report details and categorizes the Program and Policy recommendations. These recommendations by the FPTF comprise the city’s Food System Plan. Included with each recommendation is an abbreviated description of the associated risk or issue that was more fully addressed in the Community Needs Assessment (Section 1), proposed strategies or intervention(s), cost considerations or implications and anticipated measure(s) or outcome(s) of implementing the recommendation. The previously identified top five recommendations are underlined and include recommendations 1, 2, 8, 10, and 16.

Category 1 - Policy Implementation and Administration Recommendations

1. Create a Food Policy Coordinator (FPC) position to implement and oversee recommendations from the Food Policy Task Force, Mayor, and city administration. Through a comprehensive knowledge of Richmond City’s Food System, the FPC will strengthen relationships between community partners, increase overall efficiency of the food system; coordinate efforts of community organizations and City agencies to increase resident access to healthy foods; advise city administration on food policy and land use planning issues, and pursue sustainable grant funding for Food Policy Task Force initiatives.

**Description of Problem:** There is fragmentation in components of the city’s food system. Food plays a vital role in Richmond’s health status, environment, and economy. Fragmentation in any component of the food system leads to decreased production and distribution efficiency, greater food insecurity, and decreased overall health of the region.

- One in three children in Richmond City lives below the federal poverty level.  
- 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).

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Program & Policy Recommendations

- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.\(^1\)

Historically, efforts in the city to reduce hunger and increase resident access to healthy foods have been independent, geographically specific initiatives. A greater level of coordination would allow community organizations and city administrators to join forces in combating food-related challenges facing Richmond.

We believe a Food Policy Coordinator for Richmond could increase the regional “food environment” for the whole city by unifying efforts among food production, distribution, and food advocacy organizations, establish funding for current and future food related initiatives through grant writing, and advancing food-related policy before the city and state legislative bodies.

Directors of Food Policy are employed in other major US cities - San Francisco, Boston, Baltimore, New York City, etc. - to oversee markets, address issues of accessibility to nutritious food, support urban agriculture and manage food selection in public schools. In New York City, the Office of the Food Policy Coordinator spear-heads a collaboration of community agencies focused on combating food insecurity, obesity, and bolstering dietary behavior of low income residents. Currently, Richmond has no responsible position for the oversight and advocacy of the Richmond City food system.

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** The City of Richmond would hire a Food Policy Coordinator who would be responsible for directing efforts aimed at improving the food environment, including:

- Collaborate with key partners and staff to create affordable and accessible food hubs - community kitchens- in at-risk neighborhoods. Each kitchen would provide linkages between local farmers and produce with low income residents, education on preparing healthy meals, and provide residents with an opportunity to work in exchange for food.
- Draft Richmond City ordinances for Council action that would increase food security for residents; i.e. – urban hen ordinance, zoning changes for community gardens, etc.

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Program & Policy Recommendations

- Collaborate with key partners and staff to address outdated zoning restrictions, ordinances, and local tax code related to urban agriculture and food access projects.
- Pursue sustainable funding opportunities for food policy recommendations initiatives through grant writing that will support food-related initiatives.
- Collaborate with key partners and staff to increase the use of fresh/raw/unprocessed foods in Richmond Public Schools by expanding the purchase of produce from local growers to reach a minimum of 10 percent of total food expenditure.
- Collaborate with key partners and staff to develop interventions that will improve dietary behaviors in low income neighborhoods.
- Increase access to healthy food in low income neighborhoods.
- Identify gaps in existing programs that are focusing on the promotion of healthy eating within the greater Richmond region.

**Cost:**

- Salary and benefits of Food Policy Coordinator
- Budget for office, supplies, educational and outreach materials

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Better alignment and designated coordination of recommendations of the Mayor’s Food Policy Task Force with the identified needs of the Richmond City food system.
- Facilitate and increase resident access to healthy foods by designing and implementing new interventions focused on increasing efficiency and strength of Richmond City Food System.
- Champion and provide a visible impact upon the city’s food system with campaigns for healthy eating, support of community kitchens, bringing nutritious and local food to city schools and support of urban gardens.
- Liaison and educate legislators, their staff, and members of the administration on selected food-related policy.

2. Review ordinances, zoning laws, and local tax code to identify and address changes that would facilitate development of food projects and urban agriculture.
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Description of Problem: Richmond City has both neighborhoods in need of revitalization and an inequitable food system that would benefit from simplification and updating zoning and licensing laws that support urban agriculture. The city has followed national trends of increasing prevalence of Urban Agriculture, due in part to consumers' increased interest in buying local and sustainably-produced foods. Urban agriculture projects broadly encompass commercial farms, farming in urban and suburban areas, community and school gardens. The direct benefit of urban agriculture projects include increased access to healthy foods and employment opportunities for low-income residents in the surrounding neighborhood. Community gardens, for example, provide healthy food options, supply food banks and other local food pantries. Additionally, these gardens function as a community gathering space, provide safe activities for youth and help deter crime. Many municipalities have recognized the benefits that urban agriculture can bring to their residents, including economically disadvantaged cities that view urban agriculture as a way to revitalize their neighborhoods.

Urban agriculture projects, such as community gardens, can be difficult to initiate and sustain due to complex or outdated zoning and licensure laws. Several legal barriers inhibit the formation of more community gardens including organizational maintenance, control of garden lands, and access to resources. The Residential (R) and Residential-Office (RO) districts permit cultivation of crops, flowers, trees and shrubs which are not offered for sale on the premises. While this office has reviewed and approved a number of community gardens throughout the city, this zoning ordinance is “permissive” in that the specific use must be permitted within the district. Many zoning districts, specifically B-districts, do not include propagation and cultivation of crops. This use is not permitted without the on-site sales limitation imposed in the R- and RO-districts.

These regulations often unintentionally prohibit basic farming activities and food generating projects. Residents who live in affluent areas may require legal assistance to navigate the laws that facilitate use

20 Kaufman et al. (2000) 3.
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of vacant property. Such regulations impede adoption of innovative programs that would promote food sustainability and security.

Proposed Intervention and Strategies: The city would assign a taskforce to collaborate with a diverse group of stakeholders to identify laws and regulations, zoning ordinances and local tax regulations that obstruct sustainable food projects and urban agriculture within the city. (Suggested key stakeholders include Bon Secours, Virginia Cooperative Extension, VCU, City Council, Economic and Community Development Office, Minority Business Development Office, as well as a variety of non-profits and community organizations, including Tricycle Gardens and Shalom farm).

After identifying dated policies and local ordinances and the socio-economic and fiscal impact, the task force would engage city leaders and food policy advocates in revision, amendment or new ordinances and laws to support, enable, and expand urban agriculture opportunities. This task force could then identify entrepreneurs and citizens to develop local food projects, increase education and awareness of healthy eating and food sustainability. These promising food initiatives would create innovative business models, jobs, increase food production, and raise resident awareness. Residents would be empowered to enact positive local urban agricultural enterprises and build practical life-skills within the community.

Outated ordinances would be selected for revision based on the following criteria:

- Supports urban agriculture for individual land owners or community gardens
- Simplifies zoning and permitting processes
- Alleviates concerns of community activists and entrepreneurs
- Considers land use and tenure for particular parcels of land

Cost:

- Primarily internal costs and administrative time.
- Changes to local ordinances may increase or decrease tax liability and additional city resources.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increase resident access to healthy fruits and vegetables.
- Increase resident knowledge and awareness of eating healthy foods.
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- Updated zoning and tax ordinances that allow for community food production and provides partial relief to the problem of substandard grocery stores, which often operate in low-income urban neighborhoods.
- Urban agriculture that shifts the physical landscape of the city with positive environmental and aesthetic benefits while creating strong communities and encouraging hands on participation from area residents.

Category 2 - Innovations in Land Use and Urban Agriculture Recommendations

3. Revise Richmond City law Sec.10-88 regarding keeping and running at large of Fowl (current policy).

Description of Problem: Current laws and ordinances make raising chicken virtually impossible in many neighborhoods in the city. Last year, an organized effort by Richmond residents petitioning for urban chicken ownership was conducted with over 1,000 signatures. Urban backyard fowl used to be common throughout North American cities but urban planning and municipal bylaws have pushed livestock or poultry out of the urban center over the last several decades. Recently, there is a growing demand for personal chicken ownership across the US and in Richmond City. A primary reason for keeping chickens is that they are a sustainable food source - eggs. It is the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food. Studies have shown that small scale, back yard chicken keeping/egg production reduces potential disease risk associated with commercial egg production, such as salmonella. Chicago, Cleveland, New York and Seattle are among a growing number of cities to have passed laws since 2008 that allow chickens in private residential yards within urban areas.

Chapter 10 (Animals) of the City Code regulates ownership of domestic animals for noncommercial purposes. Hogs and pigs are banned in city limits but fowl are permitted subject to meeting lot size, spacing and enclosure requirements. City Code Section 10-88 states residents owning urban chickens must have a minimum lot size of 50,000 square feet while Ordinance Zoning Code Section 114-402.4

23 Pollock et al. (2011).
requires almost 4 acres. In addition, residents must house chickens 500 feet away from any house or building used for residential purposes. These space and distance requirements are barriers to the vast majority of neighborhoods in Richmond and citizens who want to keep chickens for egg production.

“Planning for chickens can either be pro-active on the part of the city council and planning staff or reactionary as citizens will eventually bring the issue to city hall.” (LaBadie, 2008)

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** The goal of this proposal is to pass legislation empowering Richmond City residents to own and raise chickens. By allowing residents to own a limited number of hens, food security is bolstered by direct access to fresh eggs. Environmental benefits of raising backyard chickens include decrease in household waste through kitchen scrap consumption, the use of chicken manure as garden fertilizer, a decrease in garden pests and weeds, and a reduction in the carbon footprint. Small chicken coops could be built by homeowners and residents within large public housing complexes. Residents and volunteers could assist with building and maintaining these coops, possibly alongside community gardens.

Concerns over chicken ownership in urban settings typically include spread of infectious diseases, noise violations, and improper disposal of waste. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the most common chicken-related health concern for humans is *Salmonella*, a bacteria shed in chicken feces. *Salmonella* can cause diarrhea, vomiting, fever, abdominal cramps, and in severe cases, hospitalization and/or death in humans. *Salmonella* and other disease may be transmitted to humans through direct contact with the birds, handling of waste, and handling chicken eggs. While these are valid concerns, a report by the Hampton Public Health District (2012) states, “there is essentially no evidence that raising small numbers of chickens presents a public health risk of sufficient magnitude to

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justify banning the practice."

CDC reported that Salmonella can be easily prevented by hand-washing and treated by antibiotics.

Proper education and regulation of chicken living conditions, waste removal, and egg handling should be considered and enforced. Potentially negative and harmful risks of chicken ownership can be minimized to an acceptable level, as the passage of legislation allowing urban chicken ownership in other major US cities demonstrates. Examples of regulations regarding noise, odor, coop construction, and proper treatment of animals these restrictions could include:

1. No more than 6 chickens (hens only) per family or unit dwelling.
2. Only property owners with a yard of 800 square feet would be allowed to have chickens.
3. Permits such as those for dogs would need to be purchased from the city to allow legal ownership, generating revenue for the city. Legal documents must be shown to officials that prove property ownership.
4. A chicken public health/safety course would also be required as well as proper housing/keeping of such fowl.

Government agencies involved with implementation would include: animal care and control, health district, human services, social services, sustainability, parks and recreation, planning and development, economic and community development. All of these agencies are support units that would supply oversight, education, enforce regulations and be used as liaisons.

We recommend backyard urban chicken ownership be introduced incrementally to Richmond City residents through a lottery system. Because of the controversial nature of this proposal and alleged negative repercussions, 200 residents should be allowed to own chickens over the first year. The new ordinance would be evaluated at the end of the year, and if acceptable, 400 residents would be allowed to own chickens during the second year. Over the third year, chicken ownership would be expanded for all residents. This gradual implementation or “trial” period would allow the city legislature to evaluate if urban chicken ownership is indeed in the best interest of all residents of Richmond City.

30 Berg, S. (2012). Health Director Comments on Public Health Risks of Backyard Chicken Raising in the City of Hampton.
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Cost:

This initiative is project-specific and has no cost to the city other than administrative cost associated with changing the legislation. Funding to maintain the chicken operation would come from a collection or donations within the community. Existing government agencies such as Cooperative Extension and 4-H could help residents with the chicken co-op/garden operation in their area, educating, supporting and empowering. The potential health risk from infection should also be considered.

Expected Outcomes:

- Increase sustainable food access and food security for residents.
- Increase waste management/resource recovery by using chicken manure for fertilizer for those who maintain gardens, creating healthy soil and food.
- Create local resiliency and a more sustainable food system.

4. Reduce or eliminate irrigation fees for community gardens.

Description of Problem: Irrigation fees represent a cost barrier to urban agriculture and community gardens. Community gardens increase local resident access to fruits and vegetables, increase physical activity, provide economic benefits, increase social equity and promote environmental stewardship.\(^{32}\) Often strategically located within neighborhoods, community gardens provide at-risk populations with an accessible, sustainable source of nutritious food. Community gardens improve local food systems by placing at least partial control of food security in the hands of citizens.\(^{33}\) A 2011 study in the American Journal of Public Health found 56 percent of community gardeners in Denver ate fruits and vegetables at least five times a day, versus 25 percent of non-gardeners.\(^{34}\)


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In order for any garden to flourish, sustainable water sources must be established. For Richmond City, there are currently five water-source options residents may utilize:

1. **Rain Barrel or Cistern** - Rain barrel: $60-$200 or Cistern: $90 and up.

2. **Portable Water Meter** - $500 Refundable deposit, monthly meter service charge of $88.30 per month; cost of meter per month; applicant must bring in meter for monthly reading/billing.

3. **Existing Water Service at Property where Water Meter is installed** - cost assessed based on property water usage fees.

4. **Existing Water Service at Property, but no water meter installed** - $35 water meter reset and $2,000 plumbing work.  

5. **New Water Service** - Water Service Permit - $5,650, plus Plumber cost - $2,000 and above.

- Establishing and maintaining water service linkages or portable meters are cost prohibitive for community gardens and/or urban agriculture projects, ranging from $1,200 per year to $6,000 for a permanent connection. Portable water meters are typically used by general contractors but also for community gardens. These hand held devices attach to any fire hydrant, allowing a readily accessible water source. The costs associated with utilizing portable water meters for a community garden include: Application for a portable water meter: $500.00 deposit.

  - Portable water meter monthly fee: $88.30.

  - Cost of hiring a plumber for meter installation and inspection: $85 an hour plus cost of inspection.

  - Backflow Device (¾ Reduced Pressure Zone) used to protect water supplies from contamination or pollution: $180.13.

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**Proposed interventions:** Richmond’s City code sections 106.283 (Commercial Water Service) should be altered to reduce or eliminate the monthly fee for portable water meter fees specifically for community gardens. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU), community gardeners and urban farmers, community, plumbers, and/or utility locators should examine the available connections to existing and proposed garden sites and find acceptable and affordable solutions for irrigation to each site.

This revision would emulate City Code alterations adopted by of other municipalities such as Austin, Texas which waive water attachment fees used specifically for community gardening purposes. Virginia Beach has a portable water meter fee of only $36.10 for residents. Revising the City code would facilitate and increase the number of community gardens by lowering the economic barrier associated with portable water meters.

**Cost:**

- Nominal administrative costs of changing the code.
- Loss of utility fees and revenue from community garden water service attachment sites.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increase the number and sustainability of community gardens throughout Richmond City.
- Increase in community gardens and access to affordable, healthy food.
- Improve environmental benefits such as managing storm-water runoff by capturing and filtering water.

5. Utilize park, recreation, and community facilities to develop orchards and edible landscaping

**Description of Problem:** Ironically, in lower income neighborhoods, parks and recreational programming is primarily directed towards sports, dance, theatre and cultural activities, while pressing food-related community needs remain unaddressed. Traditional parks and recreation land use explores connections between people, animals, and plants, and provides opportunities for communities to learn about food

availability within these environments. Richmond City’s municipal parks and recreation facilities strive to “serve people of all ages and abilities...deliver exceptional, clean, safe and accessible parks, inviting recreation facilities and programs that support the community needs...” Current designated land and facilities in Richmond include 35 parks or playgrounds, 21 community centers, and 155 athletic fields. The Food-related challenges facing Richmond include:

- One in three children in Richmond City lives below the federal poverty level.\(^{40}\)
- 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.\(^{41}\)
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).\(^{42}\)
- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.\(^{43}\)

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** We believe parks and recreational facilities could be leveraged to serve the needs of lower income communities in Richmond by transforming 1,000 square feet of park space (based on park availability) into edible landscape or orchard space to heighten food security in Richmond. According to the US Forest Service, urban orchards strengthen local community food production, improve local economies, and benefit the environment by absorbing carbon emissions, filtering water, cleaning the air, and reducing storm water runoff.\(^{44}\)

Designated orchards/edible landscaping sites could be tended by individuals, community organizations, or the Mayor’s Youth Academy. Fruits and vegetables harvested could be given or sold to local residents.

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and/or farmers markets. An informal survey and internet research reveals that the City of Richmond has successfully created several garden spaces currently managed by volunteers within city properties: Community gardens at Chimborazo Park and Playground.

- A community garden with 29 plots built at Humphrey Calder Community Center
- Horace Edwards Park
- 17th Street Farmers’ Market
- Alice Fitz Park
- Fruit trees planted at Owl Orchard community garden (44th Street)

Hickory Hill Community Center is a prime example for potential rezoning because of the substantial area that may be designated for edible landscape or orchard development. This land would support the education of children and families in the production and distribution of nutritious foods.

The edible landscape initiative will be modeled after two urban orchard initiatives in Pennsylvania and Utah:

1. The Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP) mission is “to plant orchards in the City of Philadelphia that grow healthy food, green spaces and community food security.” POP was founded in 2007 as an economic development project to develop a sustainable food source for low income neighborhoods. The project has planted 31 orchards (1125 trees and shrubs) and works with community-based groups and volunteers to plan and plant orchards filled with useful and edible plants and trees.45

2. The City of Moab, Utah, received a Community Forestry Partnership Grant from the Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands to assist with park orchards. The Youth Garden Project (YGP) has planted fruit trees that will be harvested and sold at the local farmers market. YGP has a wide variety of programs for the community, such as participating in sustainable agriculture and processing harvested food from the orchards in a certified community kitchen.46

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Establishing partnerships to support and sustain these spaces are important. Examples include: Partnerships with the U.S. Forestry and/or merchants like Home Depot or Lowes and their Corporate Social Responsibility resources to donate or obtain discounted seedlings, trees, and tools and engaging Richmond’s Virginia Cooperative Extension’s community viability program and resources made available through land grant colleges and universities, i.e., Virginia State University and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to assist with community education and guidance in the development and sustaining of orchards and community gardens.

**Cost:**

- Funds or supplemental funds for tools, buying trees and bushes (not usually grown from seed), and labor for planting orchards.
- Yearly costs related to pruning bushes and trees, and application of dormant oil (organic tree protectant during winter season).

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increase community outreach evidenced by measuring the number of program participants, families, schools and other community entities impacted.
- Increase the number of trees planted, and pounds of food grown for distribution.
- Progress monitoring evidenced by surveys of participant knowledge and experience, project and service satisfaction, progress reports, and on-site visits.

6. **Establish policy prohibiting the use of herbicides, pesticides, or inorganic fertilizers on school and park properties.**

**Problem Description:** Children are at greater risk from pesticide exposure because their metabolic rates are more rapid; they process toxicants differently; they pass through critical developmental stages; they consume more food in proportion to body size; and they have different exposure patterns than adult.\(^{47}\)

Throughout the United States, public schools, park and recreational areas, and athletic areas are often

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treated with at least one of the 20,000 pesticides registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).\textsuperscript{48} Pesticides, which are classified as insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, disinfectants and various other substances used to control pests, play an important role in food supply, protection, and disease control, but can also be harmful to human health.\textsuperscript{49} When sprayed outside, pesticides drift on to nearby property resulting in off target residues. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that over-exposure to such toxins where children play can be harmful to health and development of children due to their undeveloped organs and reduced immune systems.\textsuperscript{50} In 2010, the Journal of Pediatrics demonstrated that exposure to pesticides and other harmful chemicals increase the risk for ADHD, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and autism.\textsuperscript{51}

The Virginia Pesticide Control Board currently offers a list of recommendations for public schools. However, Virginia state policy does not restrict school pesticide use, pesticide “spray zones” around school property, exterior pesticide control, or requirements notifying students/parents of pesticide spraying.\textsuperscript{52} In addition to potential harmful side effects for children, the use of chemicals on school properties limits the success of school garden projects.

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** Enact city legislation that prohibits groundskeepers, maintenance personnel, and city gardening personnel from using inorganic, toxic or otherwise questionable herbicides where children may interact. Exposures and potential health risks to children and school staff can be reduced lowering routine pesticide applications through an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). IPM is an alternative pest-control technique that manages and suppresses pests by preventing their access to food, water and shelter. School systems that have adopted IPM recommendations include: Arizona,

Texas, California, Indiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia. In Maryland, each county board of education is required to develop an integrated pest management policy, establish procedures for conducting the program, document records of procedures, and educate staff members, students, and parents in the procedures. Parents/guardians must be notified before application of the pesticides in a school building or on school property. The EPA recommends school systems implement the following IPM strategies:

1. Monitor for the presence of pests.
2. Identify root causes of the pest problem (e.g. leaky pipes or roofs, standing water, deteriorated building infrastructure, poor sanitation, etc.).
3. Address the cause by changing conditions to prevent future infestations.
4. Utilize pest suppression techniques, if necessary, that are based on mechanical and biological controls.
5. Utilize the least toxic pesticide only after non-toxic alternatives have been tried and exhausted.

For a wider range of protection, notification before and after pesticide application occurs should be required on school or public property for 48 hours from time of spraying. Friday afternoons/evenings could be an ideal time for landscaping and maintenance personnel to distribute pesticides if no school programming is scheduled. Possible implementation strategies include using the TeamRVAGreen volunteers and the organic community gardening groups along with sustainable vendors to train groundskeepers and other city personnel about natural gardening options and best practices. With input from Health Department personnel, options such as composting cafeteria food waste may be an alternative to chemical fertilizers. Grants may be available for professional institutional composting equipment from the EPA or other environmentally concerned organizations.

**Cost:**

- Administrative costs related to changing the municipal code

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- Costs associated with retraining of groundskeepers and developing environmentally friendly grounds-keeping practices

- The use of chemical pesticides may be necessary for effective management and regulation of pests. If certain pesticides were banned from school property, adequate supplemental organic chemicals would need to be used to ensure the health and safety of students.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Create safer environments for Richmond City children with decreased exposure to pesticides and harmful chemicals.
- Decrease the risk of ADHD, heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and autism for future generations.
- Annual or semi-annual evaluation determines schools and park properties level of compliance.
- Potential cost savings for school systems created by IPM implementation.

7. Establish a competitive grant program to encourage healthy food-related businesses.

**Description of Problem:** The need to strengthen food security and access to healthy food is pervasive; Richmond City needs to support increased demand for locally grown food and produce.

- One in three children in Richmond City lives below the federal poverty level.55
- 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active healthy lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.56
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).57
- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.58

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The economic incentive for local agribusiness is compelling. In 2002, the USDA reported 1,813 farms that exist in the seven counties surrounding the City of Richmond, a wealth of untapped revenue for the local economy. 59 Most stakeholders and local authorities believe approximately 1 percent of the food sold in Richmond was grown locally. 60 Capital spent on food grown outside the district leaves the region immediately, whereas money spent on local food circulates and promotes the economic health of the community. The Seattle Sustainable Report (2008) demonstrated that “locally directed spending by consumers more than doubles the number of dollars circulating among businesses in the community.” 61

If each household in Richmond City spent $10 each week on Virginia farm-based food products, $48,474,400 community food dollars would be generated annually. 62 People from across demographic lines desire to strengthen Richmond’s local food system and partake in this growing industry, but lack knowledge, land, space, capital and/or mentorship.

**Proposed Intervention:** The FPTF believes the most effective method for the city to address food-related issues— including many of the other recommendations included in this report - is for the city to provide competitive funding that promotes and fosters innovative food-related enterprises, business, and non-profits focused on strengthening the local food system.

For example, the city could establish an annual grant, potentially entitled the “Richmond City Food Enterprise Award,” that would symbolize community recognition, media publicity, mentorship opportunities, and funding for the winning business or non-profit. The food-related recipients of this grant would stimulate economic development, create jobs, and be sustainable answers to the Cities food-related issues.

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One similarly viable model is the Supporting East End Entrepreneurship Development (SEED), an annual business plan competition targeting revitalization of Church Hill and the 25th Street and Nine Mile Road corridor in the East End of Richmond. Founded last year by Bon Secours Richmond Health System and Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), SEED Awards Program recently promised $50,000 in renewable funding to promising East End entrepreneurs and businesses. The program awards three successful applicants annually and helps them navigate the process of starting and growing a business.

Each entrepreneur granted funding is assigned a mentor and receives assistance with administrative support to advance their ideas.

Launching this competitive grant initiative would require a point person to coordinate the process, solicit applications, investigate possible mentors, secure a panel of judges to award the grant, set and execute a meeting to review applicants, select award winners, and follow-up. Outside partner organizations could include Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Richmond, and/or the Chamber of Commerce.

Cost:

Estimated costs for yearly implementation include two types of awards:

1. Micro grants (less than $1,000) for small entrepreneurial projects such as youth operated farm stand or other food catering projects.
2. Larger grants ($10,000-50,000) for small businesses, non-profits or individual initiatives such as the Bon Secours and LISC Seed Project.

Expected Outcomes:

- Generate new enterprise development beyond what most individuals in the community could normally achieve.
- Decrease health disparities outcomes for Richmond City.
- Increase local economic development and foster job and business creation.

63 Bon Secours Richmond Opens Competition to Entrepreneurs for Financial Prize Bon Secours and LISC join forces to form SEED program. Retrieved from http://www.eastendvision.org/assets/east_end_charrette/BSMS_SEED.pdf
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- Create and mentor a new generation of business people committed to urban renewal.

8. **Develop a comprehensive job training program supporting urban agriculture and ‘green’ career development.**

**Description of Problem:** Richmond City is burdened by 6.2 percent unemployment compared with 5.6 percent for Virginia.64 Lack of employment has been correlated to increased physical, emotional, and functional impairments such as sleep disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance addictions.65 As a result, the unemployed make more use of the health care system. One of the main causes of unemployment is lack of professional training, and/or higher education. Of the 12,947 seniors who graduated last June from the 48 public high schools in central Virginia, 7,876 or 61 percent are now in college. According to the National Student Clearing House, Richmond City Public Schools placed three schools in the bottom 10 of schools with seniors who attend two year or four year colleges. Armstrong High School, for example, placed only 61 of 165 seniors or 37 percent into two year or four-year colleges.66

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** Richmond City has the opportunity to address both low unemployment levels and job training for at-risk populations concurrently by focusing efforts on food-related job creation and training opportunities. We recommend the city promote career development opportunities in environmental, agribusiness, and food entrepreneurship sectors (“green” fields) with specific focus on sustainable urban agriculture. Green career development will provide more facilities and develop new facilities that offer training in horticulture, agriculture, and renewable energy for citizens and public school students.

Career training programs and initiatives would include:

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- Develop relationships with local “green” businesses and corporations to provide shadowing, internships, and on-the-job training.
- Create “green” educational workshops to encourage more food sustainable enterprises within the city and improve food security.
- Create a job transition training program for those most vulnerable and in need of skills to enter or re-enter the workforce.
- Investigate funding sources for new programs. The city will need to research grants for “green” or environmental job training through programs through organizations such as EPA, Virginia State, Growing Power, USDA, etc.
- Provide labor for city-run programs.

Community partners could include Richmond Technical School, Virginia Commonwealth University, and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

The city has demonstrated interest in support of urban agriculture through initiatives like the Mayor’s Youth Academy (MYA). The MYA provides out-of-school summer development for youth (14-19) through job readiness training, leadership development, exposure to entrepreneurship, mentoring, and post-secondary career exploration.67

**Cost:**

- Integration of career training and horticulture programs into Richmond City Public Schools.
- Costs associated with city subsidized internships at local business and non-profits, programmatic costs, and program staff.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increase job training and creation, especially for the most vulnerable populations including those without college/university degrees.

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- Better trained agriculture and culinary workforce. If more people purchase locally grown produce and more local food businesses are established, we need a capable workforce to grow, prepare, and deliver this food. If each household in Virginia spent $10 per week of their food budget on locally-grown food; $1.65 billion would be generated annually in direct economic impact.68
- Increase number of participants placed in “green” jobs after completion of a training course.

9. The city will make available vacant buildings and land for organizations/businesses wishing to start new food-oriented projects.

Description of Problem: Richmond like virtually every city in the US has abandoned buildings, boarded up storefronts or abandoned single family home. Vacant properties often contain an array of conditions (illegal dumping, leaking sewage, and fire hazards) that pose serious threats to public health, safety, and the welfare of neighborhoods while reducing property value.69 A Philadelphia based study found that houses within 150 feet of a vacant property experienced a net loss of $7,627 in value.70 In Austin, Texas blocks with unsecured vacant buildings received 3.2 times as many drug calls to police, 1.8 times as many theft calls, and 2 times the number of violence related calls as blocks without vacant buildings.71

In Richmond City, thousands of derelict buildings and empty lots exist across the city landscape. Causes of abandonment stem from high crime during the mid-1990s along with deteriorating housing stock of older homes and historical buildings. Roughly 40 city owned surplus properties (over one million square feet) currently lie vacant or unused while entrepreneurs, non-profits, and other groups lack the


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property, resources or capital to start otherwise viable food and agricultural enterprises.\(^\text{72}\) Surplus property consists of land and buildings (former school buildings, vacant homes, or small parcels of land) that are owned by the City of Richmond but that have been determined to be surplus by their use agency and City Council. Such undeveloped land and buildings represent potential food distribution, commercial centers, and areas of possible tax revenue for the city.

Despite complex challenges facing redevelopment and rezoning of abandoned property, revitalization of these buildings also present ideal opportunities to address multiple problems and provide a variety of benefits for the residents, business sectors, and city authorities.

Food related issues in the city are pervasive:

- Roughly 40,000 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.\(^\text{73}\)
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).\(^\text{74}\)
- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.\(^\text{75}\)

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** The city and Richmond’s Redevelopment Housing Authority (RRHA) should provide city owned surplus vacant buildings and land at highly reduced cost to non-profits or small businesses wishing to start new food oriented projects. A designated task force working with appropriate city offices (Economic & Community Development, Urban Planning and Department of


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Public Works) would identify potential properties to be made available and solicit applications from food-based non-profits and small businesses to apply for inexpensive short or long-term leases.

Any zoning laws, regulations and issues of parking and access would be addressed to allow and support food and urban agriculture related projects in vacant city owned buildings. Richmond’s Parcel Mapper Tool could be used to assess any property in the city for pertinent information including: property value, type of zoning, owner, total square footage, etc. Federal and state grants could supplement city funding. A list of available funding sources should be compiled from city officials in order to help facilitate this process.

Identifying viable property for use by food and agricultural enterprises would create synergies with existing efforts across the city. One example of a food-related enterprise that successfully acquired city owned surplus property is Boaz and Ruth, a multidimensional community development organization located in Highland Park. Operating out of the renovated Fire House 13 building, this non-profit provides career training and support for ex-offenders reentering the workforce.

While many potential city-owned surplus properties exist, two examples that could be purchased and revitalized include:

- **Real Schools**: 4319 Old Brook Rd. Building size: 8,986 square feet.
- **13 Acres Property**: 3801 Hermitage Road. Building size: 5,000 square feet.

**Cost**:  
- Initial administrative cost would be incurred by the city and agencies related to these policy changes.
- Currently unused building could be sold to food-related business, and in turn, the business would increase tax revenue and economic development for the city.
- Other cost related to this initiative would fall upon the individual organization requesting use of the property.

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Expected Outcomes: Successfully converting vacant city owned property into food and agriculturally related commercial centers will result in a broad range of beneficial effects for the city including:

- Establish of new food/ urban agriculture enterprises that would provide urban agriculture/food distribution jobs.
- Stimulate local economic development and increase food security within city limits.
- Empower residents to engage in positive local urban agricultural enterprises and build tangible and career related life skills.
- Improve the vitality of businesses, neighborhoods, and the city's livability as a whole.
- Broaden the tax base for City of Richmond and increase city revenue.

10. Provide funds and resources to create community kitchens and food hubs in at-risk neighborhoods.

Description of Problem: Food security and access are central metrics of Richmond City’s health status, environment, and economy. Efforts in the city to reduce hunger and increase resident access to healthy foods have been independent, geographically specific initiatives, but food-related issues remain.

- One in three children in Richmond City lives below the federal poverty level.78
- 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.79
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).80
- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.81

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Currently, Richmond does not have a central food purchasing, processing, or education and outreach center that supports local growers and provides tools necessary for citizens to become more food secure. Food hubs, or regional food distribution and coordination facilities, offer great promise for systemic social and environmental change. There is a growing interest in food hubs as a route to alleviating food deserts, increasing small farm viability, establishing much needed infrastructure, providing fresh food to local communities, and revitalizing local economies.\(^82\) There are several models throughout the country:

- **Non-profit driven model**: Alba Organics (CA), Intervale Center (VT), Growers Collaborative (CA), Red Tomato (MA), Common Market (PA), Local Food Hub (VA)
- **Producer/Entrepreneur driven model**: Grasshopper (KY), Good Natures Family Farms (KS), Tuscarora Organic Growers (PA), New North Florida Cooperative (FL), Eastern Carolina Organics (NC), Cherry Capital Foods (MI)
- **Retail driven model**: La Montanita Food Coop (NM), Wedge’s Coop Partners (MN), Weavers Way Coop (PA)
- **Consumer driven model (online buying clubs)**: Oklahoma Food Coop, Nebraska Food Coop, Iowa Food Coop  
  “Hybrid” market model (wholesale/retail food markets): Central New York Regional Market Authority (NY), Eastern Market (MI), Hunts Point Wholesale Farmers Market (NYC), Santa Monica Farmers Market (CA), “State Farmers Markets” in the Southeast and Midwest, e.g., NC, SC, MI, FL\(^83\)

The Local Food Hub in Charlottesville (LFHC) is a model non-profit food hub. Operating out of a food warehouse, the LFHC purchases and aggregates locally grown produce from more than 70 small family farms within 100 miles of Charlottesville. The LFHC distributes food/produce to more than 150 locations in the region, including public schools, hospitals, institutions, restaurants and markets. They offer educational programs and workshops including: farm apprenticeships and high school internships that


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are designed to inspire and train the next generation of farmers, producers and local food advocates. The LFHC also build partnerships to get fresh, delicious food into at-risk neighborhoods, and they donate 25 percent of the food grown at their educational farm to food banks and hunger organizations.84

Proposed Intervention and Strategies: Establish Food Hub(s) and Community Kitchen(s) in receptive areas of Richmond City. We envision a food hub with three core objectives:

1. Distribution or aggregation of wholesale food/produce: The Food Hub will be a drop off point for multiple farmers and a pick up point for distribution farms and customers that want to buy local and regional food.

2. Permanent facilities and storage: Provide the space and equipment for food to be stored, lightly processed, packed, palletized and possibly sold under a Food Hub’s regional label. Facilities will also offer cold storage for local food vendors and food rescuers. Community organizations such as the Virginia Cooperative Extension could teach food related aggregation classes.

3. Community kitchens: Community kitchens will be independent establishments or associated with community centers, non-profit organizations, and churches that would provide access to their certified kitchens for local residents. A city appointed task force would form partnerships with existing community groups with access to commercial grade kitchens. Residents could learn and participate in all aspects of food production from seed to plate, additionally providing opportunities to work and barter in exchange for food. Located in churches, schools, and community centers, community kitchens would be strategically placed near community gardens, urban farms and farmers’ markets. Virginia Department of Health will ensure all kitchens are safe and up to code.

Process for implementation would include:

- Identify neighborhoods that would most benefit from a community kitchen/food hub.
- Identify community members to support the project and be preliminarily involved, and be part of an advisory team.

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• Identify vacant buildings that would appropriately house a community kitchen/food hub.
• Identify impediments such as zoning restrictions and resolve impediments with the appropriate city authorities.
• Identify and collaborate with appropriate federal, state, and local partners.
• Identify and apply for possible funding sources (e.g. USDA).

Cost:

• Administrative and budgeting for city assistance for the development of kitchens
• Possible cost associated with of hiring a point person to manage Food Hub(s) and Community Kitchen(s)

Expected Outcomes:

• Promote healthier diet and lifestyle behaviors while providing educational opportunities for residents to learn how to prepare nutritious food for themselves and their families.
• Provide opportunities for entrepreneurs in the food service industry and career training for food industry related careers.
• Foster collaboration among small local farmers that will expand distribution capacity, lead to new markets such as large institutional customers (hospitals, corporations, etc).
• Increase support by large institutions and purchasers to small and medium sized local farms and source locally.
• Increase affordable access of small entrepreneurs and enterprises to certified kitchens for food preparation, processing, and packaging that otherwise not be affordable or available.

Category 3 - Access to Fresh, Healthy Food Recommendations

11. Mobile Farmers Market and Bus Routes to local Farmers’ Markets.

Description of Problem: Richmond City, like many US cities, suffers from disparities in the type and origin of food residents consume. Many residents lack access to fresh food and are affected by food-
related chronic health problems such as Type II Diabetes, obesity, hypertension and heart attacks.\textsuperscript{85}

Large areas of the city exist without grocery stores, and are served by convenience stores or corner markets stocked with highly processed food products, high in fat, sugars or high fructose corn syrup, and artificial colors and flavorings. Forty-one Richmond City neighborhoods fall into this category, with 11 communities which 40 percent or more of residents below the federal poverty level. Mosby has a poverty rate of over 50 percent, and Gilpin and Whitcomb have poverty rates of over 60 percent.\textsuperscript{86,87,88}

- 40,020 residents in Richmond City are food insecure and lack access to enough food for an active health lifestyle. That is roughly 20 percent of the total city population, compared to 11.8 percent in Virginia and 16.6 percent nationally.\textsuperscript{89}
- Last year, one in four residents in the City of Richmond participated in the Federal Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP).\textsuperscript{90}
- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.\textsuperscript{91}

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** Since February 2012, the city has implemented a free bus-route to Wal-Mart program targeted for seven at-risk neighborhoods throughout the district to increase grocery store access: Hillside Court, Fay Tower, Creighton Court, Fairfield, Mosby,
Whitcomb, and Fulton.\textsuperscript{92} Based upon an evaluation of this initiative’s success, this program could be expanded to increase strategic food access for Richmond’s most vulnerable populations.

1. Establish partnerships between Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) - other bus related transport companies - and local farmers markets that would incorporate bus routes from low income demographic neighborhoods to local farmers’ markets. These neighborhood-to-farmers market buses would increase resident access to local produce, meats and dairy products. The bus routes would be regular (weekly or biweekly, April through November) and well publicized.

2. Healthy food educational materials and examples of easily prepared meals and recipes will be offered as part of these bus routes. Food related workshops could also be hosted offering information on food preparation and preservation.

3. Implement a “Mobile Farmers Market” that transports and sells locally grown food and produce directly to “food desert” neighborhoods. If the SNAP incentive recommendation is implemented (Recommendation 12), underprivileged residents could use SNAP dollars to purchase fresh produce in their neighborhood at reduced rates. This concept could be modeled after Farm to Family, a local non-profit mobile farmers market that connects local farmers with communities, collecting seasonal produce (meat, dairy, fruit, vegetables, eggs, and soy) from growers and distributing/selling food and produce to neighborhoods, schools, and senior homes from their bus throughout the growing season.\textsuperscript{93}

While it is unclear whether bus transportation to farmers markets or mobile farmers markets, “Farm Buses,” would work best for Richmond City, an initial assessment could be made of potential farmers markets and target neighborhoods. This would include providing free GRTC rides for Richmond City resident or Farm-bus operation to all the local area farmers markets located within the city limits. Designated buses would pickup and drop off residents living in low to middle income areas and take them to area farmers markets (all SNAP certified) throughout the growing season. This would provide some traceability as to purchases of local organic foods by Richmond residents from local farmers markets.


\textsuperscript{93} Farm to Family (2012). Retrieved from http://www.thefarmbus.com
Senior citizens and SNAP recipients gain access to healthier food options at farmers markets that accept food stamps, SNAP/WIC vouchers.

Mobile farmers markets exist in other municipalities across the country. For example, in Chicago, Fresh Moves is a local not-for-profit that operates a mobile farmers market out of a converted Chicago Transit Bus, providing fresh produce to targeted food desert neighborhoods. Last month, the Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture also launched a farm-bus in Washington, D.C.

**Cost:**
- GRTC could operate this program or another outside company could be contracted. Evaluation of the program should be made after four months, to determine whether a Farm Bus initiative is more feasibly operated as a for-profit or philanthropy. It must be a sustainable measure that would generate revenue for the involved operating parties.
- Cost associated with bus routes from bus/transport companies.
- If city operated or supported, additional costs would be incurred with the “Mobile Farmers Market” initiative such as the cost of renting/purchasing buses and cost of staff.

**Expected Outcomes:**
- Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables in “food desert” neighborhoods throughout Richmond City.
- Increased residents education on healthy food preparation and preservation.
- Improved health for residents and reduced medical costs.

12. **Expand availability and usage of SNAP purchase points at Farmers’ Markets and other local healthy food vendors for the purpose of produce/plants/seed purchases and to increase Consumer Education of local food/produce meal preparation.**

**Description of Problem:** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifies “food deserts” as low-income neighborhoods (poverty rate of 20 percent or higher) where 33 percent of the population

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reside further than one mile to a supermarket or grocery store.\(^95\) In Richmond City, 41 neighborhoods fall into this category, 11 which have 40 percent or more of residents below the federal poverty level. Mosby Court has a poverty rate of over 50 percent, and Gilpin and Whitcomb have poverty rates of over 60 percent.\(^{96,97,98}\)

- One in four Richmond City residents receives Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, a federal program that provides food vouchers to low income individuals (previously called Food Stamps).\(^99\)

- Nearly 6,500 women and children in Richmond City received Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits every month last year - food vouchers to pregnant and postpartum women and children up to age five.\(^100\)

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** We recommend a four-pronged initiative that would provide incentives and benefits for SNAP/WIC recipients to purchase fruits, vegetables, and seeds from local farmers’ markets while requiring farmers’ markets to accept SNAP/WIC credits. Additionally, local physicians could write “prescriptions” for individuals and families with nutritional deficits redeemable at local farmers’ markets for vegetables and fruit purchases. SNAP dollars generate economic stimulus by keeping nutrition benefit funds within local and regional communities. Each SNAP dollar used generates $1.73 in stimulus for the local economy; contributing toward the salaries of the grocery clerks the truckers who haul the food and produce cross-country, and the farmer who grows the crops.\(^101,102\)

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\(^96\) Darby, A. et al. (2012). Richmond Regional Planning District Commission.
Similarly, WIC benefits supplement the diets of pregnant women, preventing premature births and improving the nutritional status of young infants and children. WIC pays for essential items such as milk, eggs and baby formula.

1. Require that regional farmers’ markets accept federal nutrition benefits (SNAP/WIC) including seed/plant purchases. The federal government provides a variety of assistance to farmers’ markets for this purpose, including free equipment to facilitate electronic benefit transfer (EBT) from a customer’s personal benefit account to producers for markets receiving $100 or more in SNAP benefits per month. Markets may also buy or rent equipment on their own. Additionally, farmers’ markets without EBT equipment may submit manual forms for repayment. ¹⁰³

2. Implement a Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP). SNAP and WIC shoppers could use their benefits at a participating farmers’ market and receive tokens for an equal amount to purchase any vegetables or fruits at Richmond farmers’ markets. In effect, food dollars spent at farmers’ markets are doubled, up to $20 per market day, allowing a shopper to acquire $40 worth of healthy, fresh, regionally grown produce.

3. Education should be provided to SNAP/WIC recipients so they can purchase vegetable seeds and plants with SNAP/WIC benefits to grow their own food. Partnerships could be forged with local urban farms, Master Gardeners, and Virginia Cooperative Extension to create gardening workshops for recipients. The city run food hub/community kitchen (see recommendation # 10) could also serve as a platform to educate residents about available resources. A partnership could also form between the free bus services currently running from “food deserts” to local grocery stores (see recommendation # 11).

4. Implement a fruit and vegetable prescription program that would allow health care providers to write individual “prescriptions” that could be exchanged at local farmers’ markets for fruits and vegetables. Target demographics would include at-risk populations (underserved, malnourished, obese, etc.) in food desert neighborhoods. Partnerships between farmers’ markets and health care providers such as Bon Secours/MCV/Retreat Hospitals should be secured for


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implementation of a fruit and vegetable prescription program in the city. Education and distribution of material to local hospitals, clinics, and farmers’ markets would also require implementation.

Successful implementations of similar initiatives in other jurisdictions across the country include:

- Double Up Food Bucks (DUFB), a Fair Food Network project in Michigan, offers twice the SNAP benefits at local farmers’ markets up to $20 ($40 in fresh produce and vegetables).\(^{104}\) Shoppers visit a “Bridge Card Booth” at participating markets and receive tokens redeemable for Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables.

- Wholesome Wave Program (WWP), a national nonprofit that links local agricultural business to underserved neighborhoods, operates in 26 states, including the District of Columbia. WWP connects 2,300 participating farms and 60 community-based organizations to offer healthy, affordable food/produce to underserved neighborhoods. The Double Value Coupon Program (DVCP) increases the value of federal nutrition benefits at participating farm-to-retail venues.\(^{105}\) The WWP incorporates the food and vegetable prescription program described above. In 2011, FVRX was expanded to eight sites: three in Massachusetts, two in Maine, two in California, and one in Rhode Island\(^{106}\).

Cost:

- Matching funds to double the value of SNAP/WIC benefits utilized. A variety of funding options would be leveraged including private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and local government funds.\(^{107}\)


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- Time and materials for educational outreach. This could come from the city, be donated from partner organizations, or partially funded through grants available from SNAP’s educational component.
- Other less substantial costs are associated with administrative work to implement the policy. Once new policies are implemented there should be statistics/data collected on all those who are participating in the new programs each week to monitor its usage and success.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables in “food desert” neighborhoods throughout Richmond City while bolstering local farms and agribusinesses.
- Increased number of recipient using food vouchers to purchase and consume fresh fruit and vegetables direct from local farmers’ markets.
- Improved nutrition of city residents and decreased diet related chronic disease (obesity, diabetes, hypertension, etc) in at-risk neighborhoods by providing access to healthier foods.

13. Implement a two year moratorium on fast-food restaurant establishments in designated food desert areas of Richmond.

**Description of Problem:** Fast-food and formula type restaurants, serving low-nutrient, energy-dense foods, tend to be more concentrated in minority and low-income neighborhoods where residents already face challenges to obtaining healthy foods because of the lack of supermarkets and other establishments that sell fresh produce, whole grains, and lean protein.  

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• In Richmond City, 41 neighborhoods fall into this category, 11 with over 40 percent of residents below the federal poverty level. Mosby Court has a poverty rate of over 50 percent and Gilpin and Whitcomb have poverty rates over 60 percent.\(^{110,111,112}\)

• Current estimates report 302 fast food restaurants and 83 convenience stores in the city. Please see the Food Policy Task Force Report for a map correlating the locations of fast food restaurants with low-income neighborhoods.

• Clinical nutrition studies present convincing evidence that the prevalence of fast food restaurants and the high-calorie foods they serve has significantly contributed to the amount of calories that the average American consumes.\(^{113}\)

• Fast food contributes to obesity in the United States because of “its large inexpensive portion sizes; high energy density; and the frequency with which Americans, including children, consume it.”\(^{114}\)

• Multiple studies show that adults and children, who regularly eat fast food, consume more calories, saturated fat, and sodium which are related to adverse health outcomes.\(^{115}\)

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies**: Implement a two year moratorium on opening or expanding fast-food establishments\(^{116}\) in “food desert” districts in Richmond City. A moratorium on the opening or expansion of fast-food restaurants would encourage growth in other food service sectors such as supermarkets.

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\(^{110}\) Darby, A. et al. (2012). Richmond Regional Planning District Commission.


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markets and sit-down restaurants that serve healthier foods.\textsuperscript{117} Additionally, reducing availability of fast food chain restaurants within three kilometers of low-income residents is shown to reduce fast food consumption.\textsuperscript{118}

Evaluators could be engaged to measure access to healthy foods in Richmond’s “food deserts” before and after implementation of the proposed new zoning ordinance or using a similar control group that did not experience the new zoning restriction. Virginia localities are granted legal authority to determine zoning ordinances generally under Code of Virginia § 15.2-2280. The relevant Richmond Municipal Code section is Chapter 17- Planning, Zoning, and Subdivision Control.

Other municipalities have restricted fast food facilities though a variety of mechanisms such as complete bans (which require special or conditional use permits for new fast food restaurants) or established quotas. Others have incorporated bans on drive-through service as a means to curtail fast food, which provide a significant disincentive for these businesses because a majority of sales traditionally come from drive-throughs. Finally, banning “formula” or chain restaurants has been another means of restricting fast food establishments.\textsuperscript{119}

Historically, most cities have restricted fast food outlets for purposes other than health such as to preserve community aesthetics, and culture, etc. Concord, Massachusetts, for example, bans all drive-in and fast food restaurants for this stated purpose.\textsuperscript{120} Los Angeles, California was the first to restrict fast food for purely health reasons. In 2008, Los Angeles implemented a ban on new fast food establishments in some of the highest poverty areas which also had high concentrations of fast food outlets. This ban received strong local and grassroots support and has been extended indefinitely.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} Mair, S., Pierce, M. & Teret, S. (2005).
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Cost:

- Minimal administrative expenses accrued by the Planning and Development Review. The city should expect some backlash from restaurant associations and those most affected by the new ordinance.
- Potential loss of revenue to city related to permitting, taxes, etc.

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduce fast-food restaurant growth and density in Richmond City.
- Encourage availability of healthier food options and the opening of supermarkets and other food establishments that sell healthier food.

Category 4 - Healthy Living Media and Marketing Recommendation

14. Implement a city-wide marketing campaign and food-system logo that promotes healthy eating.

Description of Problem: In Richmond City, there is no local, highly visible, city-wide movement to encourage city residents to make healthy dietary and lifestyle decisions or take responsibility for their share of the food system (either as a producer or consumer). Food marketing to children and adolescents is a major public health concern.

The food industry spends over $1.6 billion per year in the U.S. on marketing targeted to young people. Food and beverage advertisements communicate powerful consumption cues, focused and featuring unhealthy foods, snacking at non-meal times, and positive emotions linked to food consumption. On television alone, the average U.S. child sees approximately 13 food commercials every day or 4,700 a

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year; and teens see more than 16 per day, or 5,900 in a year.\textsuperscript{124} The food products advertised most extensively include high-sugar breakfast cereals, fast food and other restaurants, candy, and sugary drinks. Current research on food advertising to children leads to greater preferences and purchase of the products marketed.\textsuperscript{125} In one study, children consumed 45 percent more of a target product when exposed to food advertising.\textsuperscript{126}

\textbf{Proposed Intervention and Strategies:} We recommend a dual city-wide marketing initiative to convey a consistent health-educational message to residents and foster resident participation in the city’s food system through a uniform city-wide logo display throughout local businesses, schools, and offices. All members of the community would be encouraged to become involved in the city’s food system and utilize the logo. Examples of implementation include:

- **Restaurants** could purchase menu items/ingredients from community gardens or compost waste and utilize the logo on menu’s or storefront windows.
- **Local businesses** (hardware, convenience, nonprofits) could advertise in shop windows how their business, building, or products participate and bolster the city’s food system, i.e., “Green” building products, solar panels, “living roofs” covered with vegetation and soil, energy efficient plumbing, or selling environmentally friendly products such as organic foods/materials.

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\textsuperscript{125} McGinnis M, Gootman J, Kraak I. (2006). Food marketing to children and youth: Threat or opportunity? \textit{Institute of Medicine}. Wash, DC.

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- **Schools and day care centers** could be encouraged to purchase fruit and vegetables from local growers or utilize community gardens/edible landscaping (see recommendation # 5).

Develop and implement a city-wide marketing campaign that promotes health and wellness through a universal message like one developed by Blue Cross, Blue Shield of Massachusetts and used by the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative:

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Make it a 5-2-1-0 Day

- Eat 5 fruits or vegetables per day,
- Limit screen time (TVs, computers) to 2 hours or less per day,
- Get 1 hour or more of physical activity per day, and
- Drink 0 sugar-sweetened beverages per day.
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This message could be reinforced through:

- All local media platforms (e.g. mass transit (GRTC), billboards, TV, radio, magazines, papers, etc.). Partnerships and contracts with individual media platforms would need to be established to convey the message.
- City libraries could be used as educational sites for the campaign since they are already located in all areas of the city.
- Local health and educational facilities could be leveraged to disseminate information including local physician offices, hospitals, day care centers, schools, universities, etc).

- An online forum could be created to provide information on healthy eating, nutrition, and lifestyle choices. This site could also provide an opportunity for resident feedback order tailor the program to best meet the community needs.

Several examples of city-wide marketing campaigns similar to our recommendations exist throughout the country.
1. New York City has adopted “Change One Thing,” a city-wide marketing campaign targeting food stamp–eligible New York City teenagers, helping guide them to practical, economic, and healthy food-choices. Operated and funded by the Food Bank for New York City, the project has the following message: “Swapping one soda for a glass of water. Trading a donut for an orange.”

2. Eating healthy doesn’t have to mean overhauling your diet or buying expensive “health food.” It can start with just one healthy choice per day.127

3. In Maryland, “Get Fresh Baltimore” is a community awareness and education campaign designed to educate residents about the importance of fresh foods, provide information about local fresh food sources, and offer meal suggestions using local produce. 128

4. Since 2006, Maine has adopted Let’s Go! is a nationally recognized childhood obesity prevention program that utilizes the “5210” message. Let’s Go! is a program of The Kids CO-OP at The Barbara Bush Children’s Hospital at Maine Medical Center and with a partnership with MaineHealth. This initiative is supported by combination of Maine’s leading health system, business and community-based organizations.129

5. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) implemented a national campaign called “5 A day for Better Health,” with a central message that eating five or more servings of fruit and vegetables per day provided significant health benefits, especially decreasing the risk of cancer. This campaign included the partnership of food producers and retailers as well as other public and private organizations. The message was even incorporated into school lunch programs and state-wide public health interventions. The program increased awareness of the 5 a day recommendation by 150 percent (by 8 percent of the population aware before the campaign to 20 percent after).130


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**Cost:**
- Advertising and marketing costs. Encouraging businesses and organizations to use the logo will generate free advertising.
- Grant funding could be sought through Richmond City Health Department.

**Expected Outcomes:**
- Promote healthier food and lifestyle behaviors for city residents through consistent health and wellness education.
- Encourage resident participation and strengthening of the city’s food system through distribution and education of the local food system and methods of resident involvement.
- Support and promote local businesses and farmers markets by advertising their products/food as environmentally friendly or “green.”
- Create additional goals and means of measuring outcomes, i.e., how many agencies and citizens apply to participate? Are there changes in the dietary behavior, purchasing from local sources and an increase in composting in the city? Is there evidence of collaboration among agencies and citizens to combat food insecurity, and increase support of local food producers?

**Category 5 - Fresh, Local, and Healthy School Food Recommendations**

15. **The city should anticipate and make provision for new funding sources to support upgrades to Richmond City Public Schools (RPS) kitchen infrastructure and equipment** required to increase use of fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and other unprocessed foods in school menus, in compliance the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA).

**Description of Problem:** Carrying out federally-mandated increases in purchase, storage and use of fresh, whole ingredients for RPS meals requires upgrades to the RPS kitchen equipment and enhanced staff training. These mandates cannot be met from School Nutrition Services’ existing dedicated funding sources (federal reimbursement and entitlement funds from USDA’s National School Lunch, National School Breakfast, and USDA Commodity programs). RPS kitchen infrastructure lacks adequate storage (refrigeration) capacity for unprocessed fresh food items and equipment for food preparation and
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processing. Current culinary skills and knowledge of food service staff needs improvement to maximize nutrition potential of fresh produce.

Given the recurring inadequacy of federal funding appropriations to meet requirements under the reauthorized HHFKA 2010, states and localities around the country are being prompted to generate increased resources closer-to-home. RPS has, and continues to, employ a wide range of strategies to fill previous funding gaps.* The city should, however, in its pursuit of Tier 1 status, join with RPS and the local business community to develop a longer-term and more visionary public-private partnership approach, particularly with regard to funding of capital improvements in RPS kitchens.

Children’s diets tend to be inadequate in fruits (particularly whole fruits), vegetables, whole grains and calcium-rich foods while they are too high in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars. Earlier this year, the CDC reported that Virginia has followed the national trend of increasing obesity prevalence, and has reached an all-time high of 26.4 percent.131 The data in the City of Richmond is even more concerning with 29 percent of youth reported as obese.132 Only 4 percent of young people in Virginia meet the USDA recommendation of nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day.133

Outside of the home, children and adolescents spend the majority of time at school and eat a large share of their food there. With over 24,000 youth enrolled in Richmond City Public Schools (RPS), the school system has an excellent opportunity to expand and provide healthy nutrition, encourage positive lifelong habits and behaviors, while addressing the City of Richmond’s nutritional deficits.

Proposed Intervention and Strategies:

• Conduct a thorough assessment of current RPS equipment, staff assets and capabilities to plan for anticipated needs arising from a substantial increase in purchase and use of fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables.

133 Maurice and Mildner (2010).
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- Quantify baseline capital and operating improvement requirements for the next 3-5 years, with priority placed upon existing infrastructure improvements, equipment replacement, and staff training.
- Devise a capital improvement plan that addresses resource deficits over the next 3-5 years.
- Under a 10-year forecasting window, a task force should consider current best-practice models whereby RPS school meal operations are fully transformed into cooking from scratch, central kitchen, and alternative meal distribution models (e.g., New Haven, CT).

**Cost:** The cost for upgraded RPS kitchen infrastructure will depend on the current state of RPS kitchens. Beyond existing federal and foundation grant resources that are being accessed and reviewed, additional avenues to consider pursuing include:

- Specific designation of school kitchen improvement in a city bond referenda; possibly tied to matching private-sector funding
- School district’s participation in regional purchasing collaborative with other community non-profit food service programs
- Seeking state-level appropriations of additional dedicated cents-per-meal funds, tied either to purchases of locally grown foods or to foods surpassing USDA nutritional standards
- Donations of funds, equipment, and time from private sector entities, volunteer organizations, etc.

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Expand school menu offerings of fresh fruits, vegetables and other unprocessed food to foster positive lifelong habits and behaviors for RPS students.
- Expand current operational programs for RPS students such as the supper program.
ADDENDUM TO RECOMMENDATION #15

*To fill funding gaps during FY 2009-12 and prior to reauthorization of HHFKA 2010 Richmond Public Schools Nutrition Services:

- Received federal funds from the 2011 Economic Stimulus Equipment grant for USDA National School Lunch Programs.
- Received funding during FY 2010, 2011, and 2012 for 5, 10 and 15 schools, respectively, to participate in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP). These funds covered food, equipment and staffing to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to students.

Ongoing and proposed RPS nutrition initiatives include:

- Seeking program grants (i.e., Let’s Move Salad Bars to Schools) to increase the use fresh fruits and vegetables in school lunches.
- Complying with procurement regulations by seeking national competitive cooperative purchasing bid contracts for food and equipment.
- Acquiring business partners on an ongoing basis for additional operational funds, services and/or staff training opportunities (i.e., Martin’s for School Nutrition Services Staff Training Project)
- Seeking additional funding from the city (Mayor, council and community at large).

16. Richmond City Public Schools (RPS) should expand its use of fresh/raw/unprocessed foods by increasing the purchase of seasonal produce from local growers, working toward a minimum target of 10 percent of total food purchases within 5 years.

**Description of Problem:** Local growers produce a variety of seasonal fresh produce that could be purchased year-round to increase the nutritional quality, as well as taste and presentation, of school
Programs facilitating formal local farm-sourced procurement for public school systems are growing, led by the Farm-to-Schools movement with an estimated 2500+ programs involving over 10,000 schools nationwide. Geographical preference specifications currently allowed under federal formal procurement guidelines are expected to be expanded in coming years as a result of the USDA piloting programs in two states to give schools more flexibility using federal funds to buy locally grown foods.

Healthy eating habits in childhood and adolescence are important for proper growth and development and can prevent health problems such as obesity, dental problems, iron deficiency, and osteoporosis. Children’s diets tend to be inadequate in fruits (particularly in whole fruits), vegetables, whole grains and calcium rich foods while they are too high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. Often the result of poor nutrition and misinformation, childhood obesity brings with it a host of debilitating health problems and a hefty economic price.

- The 2010 Virginia Childhood Obesity Survey reported 26 percent youth ages 10-17 in Virginia as obese.137
- The data in the City of Richmond is even more concerning with 29 percent of Richmond City youth reported as obese.138
- Only 4 percent of young people in Virginia meet the USDA recommendation of nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day.139

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139 Ibid.
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- Access to affordable, nutritious foods is a severe problem facing many families and is the leading cause of the increase in childhood obesity.\(^{140}\)

Virginia’s 2007 Farm-to-School legislation established an annual Farm-to-School week to celebrate, showcase, and promote local Virginia producers and growers to forge connections. Since 2003, there has been a 300 percent increase in locally grown foods served in Virginia public and private schools. Many urban schools have participated in Farm-to-School Week including RPS. City-based farm-to-school purchasing (via informal procurements) and programming can readily be formalized and expanded through the entire school year by working local growers and distributors to effect year-round purchasing and deliveries based on seasonality and local harvest conditions.

Over the past three years, RPS has worked to increase the use of fresh, raw, and unprocessed foods in school menus:

- Exceeding USDA nutritional standards prior to Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010. RPS offers fresh fruits daily at breakfast and lunch.
- Since 2009, purchases from local vendors have increased by 50 percent.
- Participation in Department of Defense (DOD) Fresh Produce Program (which brings a better product to RPS at a lower price, including local farmers).

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:**

- Develop new food bid specifications for RPS targeting procurement of locally grown products based upon seasonal harvest timelines.
- Create new menus and recipes that use raw and minimally-processed local ingredients aligned with harvest seasons.
- Identify and adopt best practices for procurement of locally-grown fresh foods as documented in recent USDA Farm to School Team Summary Report.\(^ {141}\)
- Implement introductory programs such as regularly scheduled “local lunch” weekday menus to galvanize interest and promote enthusiastic adoption of the changes.

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Program & Policy Recommendations

- Implement advanced planning between RPS and local cooperative buying groups and distributors, ensuring that distribution and delivery methods are compatible for both schools and producers.
- Garner technical and financial support for RPS food related initiatives from food hubs (such as the Local Food Hub in Charlottesville), online coops, farmers markets and Food Corps (an AmeriCorps program currently in its pilot year in 10 states).

Cost:

- Savings or increase in purchasing from local growers and producers compared to national producers

Expected Outcomes:

- Increase access to and use of locally grown fresh produce and whole foods in RPS meals preparation to promote healthier diet and lifestyle behaviors in Richmond City youth.
- Support Richmond City’s local food system and economy through increased utilization of local/regional growers.

17. The city should convene a special working group for Healthier School Food as a forum for all stakeholders in the community food system to partner with Richmond Public Schools (RPS) in visioning, dialogue, policy-creation and implementation of projects to transform and continuously improve quality of school meals and service, specifically all foods served, sold and available throughout the RPS system.

Description of Problem: Success in upgrading/transforming school meals and cafeterias is increasingly dependent on securing support, resources and buy-in from the community at-large. Many new participants in Richmond’s burgeoning food system include concerned citizens, farmers, food producers, distributors, non-profits and food-justice advocates recognize the urgent need, as well as the economic opportunity inherent in improving school food quality through locally-generated solutions.

Quality of school food is a priority for food policy councils across the US. Cities and counties seek to leverage and develop a broader range of local resources (e.g., Farm-to-School programs) to address
Program & Policy Recommendations

child nutrition, especially for at-risk populations that receive most of their daily caloric intake in the public school setting.

- The 2010 Virginia Childhood Obesity Survey reported 26 percent youth ages 10-17 in Virginia were obese.\(^{142}\)
- The data in the City of Richmond is even more concerning with 29 percent of youth reported as obese.\(^{143}\)
- Only 4 percent of young people in Virginia meet the USDA recommendation of nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day.\(^{144}\)

RPS has established several standing working groups for a healthier school environment:

- School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) – established in 2010.

RPS uses the School Health Advisory Board in conjunction with a wellness committee, garden task force and other advisory groups, as the infrastructure to address RPS wellness overall.

**Proposed Intervention and Strategies:** The city should convene a special working group focused specifically on improving school food nutrition quality and on devising creative local resource and funding strategies for such improvements. This group would be charged with generating a vision and an implementation plan, based on best-practices, relevant model policies and innovations taking place around the country, for a RPS healthier school food policy. Membership would be drawn from RPS’ standing school wellness working groups, as well as be inclusive of all legitimately invested stakeholders (individuals & organizations) in the community. Such a group would provide a new and potentially ongoing avenue for local collaborative outreach, action, and improved food quality in RPS, and potentially in other Richmond City sites and facilities.

Additionally, the group would serve to link RPS and the School Board with other city-based food policy initiatives and state-wide programs. It would make a clear statement to city residents, surrounding

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\(^{144}\) Maurice and Mildner (2010).
Program & Policy Recommendations

jurisdictions and the state that Richmond and RPS intend to set a new benchmark for school food quality in combination with increased local, sustainable product sourcing contributing to economic growth and a healthier community. The working group would identify specific outcomes and reporting mechanisms to measure success.

Successful examples of school food nutrition quality improvement councils or committees can be found in the City of New Haven CT, Berkeley CA, Boulder CO, New York City, and Portland OR. Best practices in such localities include: comprehensive community involvement, strong local leadership, ongoing monitoring of innovations in localities nationally, creative local funding initiatives including the private and non-profit sector, year-round Farm-to-School partnerships and programming, clearly-delineated criteria for food quality purchasing, central kitchen facilities enabling more scratch cooking, small-hub-based distribution systems, etc.

Potential projects for a Richmond City/RPS Healthier School Food working group could include:

- Enrollment of schools in the Healthier US Schools Challenge (USDA) and the Healthy Schools Program (Alliance for a Healthier Generation) – the latter, supported by the American Heart Association, The Clinton Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, received $23 million in grant monies to expand the program through 2014.
- Engage parents, families, and faculty and staff in nutrition and cooking education courses available through before/after-school programs and include messages linking nutrition education and healthy food consumption patterns with higher academic performance.
- Maximize the number of schools that make the most of local food resources, school gardens, and farm-to-school resources within meal offerings and adopt health and nutrition curriculum changes.
- Explore expansion of (and funding for) the “Know Your Veggies” pilot program in conjunction with “Chefs Move to Schools,” starting with those city schools that have installed gardens during the past year.

In addition to the school community and relevant city departments, local organizations such as Virginia Foundation for Healthier Youth (VFHY), Greater Richmond Fit4Kids, YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, faith-based organizations, WBCH, FeedMore, etc. should be engaged particularly in project development and implementation.

Cost:
Program & Policy Recommendations

- Administrative costs and additional funds needed to operationalize programs agreed upon by the working group

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Implement projects to expand, transform and continuously improve school meals, service, and wellness/nutrition.
- Increase quality of school food and foster positive dietary behaviors and diets.
- Decrease the instances of chronic diet-related diseases in students and more broadly improve the health of families and the community at large.
- Stimulate local economic growth and community vitality through increased local/sustainable product sourcing.

The next section of this report recaps the findings, recommendations, and proposed next steps related to Richmond City food policy.
Conclusion

The Mayor’s Food Policy Task Force was charged with assessing the availability of quality, fresh and affordable food, particularly in lower income neighborhoods; disseminating a City of Richmond Food System Report; and, drafting a Food System Plan to include recommendations for promotion of and innovations in land use, economic development, and health policy along with strategies for implementation and benchmarks for determining progress consistent with making Richmond a Tier One city. An integral part of the task force’s work centered on issues around how to create equal access to fresh, local, healthy and affordable fruits and vegetables in neighborhoods designated as food deserts. The concept of “where we live” and its impact on our physical health became a reality through our research in addressing the city’s food system deficits. Food Shopper preferences in relation to food spending and diet are influenced by convenience and affordability of food retailers, travel time and available transportation to shopping, as well as availability of healthy foods, kitchen amenities and food prices. These influences adversely impacts diet, food security, and health of many low-income families and individuals in urban cities like Richmond. The community assessment and research formed the backdrop for task force’s work and final recommendations for the city.

As the Task Force conducted its research, it was apparent that some initiatives were already underway; such as – use of vacant land for community gardens, provision of water tanks for community gardens, 7th District Health & Wellness Initiatives and its efforts to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables for the local food pantry, the monthly RVA Shoppers’ Shuttle, etc. The Task Force applauds these initiatives, recognizes the value of these collaborations, and chose not to recreate programs that have already begun; however in some instances, noted potential and desire for some expansion of these existing initiatives.

The recommendations included in Section 5 of this report represent the city’s Food System Plan. Each recommendation includes not only the recommendation but a description of the problem that relates back to the community assessment, proposed intervention; some discussion related to cost and anticipated outcomes resulting from implementation of the recommended interventions.

This Plan builds upon existing initiatives and includes some new and innovative ideas. Community input on these recommendations was obtained from a community forum and an online survey. Noteworthy is
some concern that the attendees at the community forum and or the respondents to the online survey were not necessarily representative of lower income communities.

Taking into account community input and Task Force member views, 30 recommendations were synthesized to 17. The following recommendations while not in priority order surfaced as priority in development of this report:

- Create a local food hub/community kitchen that includes the development of communication education programs around food preservation, preparation and eating on a budget
- Revise city ordinances governing the raising of chickens
- Hire a Food Policy Coordinator
- Increase the number of schools that include food education as part of their curriculum
- Increase the use of fresh foods from local farms in school meal/snack programs

A particular point of recognition and consensus is the recommendation for the City of Richmond to have a Food Policy Coordinator. This person would be responsible for championing the city’s Food Policy improvements, overseeing implementation of these recommendations, collaborating and engaging with citizens, public and private entities to reduce and eliminate food insecurity, and other food system related initiatives that the city may support.

Finally, some of the recommendations from the Food Policy Task Force are identified as having low cost and effort to implement. It is recommended that the city consider take advantage of this “low hanging fruit” with a small funding investment in order to reinforce and reaffirm to the citizenry that the Administration is serious about addressing a just food system for all. These recommendations include:

- A review of local zoning laws and ordinances to address changes needed to promote the development of food projects and urban agriculture, to include the raising of chickens in the city and the use of pesticides on city property
- Utilizing park, recreation, community facilities and other city properties to create edible landscaping
- Explore grant opportunities for funding food system projects
- Expand the current RVA Shoppers Shuttle to include stops at local farmers markets
Conclusion

- Promote the use of SNAP benefits for the purchase of plants/seeds to enable residents to “grow” their own food
- Expand the current Mayor’s Healthy Richmond Campaign to include the marketing of information and activities that promote healthy eating

The City of Richmond is fortunate to have a number of community partners dedicated to creating a sustainable food system where all individuals have access to fresh, quality and healthy foods. The city should be open to expanding this partnerships and continuing collaborative opportunities with these community advocates in order to implement the recommendations included in this report.

With the writing of this report, the Task Force has assessed the community’s needs, researched, and offered recommendations that hopefully inform the city’s food policy efforts moving forward. There is much work to be done. The work requires ongoing and broad based collaboration with the community. We believe the city can achieve mutually agreed upon goals through working together with businesses, community-based organizations, individuals, and other institutions and government agencies. Task Force members are eager to partner with the city and local region to advance the recommendations found in this report and to identify actions that may reach even further.
## Prioritized Recommendations

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<tr>
<th>Priority 1</th>
<th>Short Term</th>
<th>Mid Term</th>
<th>Long Term</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create a Food Policy Coordinator Position</td>
<td>• Increase nutrition education with Healthier School Food Groups</td>
<td>• Establish community kitchens/food hubs w/ educational components</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Revise zoning laws for raising fowl</td>
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<td>• Expand use of local fresh foods in RPS to minimum of 10 percent</td>
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<td>Priority 2</td>
<td>• Revise zoning laws to facilitate urban agriculture</td>
<td>• Reduce/eliminate irrigation fees for community gardens</td>
<td>• Implement moratorium on establishment of fast food restaurants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Expand use of SNAP benefits at Farmers Markets</td>
<td>• Establish policy regarding use of pesticides, herbicides, etc.</td>
<td>• Provide funds to upgrade kitchens in RPS to meet new standards</td>
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<td>• Use of vacant properties for food-oriented projects</td>
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<td>Priority 3</td>
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<td>• Create edible landscapes on city owned properties</td>
<td>• Create “green” career development program</td>
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<td>• Establish grant program for food-related businesses</td>
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<td>• Establish mobile farmers markets/bus routes to markets</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement city-wide marketing campaign promoting healthy eating</td>
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Alex Acharya is a Prevention Specialist with the Virginia Department of Health, Division of Community Nutrition and member of the Virginia WIC Program Vendor Compliance Team. He is a Richmond native and strong supporter of improving food access in our community. He loves to go to farmer’s markets around the area.

Dr. Danny Avula is the Deputy Director of the Richmond City Health District. In addition to his role as a preventive medicine physician, he is also a board-certified pediatrician, and continues to practice clinically as a pediatric hospitalist at several area hospitals. After graduating from the University of Virginia, he attended medical school at the VCU School of Medicine, completed his Pediatric residency at Virginia Commonwealth University, followed by a Preventive Medicine residency at Johns Hopkins University, where he also received a Master’s in Public Health. He is deeply committed to community development efforts in the Church Hill neighborhood, where he has lived for the past eight years. During this time, he has taken a particular interest in strengthening the food system, as he sees daily the impact that poor food choice and limited access to nutritious foods has on the citizens of Richmond.

Dominic Gibbons Barrett is the Director of United Methodist Urban Ministries of Richmond (UMUMR) and Shalom Farms, a nonprofit community farm project with the overarching goal of increasing food security in the Richmond region, particularly in low-income urban neighborhoods. Each year the program provides tens of thousands of pounds of sustainably grown produce and educational opportunities to children and families in Richmond who need it most. In addition to serving on the board of the Virginia Food System Council, he is on the Richmond Public Schools Garden Task Force and chairs the enterprise development subcommittee of the Mayors Food Policy Task Force. In 2010, Bread for the World recognized Dominic as one of 75 “Hunger Justice Leaders” — leaders under 30 from across the US identified as “the best and brightest young advocates” on issues of hunger. He came to UMUMR from Palmetto Project in Charleston, SC where he ran their statewide Youth, Families and Schools Programs.

Billie Brown is the founder of Excel Management Services here in Richmond and has a passion for healthy foods.

Victoria Campbell is Survey Drafting Technician and Project Manager for the Department of Public Works. Having a lifelong commitment to the environment, extensive knowledge of city properties, and organic farmer for 30 years, she also serves as the City of Richmond’s Community Garden Coordinator. She volunteers and promotes organic food projects and outreach to the underprivileged and low income communities in Richmond.

Duron Chavis is the organizer and founder of Happily Natural Day, a two day summer festival in Richmond Virginia and Atlanta Georgia that promotes holistic health, cultural awareness and social change. He is also the manager of Richmond Noir Market a weekly farmers market response to the lack of access to organic fruits and vegetables for low income communities and food deserts. Chavis is also the coordinator of the McDonough Community Garden, an urban agriculture project on Richmond’s Southside dedicated to food security, horticultural therapy and community empowerment. Chavis currently works for Department of Social Services in the Economic Support & Independence Division as a benefit programs specialist. He was awarded Style Weekly Top 40 under 40 in 2009 and is a graduate of Leadership Metro Richmond class of 2011. For over two years he has worked with black farmers and for 10 years has developed programs specifically targeted to the African American community. His goal is to represent those who are underrepresented and empower the communities that are in the most need.

Carla Childs has been employed with the Deputy Chief Administrator’s Office for Human Services with the City of Richmond for almost three years. Carla has her Masters in Urban Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University. Carla has an interest in ensuring that residents have access to affordable healthy, wholesome and organic foods.

Jeanette Cordor is the co-founder and CEO of the Faces of Hope. This Richmond based organization is Virginia’s first non-profit organization that provides an in home nutrition and group fitness program. Mrs. Cordor was born in Kosciusko, Mississippi,
Task Force Member Bios

where she experienced, firsthand, how poor health could devastate an entire family. Her mother and grandmother died with 12 months of each other after suffering 4 strokes and a massive heart attack, respectively. This tragedy fueled Jeannette’s passion for the holistic health of disenfranchised communities. Jeannette is a graduate of Springfield College where she studied community health education, attended the Women’s Center for Business Enterprise and Outreach Training Institute Worcester, MA.

Jeannette is certified in disaster relief and emergency response through the American Red Cross and has non-profit management program at VCU’s center for non-profit excellence in Richmond, VA. Jeannette has forged strong community and corporate partnerships around childhood obesity prevention in the Greater Richmond area. She has been recognized by local agencies and as a leader in community health education. Jeannette is committed to equipping and empowering families toward a healthier lifestyle, one at a time.

Mrs. Cordor is driven and impartial to dedicated, committed people who are willing to take responsibility for their own journey to health. Today if you were to visit the Faces of Hope headquarters on the Southside of Richmond, you might hear Jeannette as she echoes her favorite slogan to parents, program participants and staff: “No excuses!” – this is her personal philosophy. Jeannette is a professional photographer who resides in Richmond, VA with husband, Jeramin Cordor, Co-Founder and their children. She enjoys travel and catching up with friends in her spare time.

Anne Darby is a planner with the Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, and a proponent of understanding the impact of food choices on us as individuals, families, communities, and the wider world. She has been active in the Richmond food advocacy community for the past several years; her demonstrated commitment to improving the food system in the Richmond region includes serving in a broad range of roles from facilitating the Richmond Area Food System Council to designing the Richmond Area Buy Fresh Buy Local guide to maintaining her own gardens wherever she lives. While earning her masters in planning, she worked as an intern at the 17th Street Farmers Market, conducted in-depth research on food policy, and wrote a plan for strengthening the local food system of the Richmond Metro area. She became aware of the complex issues surrounding food and food policy in our lives and our communities while participating in a work share CSA in 2004. Her devotion to the cause is demonstrated daily in her life through cooking, gardening and continued community involvement. Anne currently works to promote healthy food access and urban gardening by serving on the board of directors of Tricycle Gardens.

Erich Dietrich is a Grant Writer with the City of Richmond’s Department of Budget and Strategic Planning. In the past four years, he has developed more than 100 grant applications seeking funding from federal and state agencies and foundations, resulting in a total of more than $10 million in funding for the city and its partners to implement a wide range of initiatives. In this capacity, Erich has obtained a deep knowledge of the socioeconomic conditions in Richmond that contribute to our community’s food insecurity and the health disparities that result from it. As a member of the Food Policy Task Force, Erich brought this knowledge to provide data and justification to support the group’s recommendations, as well as to provide ongoing support in seeking and obtaining funding for the priority initiatives. Erich is an avid gardener at home, and through a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Service, has implemented native tree/shrubs hedgerows and a native meadow on his property. He has a Bachelor’s degree in English and Philosophy from George Mason University.

Monica M. Esparza is a principal partner in KII Industries, LLC dba AfroCity Tours. The mission of KII Industries is to cultivate and manage projects that promote vitality and sustainability in communities. Her concern and commitment to the health and safety of Richmond neighborhoods link with the ever present need to strengthen collaboration between schools, community centers, neighborhoods and businesses. In civic capacity, Monica Esparza has worked to raise awareness and ambition in conservation, environmental health and food security, particularly in communities near industrial centers.
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Monica Esparza has a BA in Urban Studies from the University of Maryland and is a graduate of the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute. Her professional background includes project management experience in justice services, transportation, environmental preservation and humanitarian arenas.

Graham Evans was born and raised in Anchorage, Alaska. What would become Graham’s passion and interest in community food systems developed in the garden with his mother and in the river, fishing with his father. The Alaskan lifestyle provided him a unique perspective on how community subsistence could look. Graham furthered his passions at the University of Virginia, where he helped found the UVa Student Garden and culminating in a relational art grant, which he and a partner used to retrofit a short school bus to run on waste vegetable oil (WVO). They planted a garden on bus’ roof and traveled the Midwest sharing food, stories, lessons and follies in a project/art exhibit called Nourish(meant).

Graham now manages Relayfoods.com, a local food distribution and online grocery delivery service that enriches the Richmond community food system by cutting the carbon footprint of grocery shopping by over 50 percent and making access to quality, sustainable and local food simple.

Jonah Fogel possesses a BS in Geology from Western Michigan University, a Masters of Landscape Architecture from Virginia Tech, and a Ph.D. in Natural Resources and Environmental Policy from the University of Tennessee.

As the community viability specialist for the Virginia Cooperative Extension Northeast District, Jonah is helping communities create a vision for their development and build the capacities necessary to carry out their vision. In this work he emphasizes issues related to community planning, capacity building, and economic opportunity development. Jonah often partners with local Extension units, community agencies, and local governments to assess their needs and assist their ongoing efforts. Current work includes community food systems facilitation, and educational programming in land use planning for municipal officials such as planning commissioners, and an interest in planning for workforce housing.

Dr. Fogel has been involved in several projects across the Richmond region involving 'local food'. Grant funding awarded includes USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) funds to help evaluate sustainable community food systems in Virginia and North Carolina.

Stephanie Ganz has a passion for food and food businesses. After graduating from The College of William and Mary, Stephanie studied Culinary Arts at Johnson and Wales University and began a career cooking at some of the best restaurants in Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland. From there, she moved to the non-profit world as the director of a small business development program through the now defunct New Visions, New Ventures. She currently offers consulting services to food business entrepreneurs and is the Manager of Sales and Marketing for the mobile food business, Pizza Tonight. She also maintains a recipe blog at onioncloute.com.

Carolyn N. Graham is a public administrator with over 25 years of experience in leading complex organizations. She was recently appointed by Mayor Dwight Jones as the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Human Services, Richmond, VA. She is the Founder/President of the Elizabeth Ministry, Inc., a 501(c) 3 organization that works to empower teen mothers in the foster care system such that they are able to live healthy, spiritually-centered, economically self-sufficient, successful, loving lives.

She served as Vice President for External Affairs for Greater Southeast Community Hospital; Vice President of the DC Board of Education, and Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families, and Elders for the District of Columbia. In this latter capacity, she was responsible for the health and human services cluster of agencies in the District government, with budgets in excess of $2.6 billion.

Dr. Graham holds a Master of Education (M.Ed.) from Antioch College; a Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.) from City University of New York; a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from the New York Theological Seminary; and a Doctorate of
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Ministry (D.Min.) from the United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH. She has done post-graduate studies at Regents Park College, Oxford University, Oxford, England and the Catholic University of America in Spirituality and Social Ethics; and she is the recipient of a number of awards and honorable citations.

Dr. Graham founded a $7 million initiative to support teen mothers in the child welfare system. Her goal is to provide the support necessary for teen mothers to become women of charter and influence, with an economic stake in their communities. She has received support from the District of Columbia’s Child and Family Service Agency, the Department of Housing and Community Development, M & T Bank, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), W. K. Kellogg Foundation and PNC Bank. The project has been designed to provide affordable housing and comprehensive supports to the teen mothers and their children. The housing project will consist of 27 housing units, and an onsite infant/toddler care center designed specifically for the children of the teen mothers.

Rachel Harms is the Program Manager of Greater Richmond Fit4Kids, a Richmond-based childhood obesity prevention organization focused on improving the health and wellness of children by promoting healthy eating, improving food environments, and increasing physical activity. Prior to joining Fit4Kids, Rachel worked in the office of Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine where she assisted the Secretary of Health in overseeing state health and human services agencies. Rachel holds a Master of Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University and an undergraduate degree in English from James Madison University.

Molly Harris was first inspired to support the local food movement in 1999 when spending summers in Vermont with her three very young children and was reminded of her own childhood and the fabulous fresh food she enjoyed growing up. It was this recollected appreciation that motivated her to open her own restaurant, Edible Garden, in 2004 showcasing locally sourced ingredients and educating customers on the importance of supporting their local agricultural community.

In late 2008, Molly began an on-line farmers market with the farmers serving the restaurant and the customers seeking their fabulous ingredients for their own pantries. The next spring, Fall Line Farms, opened a second season of business with on-line capabilities, growing from 25 farmers selling to one pick up location to over fifty farmers selling to five pick up locations. Today, the hub supports over 100 local farmers and serves customers picking up orders from over a dozen pick up locations throughout the metropolitan Richmond region. Lulus Local Food, the full service on-line program has provided a means for starting six additional hubs with multiple pick up locations and supporting more than more than 250 local farmers and small businesses with weekly sales year round.

As the founder of this ever expanding project, Harris has involved herself in many aspects of the local food movement in Virginia including serving on the executive committees for the Virginia Food System Council and the Virginia Farmers Direct Marketing Association, a founding member of the Virginia Farm to School Working Group, a participant in the Richmond City Mayor’s Food Council and leader of the Richmond Area Buy Fresh Buy Local Chapter.

Debbie Hinton has worked for the City of Richmond for almost 22 years in various capacities. She is currently an Operations Manager with the Department of Social Services, and is also assigned part time to the staff of the Deputy Chief Administrator for Human Services. It is in this capacity that she became involved with looking at food system issues in Richmond. She has a BS from VCU, as well as a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Accounting. She has passed the exam for a Certified Public Accountant and the Project Management Professional exam.

Charles Lee hails from Petersburg, Virginia. He received his bachelor’s of arts degree in psychology from Virginia Union University, Richmond, Virginia and a master’s of science degree in industrial/organizational psychology from Radford University, Radford, Virginia. Mr. Lee has worked in human resource management in state and local government and is currently employed with the Richmond City Health District as a Chronic Disease Program Supervisor. Under his supervision at the Richmond City Health District, Mr. Lee oversees the
Rock! Richmond fitness program, chronic disease related initiatives, serves as a master-trainer and facilitator for the Stanford University’s Chronic Disease Self-Management Program and the Diabetes Self-Management Program, and he also coordinates the Tobacco Use Control Project and workplace wellness initiatives. Mr. Lee also serves on the Regional Obesity Coalition and is a published author of fiction novels, a blogger, personal trainer and an American Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED Instructor.

**John Lewis**, a Roanoke, VA native, has more than 11 years of experience working with inner-city youth in Richmond Public Schools in areas that include tutoring in remedial math, science & reading instruction, mentoring, preventative counseling in violence & substance abuse, horticulture & food sustainability, leadership skill development, martial arts and self-defense instruction, and positive life-skills coaching. He currently works as a Prevention Specialist with Richmond Behavioral Health Authority’s Substance Abuse Division, where he facilitates evidence-based programs that aid in the prevention of substance abuse and other negative behaviors in Richmond inner-city youth. The major focus of this effort is to help youth develop fundamental life skills and protective factors. Mr. Lewis provides effective educational programs for children as well as parents/caregivers/community residents addressing risk-factors and potential problem behaviors of at-risk youth. One very successful prevention program that Mr. Lewis has developed and nurtured is the *Reid Garden-Greenhouse* program which engages students and community members of G.H. Reid Elementary school in agricultural education and sustainability activities. Mr. Lewis also developed and facilitates a school-based agricultural education program for 4th and 5th grade students called *The Reid Green Team*. Members of the *Green Team* participate in constructive, educational activities that enhance their environmental knowledge, develop self-efficacy as well as help protect them from negative influences and risky behavior by engaging them in positive activities which have had a noticeably positive effect on the physical and mental health of students. With access to healthy foods and hands on experience with the responsibilities of making life choices about their health, maintaining intensive gardens, and working with their peers and their communities, the youth and community served by Mr. Lewis’ programs have gained invaluable knowledge and skills that they can utilize for a lifetime. John Lewis’ extensive knowledge in prevention and community organization has made him an asset to the future growth, development, and sustainability of low-income communities in the City of Richmond.

**Mark Lilly** is the founder of Farm to Family and the FARMBUS (2009) and has been growing a successful business for 3 years, increasing sales 20 percent each year. Mark and Farm to Family have been featured on many major national and international TV segments, magazines, papers and books. Mark is a visionary with a passion to help others and to help change our current toxic food system, one small step at a time. His desire and hard work ethic pushes his vision forward and will enable his team and business to inspire many others to follow his lead. Mark is a former US Marine and has a BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University.

**Suzi Miles-Lilley**, LMT, CMT, BA is a nationally certified (NCBTMB) massage therapist licensed in NY (since 1997) and Virginia, and a member of the AMTA. She co-owns Farm to Family/The Farm Bus with husband Mark Lilly. She has a background in marketing, events, business development and specializes in creative branding and social media. Suzi is a graduate of the College of New Rochelle, the Swedish Institute, NYC and received yoga teacher training at Integral Yoga Institute in NYC. Nutritional counseling is a major part of her practice and begins with whole, traditional foods.

**Tawanda Lomax-Brown** is employed by Virginia Cooperative Extension as a Family and Consumer Science Agent. Her position allows her to address concerns of the citizens in our community relative to human development. To include the following: workforce readiness, financial management, nutrition and wellness, etiquette, basic housekeeping and other family related needs. Her Master’s Degree was earned at Central Michigan University in Adult Education. Her BS is in Family and Consumer Sciences with emphasis on interior décor and clothing and textiles from Norfolk State University. Additional educational studies were done
at Hampton University and Virginia Commonwealth University. She serves on numerous community committees and was the Vice President of the Board of Director for the Six Points of Hope Community Development Corporation as well as a former board Vice-Chair at Boaz and Ruth, Inc.

**Stacy Lukas** is the founding chair of Slow Food RVa, the Richmond chapter of Slow Food USA. As a mom concerned about what her 11-year old daughter and other kids eat, her motivation to start a local Slow Food chapter stemmed from a desire to tap into the groundswell of concerned parents, consumers, producers, food artisans and non-profits seeking to facilitate change in our local food system. Knowing the depth and reach of the Slow Food movement nationally and internationally, she hopes the greater Richmond area chapter can act as a bridge connecting our community with the broader tide of changes taking hold across the country and the world.

A Richmond city resident for 10 years, Stacy is originally from Arlington. She is a graduate of Wake Forest University and holds masters degrees from the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy at Tufts University, and George Washington University's Graduate School of Education and Human Development. Prior to moving to Richmond she worked for the American Red Cross national headquarters as a management and leadership development consultant. She spent her early career in Sydney and Melbourne, Australia, working in both the banking and the non-profit educational sectors.

Stacy owns Sublime Sojourns LLC, a leisure travel consulting business, through which she serves on the SAVEUR magazine Travel Advisory Board of culinary travel specialists.

**Lory Markham** is an urban planner with the City of Richmond’s Department of Planning & Development Review. She serves as Secretary to the City of Richmond’s Planning Commission and works on land use, zoning, and Master Plan projects throughout the city. Lory’s roots in the local food system started growing as a child raised on a farm in Powhatan County. It was on this family farm where her parents started Manakintowne Specialty Growers, which has been growing specialty produce for the best chefs, restaurants, and markets in Central Virginia since 1985. When not urban planning, Lory helps her husband Peter bake Richmond’s own Billy Bread, a crusty sourdough loaf, for many of the same restaurants and markets. The combination of her healthy appetite, her experiences on a family farm, and her professional expertise gives Lory a unique perspective on Richmond’s local food system.

**Jalana L. McCasland** is the Vice President for Ambulatory Operations and Executive Director for Regional Outreach at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center. Originally from Texas, she earned her B.S. and M.P.A. from the University of Texas. Prior to her current role, Jalana was Administrator of Ambulatory Operations at the University of Virginia Health System in Charlottesville. She has previously served as Vice President for External Programs and Clinics at the University of Texas Health Center and as President and Chief Executive Officer at Texas Quality Care Network in Tyler, Texas. Jalana is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

**Alyssa Murray** has worked with people experiencing hunger and homelessness for over twenty years. She earned her Master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning from VCU where she focused on urban design and issues surrounding health and equity. Her involvement in the Richmond Food System stems from her optimism that improving people’s access to resources makes for a healthy community.

**Patricia J. Parks** is the Library Community Services Manager at the Main Library of the Richmond Public Library system. Her consistent career focus has been community outreach through providing access to information and creating programs to promote computer, nutritional and cultural literacy. For several years she was the Laptop Librarian at the 17th Street Farmer’s Market, operating as an informal educational resource for farmers and the community. She helped design and establish the Byrd House Market and the Grace Arents Community Garden at the William Byrd Community House which received national funding from the Project for Public Spaces for being the first Social Service Organization to integrate a farmers market and community garden into their Settlement House.
programming philosophy. Her initiative to establish the Byrd House Farmlet, one of Richmond’s first urban production farms based on Will Allen’s urban agriculture methods, was a natural extension of these projects. These programs at William Byrd Community House serve as unique living laboratories for learning nutrition, ecology and economics for WBCH students, clients and community. In her current role at the Richmond Public Library, she continues to promote the use of libraries for gardening programs and as resource hubs for gardening and nutritional literacy, with a goal of fostering a stronger sustainable community that will transform Richmond into one of the nation’s healthiest and most livable cities.

Gabriel A. Reich is an Assistant Professor of secondary history/social studies education at VCU’s School of Education. He earned a PhD in Teaching and Learning from New York University in 2007. As a former high school teacher in the Bronx, Dr. Reich is concerned about the problems associated with food deserts and poor diet, and the collateral effects that they have on health and learning of adolescents and their families.

Susan Roberson is the Director of School Nutrition Services for Richmond Public Schools. Susan has worked diligently to ensure that meals provided in the schools are nutritious and of high quality. She has been instrumental in securing grants for healthy fruit & vegetable snacks in the school system.

Charlene Rogers is the Coordinator for School Health Services with Richmond Public Schools. She joined the FP&F as a result of her interests in ensuring that healthy nutritious foods were available to all Richmond residents.

Jim Scanlon is Regional Vice President with Giant/Martin’s. As Regional Vice President, Jim oversees store operations for the Martin’s Food Markets in Virginia. Prior to joining Martin’s, Jim worked 10 years for Ukrop’s Super Markets most recently serving as Vice President of Store Operations and Human Resources. He is a resident of the City of Richmond and along with Martin’s is focused on improving the lives of children and fighting hunger.

Marlene Sehen, a horticulturist and landscaper, is using her passion for growing plants to grow food. After her service in the USAF, she earned her degree in Horticulture and has been incorporating edibles in landscapes for the last twenty years. Then, while pursuing a degree in International Studies and after several trips abroad, she began searching for ways to coalesce life in the U.S. with ideas and methods she learned about and saw abroad. Her interest in the environment, health, and social justice moved her to begin teaching others about growing food sustainably. Marlene is a participant in the RPS Garden Task Force, designed and built an organic inner-city farmlet to provide fresh food to low-income families for the William Byrd Community House, assists a low-income senior living facility with growing food, has conducted workshops and taught classes to children and adults at the Richmond Public Library and other facilities, and is building a community garden, all with an emphasis on dealing with harsh urban environments, affordability, and producing a healthy abundance. She is currently in the process of setting up a non-profit to help fulfill her goal to end world hunger one lawn, one balcony at a time.

Peter Sokol earned a B.S. in Business Administration from Tennessee Wesleyan College in 2000, and then went on to pursue his M.A. in Organizational Management. After graduating from TWC, he accepted a position with AmeriCorps National Service Organization. It was while at AmeriCorps that Pete decided to pursue a career in non-profit management. After his year of service, Peter relocated to Richmond, accepted a position as a counselor at a school for at-risk youth, and started volunteering for Meals on Wheels. Soon after volunteering for Meals on Wheels, Peter accepted a full-time position as Volunteer Coordinator. Since that time, Peter has assumed additional responsibilities and new roles in operations and human resources, while working in a rigorous Master’s Program to earn his M.A. Ten years later he now serves FeedMore as the Vice President of Operations. His latest accomplishment was playing a key role in the merge of Meals on Wheels and the Central Virginia Food Bank. In 2007, Peter was accepted into a National Leadership Fellows Program with the Meals on Wheels Association of America and the National Center for Nutrition Leadership and
was also selected as one of “Richmond’s Top 40 under 40” for his contributions to the greater Richmond community. He has been involved with the Historic Richmond Foundations for seven years; served on the Executive Committee and now is a member of the Jr. Board of Directors.

**Patricia L. Stansbury** is an organic gardener, educator, and marketer of wholesale and retail organic products. Her passion about natural foods and sustainable agriculture took root years ago when she became involved in some of Richmond’s first natural foods coops, and developed into a wide range of interests and services, all centering on creating and promoting an environment for helping people eat healthier, while sustaining the earth.

**Elizabeth Vestal** is a Research Analyst at the Schroeder Center for Health Policy at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA. She joined the Schroeder Center following graduation from William & Mary’s Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy with a Master’s in 2011. Originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, Elizabeth attended college at the University of Tennessee where she graduated in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts and in 2008 with a J.D.

Elizabeth’s job with the Schroeder Center includes researching issues related to food access, nutrition, and childhood obesity. As part of its wide range of available health policy and evaluation services, the Schroeder Center works closely with the Williamsburg Community Health Foundation to provide support and evaluation for the local Williamsburg-James City Public Schools’ School Health Initiative Program. Elizabeth says this type of work led naturally to an interest in local food environments and in particular Richmond’s food system and the Richmond Food Policy Task Force.

**Valerie Waters** is the nutritionist for Martin’s Food Markets in the Richmond area. Valerie has been a registered dietitian since 2002 and has a passion for food and how it impacts our body for both the treatment and prevention of disease.

She is a graduate of Virginia Tech and completed her dietetic internship at VCU Health Systems. She is actively involved in both the local and state dietetic associations and serves on multiple community boards as well as serving Martin’s customers on a daily basis through individual consultations, classes, store tours, and more.

**Erin Wright** is native to Richmond, though her love for food was developed during the time she spent in New Mexico and California. Once back in Richmond, Erin helped manage the South of the James Market during its inaugural year, then started and managed the Farmers Market at St. Stephen’s. She is an educator and gardener at Lewis Ginter Botanical gardens, where she also develops youth volunteer programs. Working in food policy in the city inspired Erin to create a green grocery in her neighborhood—a convenient way to access healthy food.

**Alicia Zatcoff** is the Sustainability Manager for the City of Richmond. She has the challenging task of developing and implementing a complex and city-wide Sustainability and Energy Management Program. Her focus is to develop initiatives that support the sustainability priorities for Richmond: an improved quality of life for residents, a healthy environment and enhanced economic development and job creation opportunities. As a result of her efforts, the city has received three awards recognizing its sustainability achievements.

Alicia has over fifteen years of local government experience in areas including municipal law, governmental process, complex real estate transactions, community development, public safety and sustainability. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics from the University of Virginia and her Juris Doctor from the T.C. Williams School of Law at the University of Richmond. Alicia is a LEED Accredited Professional. She serves on the Executive Committee of the Sustainable Transportation Initiative of Richmond and the board of the Richmond Region Energy Alliance. She is also a member of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network and the James River Green Building Council.
Growing Home - [http://growinghomeinc.org/](http://growinghomeinc.org/)


Virginia Cooperative Community Food System Explorer - [http://www.cfse.ext.vt.edu/](http://www.cfse.ext.vt.edu/)
Appendix I - Food Policy Task Force Orientation Meeting

Appendix II - Mapping of WIC Vendor and Recipient Data

Appendix III - Healthy Corner Store Initiatives

Appendix IV - Community Forum Presentation
Mayor Dwight C. Jones
Food Policy Task Force

July 20, 2011
Main Library, 101 East Franklin Street
Richmond, VA 23219
Dr. Carolyn N. Graham  
Deputy CAO, Human Services

Office of Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Human Services  
900 E. Marshall Street, Ste 330  Richmond Virginia 23219  
Phone: (804) 646-5823 • Fax: (804) 646-7441
Actions an in-actions by government that influence the supply, quality, price, production, distribution and consumption of food.

Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned, Harper, Shattuck, Hold-Cimenez.
What do Food Councils Do?

- Discuss food system issues
- Foster connections between the various components of the food system
- Evaluate and influence policy
- Implement and/or support programs that address local food system needs
Why a City of Richmond Food Policy Taskforce?

- Conduct and/or review existing assessment data from the Virginia Food Policy System Explorer, on the availability of quality, fresh and affordable food, particularly in lower income neighborhoods;

- Produce and disseminate a Food System Report that assesses the state of the city’s food system, including activities in production, distribution, consumption, marketing, nutrition and food assistance program participation and innovative food system programs;
Develop a strategy for implementation of Richmond food policies including measures and benchmarks for determining progress towards achievement of the objectives; and make recommendations consistent with making Richmond a Tier One City.
Why a City of Richmond Food Policy Taskforce? (cont.)

Draft a Richmond City Food System Plan to include recommendations for the promotion of innovations in land use, economic development, and health policy to include:

- removing barriers that limit access to quality, healthy and fresh foods;
- increasing the use of farm to school and farm to consumer programs;
- expanding the development of local food-based businesses including farmers markets;
- expanding urban agricultural production of locally-grown and organically-grown foods to include school and community gardens;
- enhancing food security of city residents.
What is a Food System?

- Includes all phases: production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management
  - Farmers
  - Farmers Markets, Grocery Stores, Community Gardens, Feeding Sites
  - School Meals Programs
  - Jobs and Economic Development
Benefits of a Community Food System

- Healthy, Vibrant communities
- Rural & Urban Quality of Life
- Food & Value-Added Entrepreneurship
- Sustainable Farms & Landscapes
- Market & Distribution Infrastructure
- More Farm-to-Table Options
- Job Creation & Retention
- Asset-Based Economic & Social Development

² Virginia Cooperative Extension
Task Force Sub-Groups

- **School and Community Gardens** – identify school and community gardens in Richmond, develop strategies to increase the number of school and community gardens.

- **Food Security** – develop strategies for increasing access to food.

- **Enterprise Development** – work closely with the Departments of Economic and Community Development and City Council to establish policies and neighborhood projects that will support and promote local farmers and businesses that utilize and/or distribute fresh fruits and vegetables.
Task Force Sub-Groups

- **Health and Nutrition** – focus on ways the food system affects the health of our citizens, particularly in lower income neighborhoods of color—with special emphasis on obesity and the link to high incidences of heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer.

- **Community Assessment** – encourage participation in the statewide Food System Assessment being conducted by the Virginia Food Policy Council, conduct a Richmond City food system assessment, identify and track qualitative and quantitative indicators of food system change, and package/present data in a format that is understandable for policy makers and the general public.
Task Force Sub-Groups

- **Education and Awareness** – focus on increasing “food literacy” amongst Richmond residents, which may include developing a RFPC website; partnering/hosting healthy nutrition workshops; and distributing informational flyers/brochures at farmers markets, community events, etc.
Who is Hungry?

According to Feeding America:

- In America, 1 in 6 persons does not have access to enough food
- 36% of individuals served by Feeding America have at least one working adult in their household; only 10% of the client households are homeless
- More than 17 million children are living in food-insecure households
- Lack of adequate nutrition affects a child’s physical growth as well as the cognitive and behavioral development of children
- Children from food insecure, low-income households are more likely to experience irritability, fatigue and difficulty concentrating compared to other children which makes performing in school very difficult.
## Poverty Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Richmond</th>
<th>Virginia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of families</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living in poverty</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of population living in poverty</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of children living in poverty</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of seniors 65 and older living in poverty</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* 2005-2009 American Community Survey
Food Insecurity

- Limited access or uncertainty of availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.

- In 2009
  - America – 14.7% of households were food insecure
  - Virginia – 11.8% of households were food insecure
  - Richmond – 19.9% of households were food insecure
Food Deserts

- Geographic areas where grocery stores are absent or inaccessible, particularly to low-income shoppers
USDA Food Desert Locator
Richmond Food Statistics (USDA Food Atlas)

- 4.44% Households with no car & > 1 mile to grocery store, 2006
- 7.77% Low Income households & > 1 mile to store, 2006
Number and Type of Food Stores in 2008 (USDA Food Atlas)

- 65 Grocery stores
- 1 Supercenters and club stores
- 55 Convenience stores, no gas
- 74 Convenience stores, with gas
- 17 Specialized food stores
- 214 SNAP authorized stores (239 for 2009)
- 27 WIC Authorized stores (19 for 2009)
Restaurants in Richmond (USDA Food Atlas)

- 225 Fast-food restaurants, 2008
- $721.82 Fast-food expenditures per capita, 2007
- 179 Full-service restaurants, 2008
- $739.15 Full-service restaurant expenditures per capita, 2007
# SNAP Statistics – (Data warehouse/Interim Reports)

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># Snap Households</td>
<td>373,810</td>
<td>414,598</td>
<td>24,497</td>
<td>27,215</td>
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<tr>
<td># Snap Participants</td>
<td>802,376</td>
<td>871,823</td>
<td>46,389</td>
<td>50,279</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNAP Participation Rate</td>
<td>72.70%</td>
<td>85.46%</td>
<td>70.76%</td>
<td>88.11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avg. Monthly SNAP Benefit Issued</td>
<td>$103,422,115</td>
<td>$112,848,699</td>
<td>$6,487,671</td>
<td>$7,071,475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional Supplemental Nutrition Programs (USDA Food Atlas)

- **Virginia**
  - 60.81% Students free-lunch eligible, 2008
  - 5.70% Students reduced-price lunch eligible, 2008
  - * 2010 Kids Count indicates that 72% of Virginia’s children are eligible for free or reduced price lunches

- **Richmond**
  - 67.96% Students are eligible for free-lunch during 2010–11 school year
  - 3.99% Students are eligible for reduced-price lunch during the 2010–11 school year
Links to Major Health Indicators (USDA Food Atlas)

- 12.7% Adult diabetes rate, 2008
- 29.4% Adult obesity rate, 2008
- 14.8% Low-income preschool obesity rate, 2009
Correlation to Lets’ Move!

Four Pillars of Commitment

◦ Giving parents and caregivers the tools they need to make healthy choices in early childhood

◦ Improving nutrition in schools

◦ Increasing physical activity opportunities

◦ Making healthy food affordable and accessible
What can Richmond Do?

- It’s up to YOU!!
Next Steps

- Workgroup participation
- List Serv - invitations will be sent to each of you
- Establish a meeting schedule
Healthy Corner Store

Initiatives
Purpose/Goals:

- Access
- Education
- Cultural Transformation
Philadelphia, PA

• FoodTrust

• Get Healthy Philly! Campaign
Philadelphia, PA

How was the initiative established?

- Conducted Community Assessment/Background Research
- Selected Target Areas
- Determined Customer Preferences/Demand
- Store Recruitment/Training
- Message Re-Enforcement
- Evaluation
What does the program look like today?

- 600 stores
- 3 levels of store owner involvement
- Programmatic elements
- Snackin’ Fresh Crew
- Nutrition Education
- Frequent meetings
- Funding
- Overall budget
Baltimore, MD

**Healthy Corner Store Project - Five Phase Intervention Trial**

- Formative Research
- **Phase 0:** Store Recruitment
- **Phase 1:** Breakfast
- **Phase 2:** Healthy Cooking at Home
- **Phase 3:** Healthy Snacks
- **Phase 4:** Carry out Foods
- **Phase 5:** Low calorie Drinks
Choose Cooking Spray & COOK WITH LESS FAT

Healthy food can be cheaper

BENEFITS OF COOKING SPRAY:
1. FAT-FREE:
   helps prevent diabetes.
2. CALORIE-FREE:
   helps maintain healthy weight.
3. SALT-FREE:
   helps maintain healthy blood pressure.

Cooking spray can be used in place of oil or shortening for many cooking needs.

Breakfast
- Fried eggs
- Fried potatoes
- Omlettes

Lunch and Snacks
- Grilled sandwiches
- Pan coat for muffins & cookies

Dinner
- Burgers
- Fish
- Stir fry
- Sauteed vegetables

USE LESS FAT & LET THE TRUE TASTE SHINE THROUGH!

EAT WELL, SAVE MONEY!

NOTE: Prices are approximate and may vary depending on brands purchased or whether or not an item is on sale.

Q: Are some types of fat better than others?
A: Yes. The most important thing is to eat less fat. Fat is high in calories, so it can lead to diabetes and heart disease. But when you choose fats, choose LIQUID fats instead of SOLID fats. Liquid fats have less saturated fat, the type of fat that contributes to heart disease.

Which fat would you choose?

Key to fat content:
- Orange = total fat
- Red = saturated fat

0 grams 0 grams COOKING SPRAY

14 grams 2 grams VEGETABLE OIL

13 grams 6 grams SHORTENING

NOTE: Fat content in vegetables oil and shortening vary widely depending on variety or brand purchased.
HEALTHY SNACKS CAN BE CHEAPER!

More than 3lbs of apples for $3.29

1 bag of chips for $3.29 (actually less than 1 pound)

HEALTHIER SNACKS

Regular potato chips
- Serving size: 1 oz (37.5g)
- Calories: 150
- Calories from fat: 66
- Total Fat: 9 grams
- Sodium: 180 mg

Baked potato chips
- Serving size: 1 oz (11 chips)
- Calories: 179
- Calories from fat: 19
- Total Fat: 1.5 grams
- Sodium: 185 mg

Pretzels (Unsalted)
- Calories: 119
- Calories from fat: 19
- Total Fat: 1 gram
- Sodium: 628 mg

Fruits
- 1 medium apple
  - Calories: 52
  - Fat: 0 grams

1 bowl of whole grain cereal with 1% milk
- Calories: 165
- Fat: 3 grams

FRUITS AND VEGGIES ARE FINE TO SNACK ON ANYTIME!
Baltimore, MD

Healthy Corner Store Project - Five Phase Intervention Trial

- Evaluation
- Staffing
- Funding Sources
- Overall budget
Lessons Learned...

- Earn trust of store owners and get them on board first
- Partner with distributors/local farmers
- It is more than just access – existing culture MUST change
- Nutrition Education
Mayor Dwight C. Jones
Food Policy Task Force
Community Forum
April 4, 2012
Hosted by: Food Policy Task Force
What is Food Policy?

- Government policy, or lack thereof, that influences the supply, quality, price, production, distribution and consumption of food.
Charge of the Food Policy Task Force

• To develop recommendations to increase healthy food access in the City of Richmond.
• To improve the health and quality of life for citizens.
• To become a sustainable, resilient City.
Residents live in “Food Deserts” - Areas that lack access to healthy and affordable foods.

Many of these food deserts are in low income communities.

Lack of access to food leads to increased premature death and chronic health problems.
Food Deserts by Neighborhoods

Sources: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEC
Food Desert Neighborhoods and High Poverty Tracts

Sources: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEC
Food Deserts, Poverty and Access to Transportation

Sources: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEC
Food Deserts with Fast Food and Convenience Stores

Sources: RRPDC, US Census Bureau (ACS 2005-2009), City of Richmond, NAVTEC
Food Policy Subgroups

1. Enterprise Development
2. Food Security
3. Education & Awareness
4. Health & Nutrition
5. School & Community Gardens
6. Quality of School Food
7. Community Assessment
SUB GROUP
RECOMMENDATIONS &
AUDIENCE VOTING
Press the number that corresponds to your answer.
But first, a test...
Pick your favorite healthy snack...

1. Apple
2. Almonds
3. Banana
4. Yogurt
5. Hostess Twinkie
Enterprise Development

1. Identify and provide vacant properties for food oriented projects at minimal/no cost.

2. Research and implement changes in laws and regulations to facilitate development of food projects and enterprises, particularly in food deserts.

3. Expand efforts with The Mayor’s Youth Academy to develop and/or support job training programs around urban agriculture, horticulture and “green” career development.
4. Set aside funds to create a grant application for underserved communities.

5. Create a local food hub/community kitchen to house a co-op to establish buying power, provide cold storage for food rescue and distribution, cooking classes, nutrition education, etc.

Enterprise Development (cont.)
1. Provide vacant properties for food oriented projects.

2. Implement changes in laws and regulations.

3. Expand efforts with The Mayor’s Youth Academy.

4. Create a grant application process.

5. Create a local food hub/community kitchen.
Food Security

1. Revise city law regarding raising of chickens.
2. Create a City cannery and growers market.
3. Provide for community farm food bus stops and/or transportation to local Farmers Markets.
4. Expand use of SNAP/EBT at Farmers Markets, education consumer about ability to use for plants and seeds.
5. Revise zoning laws relating to urban agriculture within city limits.
Please make your selection...

1. Revise city chicken law.
2. Create cannery/growers market.
3. Provide for community farm food bus stops.
5. Revise zoning laws.
Education & Awareness

1. Hire a Food Policy Coordinator to implement the recommendations of the Task Force.

2. Implement a branding campaign for good nutrition “What’s cooking? Good nutrition happens when we cook together”.

3. Expand on use of libraries as a community resource on nutritional literacy and nutrition related programs.
4. Develop certified community kitchens that would offer nutrition and food preparation classes.

5. Create a social media campaign/forum to provide access to resources and information.
Please make your selection...

1. Hire a Food Policy Coordinator.
2. Implement a branding campaign.
3. Expand on use of libraries.
4. Develop certified community kitchens.
5. Create a social media campaign/forum.
1. Restrict zoning for fast food restaurants for a two-year period.

2. Require all child care programs in City to serve a fresh fruit and vegetable at each meal/snack.

3. Implement programs to develop community based activities to improve skills in purchasing and preparing healthy foods.
4. Develop community based programs to teach food preservation, preparation and eating well on a budget.

5. Develop a consistent media message for schools and buses related to health and wellness.
Please make your selection...

1. Restrict fast food zoning.
2. Child care meal and snack requirement.
3. Implement purchasing/preparation programs.
4. Develop food preservation, preparation and eating well on a budget programs.
5. Develop a consistent media message.
School & Community Gardens

1. Eliminate or reduce water costs for urban agriculture or community gardens.
2. Increase number of schools that include local food education, school gardens and health/nutrition as part of curriculum.
3. Support job training programs and workshops that promote urban agriculture, horticulture and “green” career development (see Enterprise Development).
School & Community Gardens (cont.)

4. Adopt resolution regarding use of herbicides, pesticides and inorganic fertilizers on school and park properties.

5. Utilize parks and city property to develop orchards and/or edible landscapes.
1. Eliminate or reduce water costs.

2. Increase number of schools that include food education as part of curriculum.


4. Adopt resolution on herbicides, pesticides, etc.

5. Utilize parks and city property to develop orchards, etc.
Quality of School Foods

1. Establish a community-based Healthier School Food working group to advance nutrition quality in foods served & sold in RPS on an ongoing basis.

2. Secure/provide funding for upgrades in RPS kitchen infrastructure toward increased usage of fresh & unprocessed foods per updated USDA standards.

3. Increase purchases of fresh/raw/unprocessed foods from local farms to reach an initial target of 10% of total procurement.
Quality of School Foods (cont.)

4. Ensure consistent adoption of improved nutrition quality standards across all school settings, i.e., before- and after-school programs and school-community partner venues.

5. Expand nutrition/cooking education programs to include parents/families, teachers & school staff.
Please make your selection...

1. Establish a community-based Healthier School Food working group.

2. Funding to support upgrades in RPS kitchens

3. Increase use of fresh foods from local farms.

4. Ensure consistent nutrition standards for before & after school programs

5. Include parents & families in nutrition education programs.
Thank You!