

city of  
**HARTFORD**  
**ADVISORY**  
**COMMISSION**  
on **FOOD POLICY**

annual report and  
policy recommendations

**2016**







## CITY OF HARTFORD ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY

c/o Hartford Food System, 1 Congress St., Suite 302, Hartford, CT 06114  
Phone: 860.296.9325 Fax: 860.296.8326 Email: [hartfordfood@hartfordfood.org](mailto:hartfordfood@hartfordfood.org)

### 2016 Food Policy Commissioners

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**Martha Page**  
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**Cary Wheaton**  
Billings Forge  
Community Works

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Luke Bronin  
Mayor of the City of Hartford  
550 Main Street  
Hartford, CT 06103

Dear Mayor Bronin,

I am pleased to submit this report on behalf of the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy. This Annual Report outlines the progress of the Commission over the past year as well as our recommendations for the future. We trust you will find that the Commission remains committed to our and the City's goal of ensuring that all Hartford residents have permanent access to a safe, affordable, and healthy diet.

We continue our work to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables using federal nutrition programs, to increase participation in the Summer Food Service Program, to increase the number of and support for existing school gardens, and to reduce food waste in the City. We are also introducing a new recommendation to support mid-sized grocery stores in the City as sources of affordable, fresh, healthy food.

With this Annual Report, we are also examining ways to strengthen the Commission and make it more visible in the community. You will find that this year's policy recommendations are actionable, achievable, and impactful. They call upon all sectors of our City – state and municipal government, businesses, schools, community organizations, and Hartford residents – to work together toward a food secure Hartford. The Commission was created in 1991 with the understanding that no single sector can resolve the complex issues of food insecurity, and this year's recommendations reflect that understanding.

We thank you and your staff for your continued support and consideration as we strive to make food security a top priority in the City of Hartford. As always, we encourage you to call on any of us at any time to discuss the state of the City's food system.

Sincerely,

*Martha Page*

Martha Page  
Chair





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### 2016 Annual Report

#### Introduction

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy was established by City ordinance in 1991 to implement recommendations from the Mayor's Task Force on Hunger. Continuously operational since then, its purpose is to integrate all City agencies in a common effort to improve the availability of safe and nutritious food at reasonable prices for all Hartford residents, particularly those in need.

The Commission's work is guided by four goals:

1. To eliminate hunger as an obstacle to a happy, healthy and productive life in the City;
2. To ensure that a wide variety of safe and nutritious food is available for City residents;
3. To ensure that access to food is not limited by economic status, location or other factors beyond a resident's control; and
4. To ensure that the price of food in the City remains at a level approximating the level for the state.



Part of a mural at the Grow Hartford garden at the corner of Main and Park Street.

Photo Credit: Hartford Food System

The original goals of the Commission continue to be relevant today. A study by the University of Connecticut to evaluate community food security across all 169 Connecticut towns found that Hartford's population is the most at risk of food insecurity above any other town in the state (University of Connecticut 2012). Food insecurity is defined as the inability to access enough food for an active and healthy life at all times. Significant socioeconomic and health disparities, including limited and inconsistent access to affordable and healthy foods persist in Hartford and the Greater Hartford area. At less than \$30,000, the median household income in Hartford is less than half of that of Hartford County. Furthermore, nearly one third of Hartford residents (and more than 40% of Hartford's children) live below the poverty level (ACS 2014 5-year estimates). As the ability to access healthy food is linked directly to socioeconomic status, food insecurity and diet-related diseases are entrenched problems for many Hartford residents.



## HACFP History

The year 2016 marks a quarter century of continuous, volunteer-based food policy work in Hartford. The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy's mission and goals have remained the same, but over the years, the Commission has taken on different structures and used different strategies to engage Commissioners, residents, and City officials to achieve its goals. In the past, the Food Policy Commission has:

- Received a \$3,000 - \$5,000 annual budget from the City
- Completed grocery store price surveys and compiled data about hunger and federal nutrition program participation to assess need in the City
- Written letters to state and national legislators to advise on issues such as welfare reform and child nutrition
- Advocated for the development of new bus lines to improve access to grocery stores
- Met with City officials and business leaders to advocate for grocery stores to be located in Hartford and to demand fair pricing at grocery stores in Hartford
- Lobbied the City to hire a local vendor to administer the Summer Food Service Program
- Celebrated the work of food activists and school food service programs through community events like the Community Food Security Awards and the Golden Muffin Awards
- Had a staffperson from the Mayor's office attend monthly meetings to report back to the Mayor

The Commission's work has included legislative advocacy at the state and national level, negotiations with large companies, grassroots organizing, and education. Over the years the Commission has shown adaptability and a willingness to try new strategies to achieve its goals. Many of these strategies are worth revisiting to tackle the complex problems Hartford faces today.

## HACFP Commissioners

There are 16 volunteers who serve the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy. Some are individuals who reside in Hartford; others represent nonprofits or city agencies that address food issues in Hartford. They are: **Valerie Bryan**, *Hartford Resident*. Val serves on the School Gardens Working Group and Events Planning Group of the Commission.

**Mary Cockram**, *Frog Hollow Consulting*.

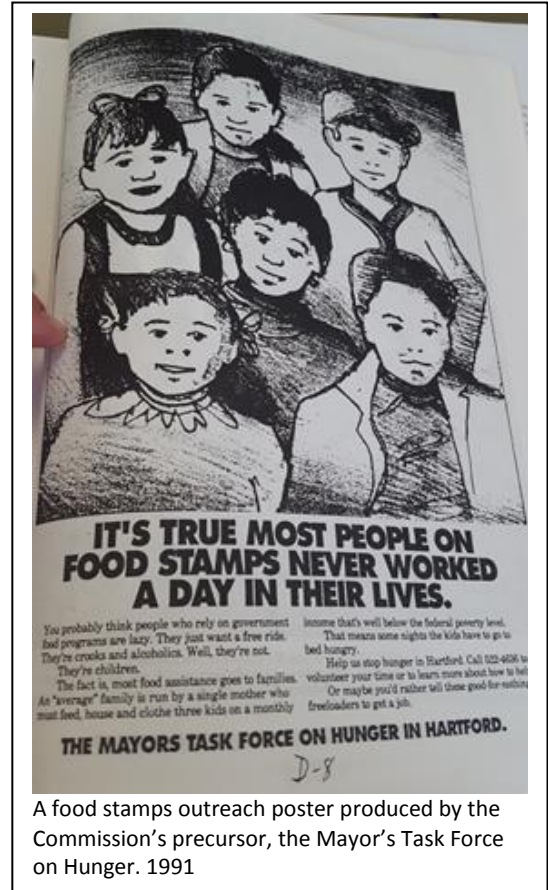
**Angela G. Colantonio**, *Urban Alliance*. Angela serves on the Summer Meals Working Group of the Commission.

**Dawn Crayco**, *FoodCorps CT*. Dawn, formerly of End Hunger Connecticut!, serves on the Summer Meals Working Group of the Commission.

**Valentine Doyle**, *Hartford Resident*.

**Tevonne Ellis**, *REACH Coalition, YMCA*.

**Brunella Ibarrola**, *Hartford Public Schools Food and Child Nutrition Services*. Brunella serves on the Summer Meals Working Group of the Commission.



A food stamps outreach poster produced by the Commission's precursor, the Mayor's Task Force on Hunger. 1991



**Richard Lotstein**, *HPC Foodservice*. Richard serves on the Food Waste Working Group and Events Planning Group of the Commission.

**Katie S. Martin**, *University of St. Joseph*. Katie serves on the Grocery Stores Working Group of the Commission.

**Andrew May**, *Hartford Resident*. Andrew serves on the food waste working group and events planning group of the Commission.

**Martha Page** (Chair), *Hartford Food System*. Martha serves on the Grocery Stores Working Group of the Commission as well as serving as Chair of the Commission.

**Ron Pitz**, *Knox Parks*. Ron serves on the Food Waste Working Group of the Commission.

**Sarah Santora**, *Foodshare*. Sarah serves on the Fruit And Vegetable And Federal Nutrition Programs Working Group of the Commission.

**Sofia Segura-Perez**, *Hispanic Health Council*. Sofia serves on the Fruit And Vegetable And Federal Nutrition Programs Working Group of the Commission.

**Danielle Smiley / Carol Steinke**, *Hartford Department of Health and Human Services, WIC*.

**Cary Wheaton**, *Billings Forge Community Works*.

### Overview of 2015-16 HACFP Work

This year, the Commission has continued to work towards greater food security for Hartford residents by bringing together diverse stakeholders including Hartford residents and representatives from various organizations working on food and public health in the City. The group conducts monthly meetings, the second Wednesday of every month, usually in the Hartford Public Library from 3:30 to 5:15 pm.

#### Community Engagement

The Commission does not have a formal strategy for community engagement; however, it is working to develop a strategy to create opportunities for Hartford residents to share their experiences and input on food policy issues. While a formal strategy does not yet exist, the Commission hosted several community events this year:

- **Food Day Community Breakfast** – The Commission revived an event that was held periodically in the past in October 2015 to release the 2015 Annual Report. It was scheduled to align with the World Food Day of the United Nations. Participants organized into “Solution Circles” around last year’s eight recommendations to brainstorm ideas to improve SNAP participation, increase the number of school gardens, and other food

policy issues. Roughly 65 people attended, including then mayoral candidate Luke Bronin. The Commission used this event to identify future volunteers and partners for this work.

- **Community Food Security Awards** – The Commission continued its annual tradition of hosting the Community Food Security Awards in March 2016. This year’s awards celebrated Tenaya Taylor for her work with Summer of Solutions Hartford and Grow Hartford Youth; Dr. Michelle Cloutier for her work with the Hartford Childhood Wellness Alliance; the Family Day Foundation for their Keney Park Sustainability Project; and the managers and owners of C-Town Supermarket on Wethersfield Avenue for their work with the SNAP UP fruit and vegetable incentive program. Roughly 60 people attended, including City Councilperson Wildalez Bermudez, City Councilperson James Sanchez, and State Representative Angel Arce.

- **Big Read Workshops and Film Series** – The Commission partnered with the Hartford Public Library to bring several food and environment-related events to various branch library locations between March and May 2016. This included a screening of *Food Chains*, a documentary

about farm workers organizing for better wages; a screening of *Dirt! The Movie*, a documentary about the importance of soil; four workshops about food preservation; and four workshops about composting. An estimated 100 people total attended a workshop or film screening, and most of them were Hartford



Tenaya Taylor accepts the Youth Community Food Security Award from Commissioner Angela Colantonio.

Photo Credit: Meg Hourigan

residents. The Library, the Commission, and the participants have shown interest in having more of these events.

### *Urban Agriculture Zoning Codes*

The Commission is excited to report that a policy change years in the making has come to fruition. Its recommendation that agriculture be permitted in all City zones was included in the zoning code update spearheaded by the Planning and Zoning Commission. Agriculture is now permitted and protected in all City zones except Downtown. This is a major win for urban farmers and backyard gardeners to have support from the City in their efforts.

### *Evaluation*

Despite its long history, the work of the Commission has never been formally evaluated. This is not unusual among food policy councils, as no standardized process for evaluating their efficacy exists. This year the Commission completed several evaluations and is using the results of these evaluations to guide its future activities and develop a strategic plan.

### **Progress on 2015 Recommendations**

A major responsibility of the Commission is to monitor the progress made on its previous recommendations. Below is a summary of the progress on and challenges to the 2015 recommendations:

*Ensure that Hartford maximizes use of the Summer Meals Program* – Increasing participation in the program continues to be a challenge. The Commission is reinforcing its 2015 recommendation in 2016.

*Ensure that eligible Hartford residents are able to utilize the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)* – The organizations represented on the Commission, particularly Foodshare, End Hunger Connecticut!, Urban Alliance, and Hispanic Health Council, have continued to promote SNAP. SNAP faces several threats nationally and at the State level, but local organizations are advocating for it as well as working to fill in the gaps when cuts are made.

*Support efforts to increase the number of gardens and farm sites in Hartford* – The update to the zoning codes to permit agriculture in most City zones is a major success for this recommendation. Organizations represented on the Commission, such as Hartford Food System and Knox Parks, continue to farm, support community gardens, and expand agricultural production in the City.

*Support every effort to promote the use of federal and state food assistance benefits to purchase fruits and vegetables* – Community organizations continue to promote SNAP incentives at farmers' markets and a new pilot to incentivize SNAP at grocery stores in Hartford (see p. 12). The Commission is reinforcing its 2015 recommendation and elevating it to priority status in 2016.

*Encourage the development of school gardens in Hartford* – This year several gardens were started and the greenhouse was reopened at Bulkeley High School. The Commission is reinforcing its 2015 recommendation in 2016.

*Support the development of a grocery store associated with the development of Downtown North* – The current status of the baseball stadium and any associated development is uncertain; the Commission supports the development of a grocery store in Downtown North but it is unclear if developers intend to include a grocery store at this point.

*Support the redevelopment of the Hartford Regional Market* – The Hartford Regional Market requires a significant infusion of state or federal funds to become a true regional food hub. It could create significant jobs and stimulate the local economy but lacks the infrastructure to do so.

*Support efforts to divert food waste from the city's waste stream* – There was significant interest in the composting workshops that the Commission hosted with the Library this year. The Commission is reinforcing its 2015 recommendation in 2016.

## **2016 Recommendations**

In order to address the barriers to healthy and affordable food for many Hartford residents, the Food Policy Commission presents its recommendations to improve food access and food security through an annual report. The purpose of this report is to provide City leadership with recommendations to improve the food system in Hartford and to raise awareness about the persistent food insecurity that affects many Hartford residents.

This year, the Commission has selected one **policy priority** and four **policy recommendations**.

### **Policy Priority:**

- **Increase fruit and vegetable consumption using federal and state food assistance benefits**

### **Policy Recommendations:**

- Establish a Mayor's Task Force on Summer Meals in Hartford
- Develop and support school gardens at every school in Hartford
- Support existing mid-sized grocery stores to sell healthy, affordable food
- Support efforts to divert waste from the City's waste stream

The Commission identified this year's policy priority (increase fruit and vegetable consumption using federal and state food assistance benefits) to highlight its importance and build support and awareness across all sectors of the City. This policy priority offers significant public health and economic benefits for the City. The four policy recommendations that follow are also important and offer key proposals to achieve food security for Hartford. The Commission feels that reducing the number of recommendations from previous years can help maximize the strained resources of the City without exhausting our most valuable asset – people.

**POLICY PRIORITY: INCREASE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION  
USING FEDERAL AND STATE FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS**

**Background:** Hartford has several assets when it comes to fresh food sources, including seven farmers' markets; the Hartford Mobile Market (HMM), which makes multiple stops per day, six days a week; and several mid-sized grocery stores which offer a culturally diverse selection of fruits and vegetables to Hartford residents.

The concept of HMM was the product of extensive community participatory research led by the Hispanic Health Council and proposed by the community as a way to increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables. Four of the seven farmers' markets and the HMM accept SNAP benefits and other food

assistance programs in addition to providing incentives for customers to use their SNAP benefits.

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC-FMNP) provides WIC participants with \$15 per participant per market season to spend on Connecticut grown produce at farmers' markets. While a similar program, the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, had a redemption rate of 80% in 2015, WIC-FMNP has a redemption rate of only 55% in 2015 (CT Department of Agriculture).

**Why it matters:** Increasing access to fresh produce can help improve the health and wellbeing of Hartford residents. Research shows that increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables can reduce obesity, hypertension and heart disease. Farmers' markets and the HMM are important points of access to fresh produce that further stretch SNAP and WIC recipients' food dollars.

**Barriers:** A study assessing residents' barriers to farmers' markets in Hartford (n=124) found that although a high percentage (89%) knew about the existence of farmers' markets, among them only 39% were aware that they could use SNAP/WIC benefits at the market, and even fewer (15%) knew about the doubling of SNAP. Other barriers identified by this study were: farmers' markets schedules (12%); lack of time (10%); food not affordable (9%); and not feeling comfortable buying there (8%) (Center for Social Research, 2015).

In 2016 Connecticut began using E-WIC, and now WIC fruit and vegetable checks cannot be used at farmers' markets; also, no new vendors can become WIC vendors until winter 2017.

Another barrier is that SNAP incentives work differently at each market, which is confusing for vendors, market masters, and customers. Some of these differences are due to the fact that the farmers' markets apply for grants separately, and reporting requirements limit or prohibit collaboration.

**KEY STATISTICS**

**4 out of 7** Hartford farmers' markets accept SNAP and also offer SNAP incentives

**42%** of households in Hartford receive SNAP (ACS 2014)

**55%** of WIC FMNP coupons redeemed in 2015 (CT DoAg)

**80%** of Senior FMNP coupons redeemed in 2015 (CT DoAg)

**Current Work in Hartford**

Four farmers' markets and the HMM accept SNAP; all of them also offer incentives that increase the purchasing power of SNAP customers (such as doubling SNAP or offering coupons).

There are ongoing efforts to use shared marketing for the farmers' markets; the four SNAP farmers' markets meet monthly to foster collaboration.

**Current Work in Other Cities/States**

In 2016, the Los Angeles Food Policy Council worked with the City Council to pass an ordinance requiring all farmers' markets in the city to accept SNAP.

Farmers' markets in Portland, Oregon pool their SNAP incentives grants so that incentives at one market are completely transferable to another.

**POLICY PRIORITY: INCREASE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION  
USING FEDERAL AND STATE FOOD ASSISTANCE BENEFITS**

**TARGETS**

- **Increase usage of SNAP benefits** and other programs during 2017 farmers' market season
- Completion of a **promotional video** in Spanish and English that will be displayed at key community sites.

**PROPOSALS**

**What can the City do?** To support and promote farmers' markets as affordable, accessible sources of fresh fruits and vegetables, the City of Hartford can:

- Assist farmers' markets by offering to convene meetings at City Hall and assigning a City representative to facilitate work on common issues, including training of farmer market managers and volunteers.
- Consider an ordinance enabling all farmers' markets to accept SNAP, while also committing to support the farmers and market masters to make it happen (consider Los Angeles ordinance as example).
- Identify funding sources (within or outside the City) to provide added value incentives at all farmers' markets/HMM.
- Distribute promotional materials for the farmers' markets/HMM.
- Support efforts to create a welcoming and festive atmosphere for all Hartford residents at farmers' markets.

**What can community organizations do?** Community organizations should continue to standardize materials, including posters, flyers, and videos, to cultivate a coordinated brand. All materials should feature SNAP prominently and be widely distributed.

**What can the State do?** The State Department of Public Health should work to make E-WIC available at all farmers' markets and small groceries as soon as possible. The Department of Social Services should insert farmers' market flyers in SNAP redeterminations and other DSS mailings. State agencies should show the farmers' market promotional video in their waiting rooms and post it on their websites.

**What will the Commission do?** The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will promote consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables using federal nutrition programs by:

- Developing a promotional video about farmers' markets and HMM;
- Promoting farmers' markets and HMM on Spanish language radio stations;
- Advising farmers' markets on ways to make them more welcoming spaces for all Hartford residents;
- Reviewing promotional materials and providing feedback;
- Developing language for the aforementioned ordinance requiring all farmers' markets to accept SNAP.

The Fruit and Vegetable and Federal Food Assistance Programs Working Group will also discuss expanding this work to include all food assistance programs, such as school meal programs.

**Key Partners**

- All Hartford farmers' markets
- City of Hartford
- Community hospitals and clinics
- Community members
- Community Solutions
- Eastern CT State University
- Foodshare
- Hispanic Health Council
- Oh SNAP! Hartford
- Spanish language radio stations



Oh SNAP! bus ad in Hartford informs riders that SNAP can be redeemed at farmers' markets.  
Photo Credit: Oh SNAP! Hartford

**Synergy**

This recommendation synergizes with the recommendation to support mid-sized grocery stores. They both aim to increase the availability of fruits and vegetables at affordable prices to Hartford residents.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ESTABLISH A MAYOR’S TASK FORCE ON SUMMER MEALS IN HARTFORD**

**Background:** During the school year, approximately 18,000 Hartford students rely on free school meals as their main source of nutrition. When school lets out in June, access to these meals is compromised. To fill this gap, the federal Summer Meals Program provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to children and teens, 18 years of age and younger. There are four sponsors of summer meals in the City: the Hartford Board of Education serves schools and libraries, the City of Hartford serves parks and park programs, Community Renewal Team, Inc. serves community-based programs and faith-based organizations, and Trinity College serves their summer camp.

KEY STATISTICS	
<b>18,000</b>	Hartford students rely on free school meals
<b>1 in 3</b>	Hartford students participated in the Summer Meals Program in 2015

**Why it matters:** The Summer Meals Program ensures kids have places to go for healthy meals in the summer, making it more likely that they will be physically and intellectually ready for school in the fall. Despite over 100 sites serving summer meals throughout Hartford and initiatives to expand summer meal service to the weekends, there was a 5% decrease in the number of meals served through this program between 2014 and 2015, meaning only 1 in 3 children in Hartford participated in the program last summer.

**Barriers:** Hartford students may not participate in the Summer Meals Program for many reasons, including lack of awareness of meal locations, the stigma associated with going back to a school during the summer even if only for a meal, the absence of programming and activities for kids at all sites, and easy access to less nutritious, but more desirable packaged or processed foods and snacks. The most salient reasons for poor program participation are not entirely clear and additional efforts are required to better understand the underlying factors responsible for observed outcomes and discouraging trends in participation rates.

Hartford Summer Meals Sponsor	Number of Meals Served			% of Total Meals Served in 2015
	2013	2014	2015	
<b>Hartford Board of Education</b>	172,948	185,032	179,623	69%
<b>City of Hartford</b>	60,641	41,050	20,496	8%
<b>Community Renewal Team, Inc.</b>	880	37,680	49,781	19%
<b>Trinity College</b>	10,196	11,133	10,776	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>244,665</b>	<b>274,895</b>	<b>260,676</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Current Work in Hartford**  
 Hartford Public Schools, CRT, End Hunger CT!, Foodshare, Urban Alliance, and other community organizations promote the Summer Meals Program through electronic and print communications, as well as other creative efforts to make the program accessible and appealing to Hartford families.

**Best Practices**  
 Collaborate with school officials to identify where kids are during the summer and to inform them of summer meals before school lets out.  
 Organize or participate in volunteer canvassing events, called “Blitzes” or “Outreach Days” at the start of the summer to kick off the program and get the word out.  
 Promote the program through op-eds, public speeches, or regular e-mail blast and social media.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ESTABLISH A MAYOR’S TASK FORCE ON SUMMER MEALS IN HARTFORD**

**TARGETS**

**Convene a Mayor’s Task Force on Summer Meals by January 2017** with representatives of key city departments and organizations in Hartford to set goals and **create an action plan for increasing Hartford’s Summer Meals participation.**

**PROPOSALS**

The Commission recommends the establishment of a Mayor’s Task Force on Summer Meals in Hartford to:

- Increase awareness about summer meals
- Identify barriers and challenges to participation
- Coordinate communication efforts
- Develop an effective city-wide marketing campaign
- Identify opportunities to serve more children and youth
- Develop city-wide goals for participation and access

**Key Partners**

- Agencies sponsoring summer meals
- Anti-hunger organizations
- Faith-based organizations
- The Offices of the Mayor and Superintendent
- Parents of Summer Meals Program participants and/or participants

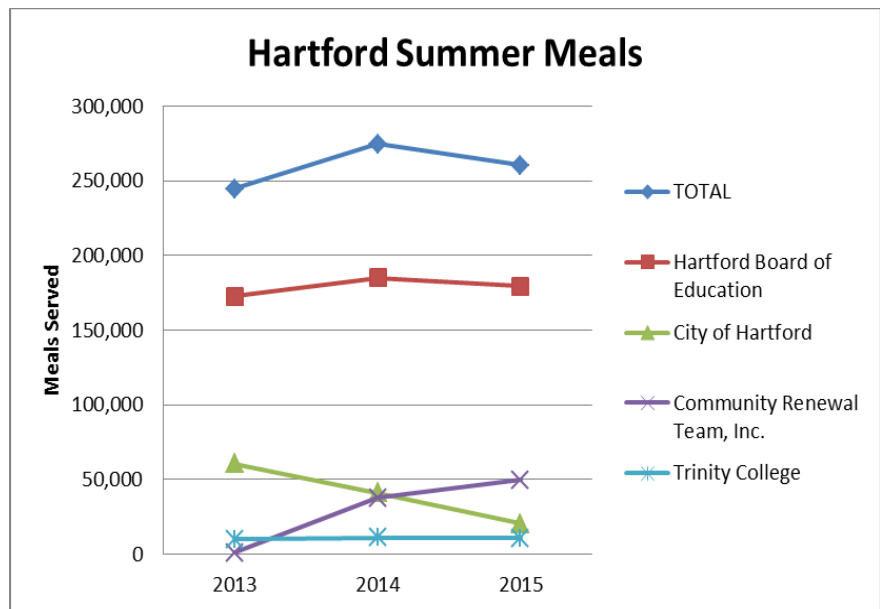
**What can the city do?** The Commission urges the City to take a leadership role in convening this task force and taking a proactive approach to increasing participation in the Summer Meals Program over the coming years.

**What can community organizations do?** Community organizations can continue in their efforts to increase awareness about the Summer Meals Program. The Mayor’s Task Force can help support community organizations in their efforts to increase program participation.

**What can the State do?** The

Department of Social Services should include information about summer meals in their mailings to SNAP recipients.

**What will the Commission do?** The Commission will continue to provide a platform for community organizations and residents to share their experiences with offering, promoting, and participating in the Summer Meal Program, and will use this feedback to inform future communications and recommendations to the City.



**Synergy**

This recommendation synergizes with the school gardens recommendation because it may increase children’s access to nutrition education as well as fresh food sources. School gardens could offer enrichment to summer meal programs.



**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO HAVE GARDENS AT ALL HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**Background:** School gardens promote academic achievement by providing experiential learning through connection with the natural environment. In addition, school gardens provide an opportunity for children to identify vegetables, flowers, and herbs; to understand how they grow; and to understand the nutritional benefits of a healthy diet. During the summer, vegetables from school gardens may provide access to healthy food for families that help maintain the gardens.

Approximately 22 schools in Hartford have active gardens. Environmental Studies Mary Hooker School involves all students in gardening through its STEM curriculum. Other schools involve particular classes or grades in garden maintenance.

**Why it matters:** Proper nutrition is important for learning and school performance. In a comprehensive review of 20 years of literature on school garden programs, 93% of the studies reported improved student performance in science, 80% saw improvement in math, and 72% noted improvement in language arts (Williams and Dixon, 2013).

Improving nutrition is also very important for the long-term health of children into adulthood. A significant percentage of Hartford children have been identified as being overweight or obese. Since many parts of Hartford have been identified as “food deserts,” not all families have access to high quality and affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. School gardens can improve nutrition by providing a source of healthy food for families that help maintain these gardens during the summer.

**Barriers:** Funding is needed to provide materials for raised beds, soil, and tools – installing a new garden costs about \$1,000 per school. Lack of curriculum and support from school administration, parents, and teachers also must be addressed. Ongoing professional development for teachers, as well as engagement of parents who want to take on a leadership role, is critical.

<b>KEY STATISTICS</b>	
<b>93%</b>	of studies on school gardens have shown an increase in student performance in science
<b>22</b>	schools in Hartford currently have gardens (out of roughly 50)

**Current Work in Hartford**

For several years the Hartford School Garden Advisory Team (HSGAT) has been actively involved in creating and maintaining school gardens at 13 Hartford schools, as well as providing classroom and afterschool enrichment activities. HSGAT is a small group of master gardener volunteers, one of whom is a commissioner on the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy. Others include parents, teachers, and representatives of several nonprofit organizations, including Knox Parks, FoodCorps, and Summer of Solutions.

In addition to ongoing involvement at Environmental Studies Mary Hooker Magnet, Fred D. Wish, Martin Luther King, Moylan Montessori, Noah Webster Microsociety, and Belizzi Dwight Asian Studies schools, recent activities include creating a vertical garden at Betances STEM School, reopening the greenhouse at Bulkeley High School, and starting to develop protocols for using vegetables and herbs grown at Hartford school gardens in school cafeterias. During the summer of 2016, the HSGAT met with representatives from Hartford Public Schools’ Office of the Superintendent to discuss expansion of gardening in City schools. There is now a commitment by the superintendent’s office to reach out to principals to promote school gardens with the objective of adding gardens at five schools every year. HSGAT will be a key partner in this work.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO HAVE GARDENS AT ALL HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**TARGETS**

**Increase the number of school gardens in Hartford by five per year until every public school in the City has a garden.**

**Ensure that existing school gardens continue to thrive.**

**PROPOSALS**

**What can the City do?** The City should coordinate dialogue between the Office of the Mayor, the Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools, the Board of Education, and City Council to build support. Outcomes of this conversation may include grant seeking and writing, developing curriculum, and doing outreach to build community support for school gardens.

**What can community organizations do?** Community organizations can contribute expertise, do outreach, and host events that celebrate school gardens and promote healthy eating.

**What can the State do?** The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Education can collaborate to develop statewide curriculum for school gardens as well as develop nutrition curriculum. State funding for school gardens could be an important resource to achieve the goal of having active gardens at every school in Hartford.

**What will the Commission do?** The Commission will assist in identifying grant opportunities and writing grants to create school gardens in addition to supporting existing school gardens. The Commission may plan events that spotlight school gardens and incorporate information about school gardens into any outreach materials. The Commission may also explore ways to incorporate produce from school gardens into meals served in the cafeterias. The Commission will explore developing a best practices document to be shared among Hartford schools.

**Key Partners**

- FoodCorps
- Hartford Food System
- Hartford Public Schools
- HSGAT
- Knox Parks
- Parents and students
- Summer of Solutions Hartford
- Teachers



Students at the Burns Elementary School garden.

Photo Credit: Tenaya Taylor

**Synergy**

This recommendation synergizes with the summer food recommendation – school gardens could support summer food programs and offer extra enrichment.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EXISTING HARTFORD MID-SIZED GROCERY STORES  
TO PROMOTE THE AVAILABILITY AND SALE OF HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD**

**Background:** In a 2015 assessment by the University of Connecticut, Hartford’s population was the most at risk of food insecurity in Connecticut. In conjunction with very high levels of poverty, many Hartford residents struggle with diet-related chronic diseases and have a difficult time accessing healthy, affordable food. Hartford has been subject to supermarket “red-lining,” losing several full-service supermarkets since the 1980s. Loss of large food retailers in Hartford has resulted in sales “leakage” from Hartford to suburban supermarkets, with an associated loss of economic benefit to the City.

**KEY STATISTICS**

- 1 out of 4** Hartford residents live in a designated “food desert”
- 8** mid-sized grocery stores in Hartford
- 2** large supermarkets in Hartford

**Why it matters:** There are very few large full-scale supermarkets in Hartford, leading to many parts of Hartford being designated by the USDA as “food deserts;” however, there are several existing, and often successful, “mid-sized” grocery stores that sell a broad range of food items, including fresh produce, dairy, meat, and seafood. These stores, many of which employ more than 15 people, represent economic and community assets. These mid-sized markets, such as C-Town and Bravo, are generally locally owned, they provide local jobs and are recognized by many residents as convenient and affordable neighborhood sources of fresh food and other groceries. Successful businesses of this type contribute to the local economy in a positive way. Helping these existing businesses become more successful can be a positive factor in decreasing health disparities and contributing to economic development in the City.

**Barriers:** While these mid-sized markets in Hartford already represent a source of healthy food, they would benefit from improvements for their exterior facades, parking lots, display/refrigeration equipment, and lighting to improve the customers’ experience. Sourcing strategies that consistently ensure the availability of high-quality produce would also be helpful. Due to limited marketing and store renovation budgets, promotion, publicity, and displays for fresh produce and other healthy food are often not possible. Relatively simple environmental improvements and marketing would help to attract customers and increase the sale (and the consumption) of fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Current Work in Hartford**

Two mid-size grocery stores in Hartford recently participated in a pilot program called SNAP UP, in conjunction with Hartford Food System and Wholesome Wave, to offer \$5 vouchers for fruits and vegetables to SNAP customers who made qualifying purchases. This short-term program resulted in thousands of dollars in additional fruit and vegetable sales for the participating grocers, helping to ensure more healthy food on more Hartford tables. While the pilot is concluded, a new USDA grant will allow the incentive program to be re-established in up to three Hartford mid-sized grocery stores. A new mid-sized market recently opened in the North End of Hartford in the Promise Zone, in an area with high need for healthy food. A group of organizations have been meeting monthly since the fall of 2015 to develop a Healthy Hartford Business Initiative to help create a business model for grocery stores to sell more healthy food.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EXISTING HARTFORD MID-SIZED GROCERY STORES  
TO PROMOTE THE AVAILABILITY AND SALE OF HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE FOOD**

**TARGETS**

Work with 3 – 4 existing mid-sized markets to support them in becoming even more of an economic and community asset.

Focus on 3 – 4 markets to **increase the supply and sale of fresh, and when possible, locally grown fruits and vegetables by 10%.**

Grocery stores will see increase in purchases of fruits and vegetables by SNAP and WIC customers, as well as the reduction of inventory loss due to spoilage and sales loss to suburban stores.

**Planned infrastructure and store environment improvements** will help attract new customers to shop at the markets for healthy food.

**Overall sales increases** will promote sustainability of the “healthy food” approach.

**PROPOSALS**

**What can the City do?** The City can recognize these existing businesses as community assets; partner with mid-sized stores to develop strategies and sources of funding to improve facades, lighting, and parking lots to increase customer traffic and improve the customer experience; provide support for purchase of refrigerators or other equipment to sell more fruits and vegetables; provide publicity and promotion to encourage customers and neighbors to shop at these markets; and leverage the new zoning code provisions for healthy food retailing.

**What can community organizations do?** Community organizations can build relationships with targeted markets, offer nutrition classes that focus on fruits and vegetables, connect clients to federal nutrition programs and incentive programs like SNAP and WIC and encourage participants to use their benefits at targeted markets, recognize and publicize the work being done, and move away from “food desert” and other deficit-based language and instead leverage asset-based approaches to improving food security.

**What can the State do?** The State Department of Agriculture should promote and support local sourcing options for target markets; support statewide partnering on grant applications for federal fruit and vegetable incentive programs; advocate for protection of SNAP and other federal nutrition programs.

**What will the Commission do?** The Commission will identify grant opportunities to expand fruit and vegetable incentive programs, build relationships with targeted markets, publicize these community assets, and encourage customers to shop for healthy food.

**Key Partners**

- Community Solutions
- Existing mid-sized grocery stores in Hartford (ex. C-Town on Wethersfield Avenue; Associated Supermarket on Barbour Street)
- Foodshare
- Hartford Food System
- Hartford NRZ's
- Participants in federal nutrition programs (SNAP, WIC)
- University of Connecticut
- Wholesome Wave



Produce section at C-Town Supermarket on Wethersfield Ave.

Photo Credit: C-Town Supermarket

**Synergy**

This recommendation synergizes with this year’s policy priority to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables using federal nutrition programs. SNAP recipients will have better access to fruits and vegetables at these mid-sized grocery stores.

**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DIVERT FOOD WASTE FROM THE CITY’S WASTE STREAM**

**Background:** The total waste produced in Hartford is 90,093.24 tons of material annually (DPW). Statewide, food waste constitutes 13.5% of the total compostable materials (DEEP). Using these data, the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy estimates that 12,162.59 tons of food are wasted in Hartford every year. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 40% of food in the US is wasted between the source (farm) and consumer (plate). The EPA has developed a “food recovery hierarchy” that prioritizes 1) reducing the amount of food wasted; 2) feeding hungry people with safe surplus food; 3) feeding animals; 4) industrial uses, ex. waste-to-energy; 5) composting; and 6) incineration or landfill.

**KEY STATISTICS**

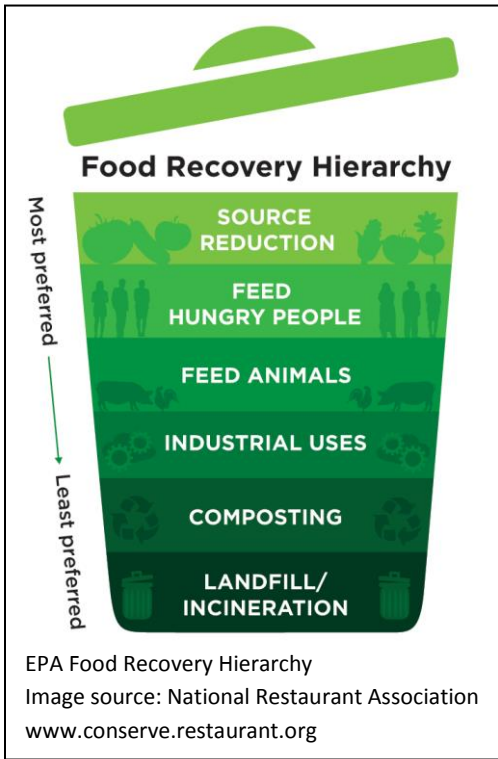
**12,162 tons** of food waste produced in Hartford annually (DEEP, DPW, & HACFP, 2016)

**5%** of food in the US is composted (EPA, 2013)

**40%** of food in the US is wasted (EPA, 2013)

**Why it matters:** Better management of food waste can save the State and the City of Hartford money. Redirecting unused food to food pantries can help alleviate hunger, while composting spoiled food can produce rich soil to grow more local food. Increased composting will stimulate the local economy by creating more and supporting existing local food entrepreneurs.

**Barriers:** There are start-up costs to expanding composting services or other food waste reduction methods. Lack of knowledge about food waste, consumer confusion about expiration dates, and misconceptions about “ugly” food contribute to more food being wasted.



**Current Work in Hartford**

In 2016, the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy partnered with the Hartford Public Library to host four composting workshops at different branch libraries around the City. Over 40 Hartford residents attended these workshops.

Trinity College has partnered with Knox Parks to drop off food waste generated on campus, which is converted to compost for use in the community gardens.

The Materials Innovation and Recovery Authority (MIRA), formerly known as Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority, is looking at ways to reduce reliance on burning trash at its Hartford plant.

**Current Work In Other Cities/States**

Hommocks Middle School in Mamaroneck, NY purchased an on-site food composter called “The Rocket,” which will reduce trucking and disposal costs while also providing the “Black Gold” that is nutrient rich compost. Early statistics show an 86% reduction in waste needing to be trucked away.

The City of New Haven is working with New Haven Farms to license and promote a bike food waste recovery service in two target neighborhoods.

Cities such as Washington DC and Boston have implemented an \$8 per week surcharge to pick up food waste.



**POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DIVERT FOOD WASTE FROM THE CITY’S WASTE STREAM**

**TARGETS**

**Reduce compostable waste** deposited in residential trash

**Collect data** to determine the extent of institutional and residential food waste in Hartford

**Raise awareness** about food waste through a series of public events

**PROPOSALS**

**What can the City do?** The City can purchase backyard composters for a pilot compost project. The Department of Public Works should collect additional data about food waste and calculate potential savings created by removing food from the waste stream. The City can ensure that local institutions such as hospitals and colleges comply with the new state law requiring large producers of organic waste to transport this waste to nearby energy plants.

**What can community organizations do?** Community organizations can work with the Commission to collect data about food waste and host workshops or informational sessions about food waste.

**What can the State do?** The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection can support municipal efforts to reduce food waste and collect data about food waste in the State that will help make the case for composting services.

**What will the Commission do?** The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will secure funding for a pilot program for backyard composting. This pilot will be developed in partnership with a Hartford Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) identified by the Commission. The Commission will also identify a local high school to help collect data and analyze the impact of the pilot.

The Commission will host a series of educational events to raise awareness about food waste, including:

- Show the film *Just Eat It*
- Sponsor a book talk with John Mandyck for his book, *Food Foolish*, on October 28, 2016
- Co-host a “food scrap” dinner with a local restaurant
- Host a talk with representatives from a food waste company

The Commission encourages Hartford residents to look at the ways they can reduce food waste at the individual level. Examples include composting in their homes; volunteering with Foodshare to collect surplus food from retailers; volunteering with Community Plates to serve surplus food to the hungry; hosting a “food scrap” dinner to raise awareness about food waste; and volunteering and sharing expertise with the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy.

**Key Partners**

- City of Hartford, especially Department of Public Works
- DEEP
- Foodshare
- Hartford Food System
- Hartford NRZ’s
- Knox Parks
- Local businesses, such as Blue Earth Compost



In-home compost bin for food scraps  
Source: Blue Earth Compost  
[www.blueearthcompost.com](http://www.blueearthcompost.com)

**Synergy**

This recommendation synergizes with the school gardens recommendation. Schools that develop composting programs could use the compost to enrich the soils of their gardens.

## Conclusions on the 2016 Recommendations

The policy priority and recommendations outlined above require buy-in from the Commission, City officials, State government, Hartford residents, and community organizations. Some of the key partners common to multiple recommendations include: City government, community members, Foodshare, Hartford Food System, Hispanic Health Council, Knox Parks, school administrators, and the University of Connecticut; many of these organizations are already represented on or otherwise engaged with the Commission. The Commission exists in part to build coalition between and “de-silo” these sectors; therefore, much of this work is already done over the years of collaboration and trust-building on the Commission.

Common threads throughout these recommendations include: working together to identify private and public funding, gathering input from residents, and streamlining outreach.

The Commission will continue to develop cross-sector relationships, increase opportunities for residents to share their input, and build credibility with City officials to achieve the targets listed above.

The Commissioners and stakeholders who helped develop these recommendations have a shared vision that guided the research and development of the proposals.



Bulkeley High School Greenhouse, fully restored in 2016  
Photo credit: Robert Wild



Diverse produce selection at El Gitano Supermarket on Park Street (now La Marqueta)  
Photo credit: Hartford Food System





The Hartford Mobile Market, which runs all year and accepts SNAP

Photo credit: Hartford Food System



Children receiving lunch through the Summer Meals Program

Photo Credit: End Hunger Connecticut!



Foodshare warehouse in Bloomfield. Foodshare accepts donations of excess food according to the EPA food recovery hierarchy.

Photo credit: Foodshare

## *Achieving the targets will create a Hartford where:*

- SNAP recipients feel comfortable at and can purchase affordable produce at Hartford farmers' markets;
- Children are aware of and enthusiastically participate in the Summer Meals Program, reducing hunger in the summer;
- Every student has access to a garden at their school and receives gardening education;
- Locally owned mid-sized grocery stores are recognized by residents and officials as economic drivers and sources of fresh, healthy, and affordable food;
- Less food is deposited into the waste stream, and is instead used to feed the hungry or composted, following the EPA food reclamation hierarchy.

## **Capacity Building**

The recommendations listed in this report cannot move from ink on paper or pixels on a screen to concrete policy changes if the Food Policy Commission does not function effectively. Therefore, the Commission is working to build capacity and examine its structure to become more efficient and complete its goals.

The Commission is made up of 16 volunteers and supported by a half-time staffperson provided by Hartford Food System. There are five issue-based working groups currently active, and they correspond to the recommendations made in this report: increasing fruit and vegetable consumption through federal nutrition programs, grocery stores, school gardens, the Summer Meals Program, and food waste. Another working group of the Commission plans events such as the Community Food Security Awards and World Food Day Community Breakfast.

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy completed three evaluations in the last two years. The primary conclusions of the evaluations showed that the Commission needs to develop its community engagement and communication strategies to reach a wider audience and produce recommendations that represent the needs of the residents of Hartford.

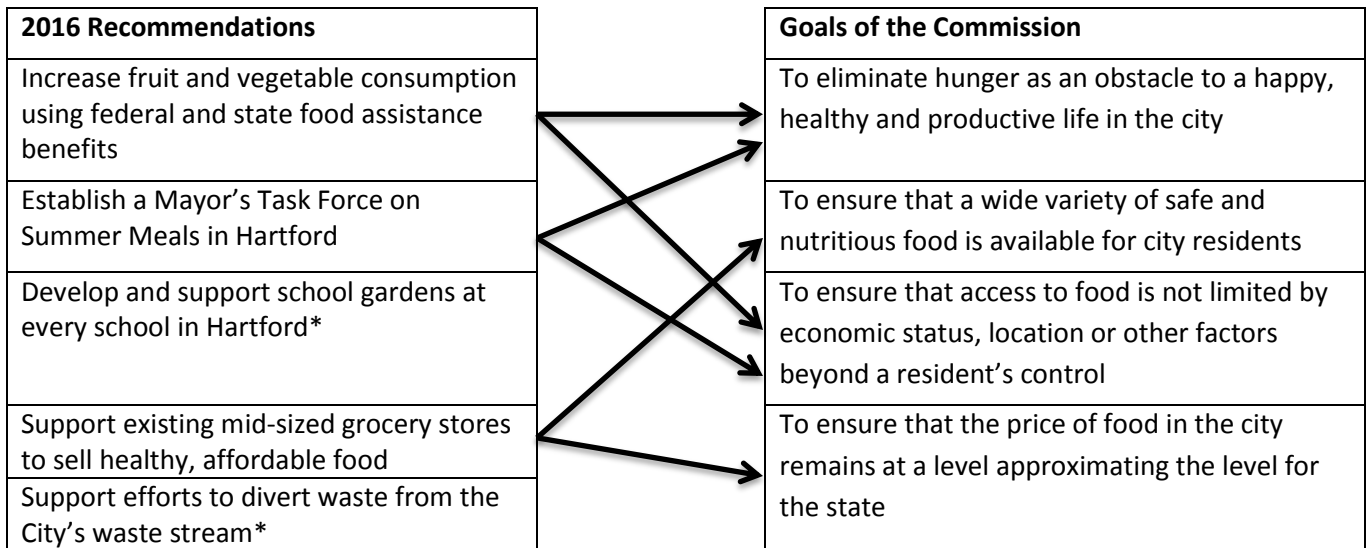
The Commission is working to build its capacity in several ways, including:

- Developing a communications plan, including a newsletter, social media presence, interaction with elected officials, and Commissioner participation in community meetings;
- Hosting more community events;
- Establishing a Leadership Committee to address communications and outreach, collaboration with other food policy councils, capacity building, and development of the Annual Report;
- Developing governance documents for Working Groups;
- Exploring “Affiliate Membership” to include more stakeholders in the Commission;
- Developing by-laws; and
- Expanding its membership to include two youth commissioners.

The Commission is also developing its relationship with other municipal/local food policy councils (Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London County) with the intent to share expertise and eventually develop a statewide food policy agenda.

## Conclusions

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy has been working on food issues in Hartford continuously for 25 years. While the original goals of the Commission were focused around food security, access, and prices, the Commission regularly examines issues outside of this scope, including food and nutrition education, sustainability, and enjoyment of food. The diagram below demonstrates how 2016 recommendations correspond to the original goals of the Commission.



Two of this year’s recommendations (marked with an asterisk) don’t fall neatly into the original goals of the Commission; however, the Commission recognizes that they are vital to creating a Hartford that isn’t just food secure, but whose food system is sustainable and whose citizens are educated about and enjoy growing, cooking, and eating healthy food.

Because the Commission has addressed the issues of a sustainable food system and of food and gardening education so often, it may be appropriate for the Commission to adopt these as goals.

This year, the Commission expanded its recommendations to include strategies and actions for community organizations and state government to take, in recognition of the difficulties faced by City government and understanding of the Mayor’s call for regionalism as a solution to the inequities Hartford faces. Hartford is not and will never be a closed food system (i.e., an area that produces all the food it consumes); therefore, solutions must come not just from the City but from outside the City as well. This is another reason the Commission is reaching out to the food policy councils of New Haven, Bridgeport, and New London County. Together we can develop policies that contribute to robust food systems throughout Connecticut.

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Advisory Commission on Food Policy  
Annual Report and Recommendations  
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