

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

annual report and
policy recommendations

2017





CITY OF HARTFORD ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY

c/o Hartford Food System, 1 Congress St., Suite 302, Hartford, CT 06114
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October 16, 2017

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 are introducing a couple new policy recommendations to prioritize healthy food retail in the City's development and promote growing nutritious food on more City-owned land. We are amending past policy recommendations to increase fruit and vegetable consumption using nutrition programs and to ensure the sustainability of school gardens. We continue our work to reduce food waste in the City.

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
Chair



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2017 Annual Report

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2017 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 approximately \$31,000, 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 2017 marks 26 years 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 15 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 Sustainability Working Group and the Growing Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

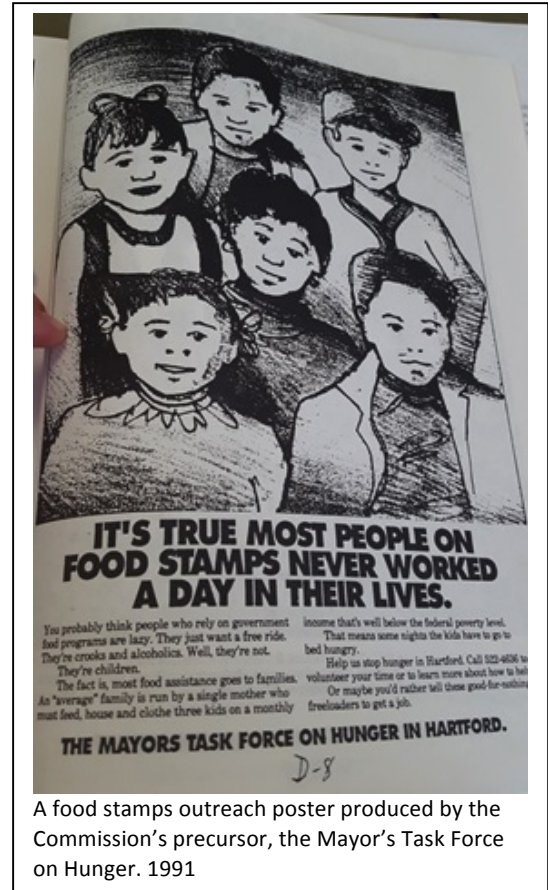
Mary Cockram, *Frog Hollow Consulting*. Mary serves on the Sustainability Working Group of the Commission.

Angela G. Colantonio, *Urban Alliance*. Angela serves on the Getting Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Dawn Crayco, *FoodCorps CT*. Dawn serves on the Nutrition across the Lifespan Working Group of the Commission.

Valentine Doyle, *Hartford Resident*.

Brunella Ibarrola, *Hartford Public Schools Food and Child Nutrition Services*. Brunella serves on the Nutrition across the Lifespan Working Group and the Growing Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.



Richard Lotstein, *HPC Foodservice*. Richard serves on the Growing Healthy Food Working Group and the Selling Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Katie S. Martin, *University of St. Joseph*. Katie serves on the Getting Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Andrew May, *Hartford Resident*. Andrew serves on the Sustainability Working Group of the Commission.

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

Ron Pitz, *KNOX*. Ron serves on the Growing Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Sarah Santora, *Foodshare*. Sarah serves on the Getting Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Sofia Segura-Perez, *Hispanic Health Council*. Sofia serves on the Getting Healthy Food Working Group and the Nutrition across the Lifespan Working Group of the Commission.

Carol Steinke, *Hartford Department of Health and Human Services, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion*. Carol serves on the Nutrition across the Lifespan Working Group of the Commission.

Cary Wheaton, *Billings Forge Community Works*. Cary serves on the Selling Healthy Food Working Group of the Commission.

Overview of 2016-2017 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, in the Green Room of City Hall from 3:30 to 5:15 pm.

Community Engagement



85 followers



43 followers
(+95%)



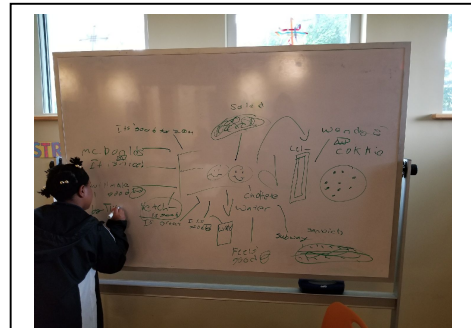
151 subscribers
(+68%)

Through the work of an AmeriCorps VISTA member with Hartford Food System, the Commission is working to finalize a communications and outreach strategy to create opportunities for Hartford residents to share their experiences and input on food policy issues. While a formal plan has not yet been approved, the Commission hosted several community events this year:

- **Food Day Community Breakfast** – The Commission released the 2016 Annual Report in October of 2016 in alignment with the celebration of World Food Day of the United Nations. Participants broke out into groups and worked to create action steps around the five recommendations proposed last year. These included: improving user experience of federal nutrition benefits, establishing a Mayor’s Task Force on Summer Meals, increasing the number of school gardens in Hartford, promoting availability and sales of healthy food in mid-sized grocery stores, and reducing the amount of food waste and cost of food waste management in Hartford. Mayor Bronin was in attendance along with approximately 60 other individuals.
- **Community Food Security Awards** – The Commission continued its annual tradition of hosting the Community Food Security Awards in March 2017. This year Sonsharae Owens was the Youth Individual award recipient for her work as a program coordinator for Summer of Solutions Hartford. Louisa Barton-Duguay was the recipient of the Adult Individual award for her work as the Community Outreach Worker for Grace Lutheran Church. This year’s award recipient for the Business category was Bear’s BBQ and Smokehouse for their work as a statewide leader in Governor Malloy’s Second Chance Initiative. Lastly, the

City of Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission was the award recipient for the Nonprofit/Government Agency category as their dedicated citizens have contributed to food security through comprehensive changes to the City's zoning code, ultimately impacting all Hartford residents. Individuals in attendance included Dr. Gary Rhule, Director of Health and Human Services in Hartford, as well as Mayor Luke Bronin, who personally congratulated all Community Food Security Awardees.

- **Community Conversations** – The Commission hosted a series of community meetings this summer to collect feedback from Hartford residents on their food experiences. Topics from grocery stores to summer meals were discussed, which led to valuable insight on the availability, accessibility and quality of food for those in need in Hartford. For example, Mr. Hagenbach shared with us the importance of the Farmers' Market coupons to buy fruits and vegetables and he "wish[es] Bronin would make sure the program is never cut". The Commission held a conversation among schoolchildren ages 7 to 15 at the Albany Branch Public Library (Pictured below). This feedback included views on school lunches and nutrition. The Commission used this information to aid in writing their policy recommendations for the Annual Report.



Student doodles conversation on food.
Photo Credit: Meg Hourigan

Progress on 2016 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 2016 recommendations:

Increase fruit and vegetable consumption using federal and state food assistance benefits – The Commission's Fruit and Vegetable Working Group and Eastern Connecticut State University developed videos in Spanish and English promoting SNAP benefits at the Hartford Mobile Market and Hartford Farmers' Markets. The video highlights the importance of eating fresh produce, supporting local farmers, and at the same time, getting extra value when buying produce using SNAP benefits. Since the spring of 2017, the video has been playing in Greater Hartford DSS Offices as well as have been posted on the DSS website, their social media channels, and on partner organizations' social media outlets. The Commission is reinforcing its 2016 recommendation in 2017.

Establish a Mayor's Task Force on Summer Meals in Hartford – In June of 2017, the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy submitted a proposal for the formation of a Mayor's Task Force on Summer Meals to the Mayor's Office. This proposal resulted in a larger discussion with the Mayor's Office regarding the potential creation of a multi-agency taskforce focused on enhancing the summer experience for Hartford Public School students, including increased access to summer meals.

Develop and support school gardens at every school in Hartford – No new gardens have been created this past year, however FoodCorps members are planning to create a garden at Simpson-Waverly School. The Hartford School Garden Council is working to expand the garden at Wish School and the garden at Annie Fisher Montessori Magnet School was better utilized this past year. In collaboration with the Superintendent's Office, the Hartford School Garden Council is working through water issues and the beginnings of curriculum development.

Support existing mid-sized grocery stores to sell healthy, affordable food – The SNAP UP! program, a collaboration between Hartford Food System and Wholesome Wave, offers \$5 vouchers for fruits and vegetables to SNAP customers who make qualifying purchases at the midsize grocery store C-Town on Wethersfield Ave. This program is resulting in thousands of dollars in additional fruit and vegetable sales for the participating grocer, helping to ensure more healthy food on more Hartford tables.

Support efforts to divert waste from the City's waste stream – Multiple applications for grants were submitted as a result of collaboration between several partners, including organizations represented on the Commission as well as new partners like Keney Park Sustainability Project and Blue Earth Compost. With the Commission's letter of support, Blue Earth Compost was awarded a \$10,000 grant from CT DEEP to pilot a composting project in the Billings Forge area. Additionally, the City of Hartford hired a new City Sustainability Officer, Shubhada Kambli. Shubhada's responsibilities include finalizing and planning the implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan. The Commission is reinforcing its 2016 recommendation in 2017.

2017 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:

- **Prioritize healthy food retail in the City's development**

Policy Recommendations:

- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption using nutrition programs
- Support efforts to divert wasted food from the City's waste stream
- Ensure the sustainability of school gardens
- Promote growing nutritious food on more City-owned land

The Commission identified this year's policy priority (prioritize healthy food retail in the City's development) 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 a limited number of recommendations can help maximize the strained resources of the City without exhausting our most valuable asset – people.

POLICY PRIORITY: PRIORITIZE HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL IN THE CITY’S DEVELOPMENT

Background: Many parts of the City of Hartford are classified as a food desert because of its limited healthy food retail options for residents. More than a third of residents do not own a car and have to rely on walking, public transit, or riding with a friend to do their grocery shopping. There are a limited number of midsize food retailers in Hartford, which many residents feel are not sufficient to satisfy their grocery shopping needs. In order to buy more affordable, fresh and healthy foods for their families, many residents shop at supermarkets and large box stores outside of Hartford’s city limits.

KEY STATISTICS

1 out of 4	Hartford residents live in a designated “food desert”
8	Midsize grocery stores in Hartford
36%	of households do not own a car

Why it matters: Many of Hartford residents’ food purchasing dollars leave the City. Strategies to develop more high quality food retail would retain these dollars in Hartford and reap many health and economic benefits for the City. Studies show that for every additional supermarket, produce consumption increases 32% for African Americans and 11% for whites (The Grocery Gap, 2010). Improving access to healthy food in communities corresponds to healthier eating and overall better public health in the community. Prioritizing food retail development in the City would increase job opportunities for Hartford residents. When a new ShopRite store in Pennsylvania opened, it created 258 jobs and more than half were filled by local residents (The Grocery Gap, 2010).

Barriers: There are three primary barriers- economic, psychological, and educational- stopping the development of high quality healthy food retail in the City. Scarce development money is available, access to public and private capital is limited, and it costs more to develop in the city vs. the suburbs. Often the focus is on supermarket-sized (greater than 35,000 sq. ft.) retailers, which may not be ideal or economically feasible for small cities, therefore the City is always fighting the notion that we have no healthy food retail if there isn’t a supermarket. Lastly, City residents may not know the variety of healthy food options available to them due to lack of advertising and marketing budgets of midsize healthy food retailers.

Current Work in Hartford

The Commission recognizes, supports, and celebrates local, healthy food retailers. For example, Jeffrey Perez, the Manager of C-Town on Wethersfield Avenue, received the 2016 Community Food Security Award in the Business category.

The SNAP UP! program, a collaboration between Hartford Food System and Wholesome Wave, offers \$5 vouchers for fruits and vegetables to SNAP customers who make qualifying purchases at the C-Town on Wethersfield Ave. This program is resulting in thousands of dollars in additional fruit and vegetable sales for the participating grocer, helping to ensure more healthy food on more Hartford tables. Hartford Community Loan Fund has sponsored a market survey to provide insight on the retail environment in Hartford. The Invest Health Project has identified access to healthy food retail in the North Hartford Promise Zone as the focus for investable projects. Wellbeing 360 is involved in and sponsors healthy food access work.

POLICY PRIORITY: PRIORITIZE HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL IN THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENT

TARGETS

- Determine the general tax revenue contributions for the **eight** midsize grocery stores in Hartford to implement and support efforts to increase general tax revenue from food retail.
- Convene a meeting between the City's Development Services and at least **five** food retail managers/owners to **discuss opportunities for capital improvements and form a better understanding of needs.**

PROPOSALS

What can the City do? The City should publicly identify healthy food retail as an economic priority by reviewing and streamlining the licensing process for starting food related businesses so it is more effective and transparent; developing an onboarding process for new businesses; developing a process to measure and label healthy food outlets and then promote existing and new stores meeting these criteria to residents and visitors; and hosting a Mayoral Town Hall meeting focused on food retail and food related businesses.

What can the community do? Community members can support existing grocery stores by shopping at these healthy food retailers and forming open lines of communication to express clear shopping expectations.

What can the State do? The State can continue to support small businesses, particularly food businesses, through efforts including the Small Business Express, the Women's Business Development Council, and the Minority Business Initiative. Lifting up food business at the state level will help foster food-centered economic development in Hartford and throughout the state.

What will the Commission do? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will provide visible support for healthy food retail development by:

- Inviting Development Services to present at a Commission meeting on their plans for food retail economic development;
- Preparing and convening a meeting between the food retail sector and the City's Development Services to discuss opportunities and challenges for economic development in the future;
- Assisting in the development and launch of a citywide Buy Local/Shop Small campaign;
- Compiling and sharing information about food retail in the City.

Key Stakeholders

- City of Hartford, especially Development Services and the Dept. of Health and Human Services
- Existing midsize grocery retailers in Hartford
 - ❖ Bravo, Compare, C-Town, and Save-A-Lot
- Hartford Community Loan Fund
- Public and private funders
- Trinity/Saint Francis Hospital
- University of Connecticut



Produce section at C-Town Supermarket on Wethersfield Ave.

Photo Credit: C-Town Supermarket

Community Input

A recent survey commissioned by the Invest Health project asked more than 260 Hartford residents about their shopping habits. While most respondents reported frequent use of corner and convenience stores, the majority of household food is purchased at medium and large grocery stores; residents report that these are preferred for prices, selection, and location.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION USING NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Background: Hartford has several assets when it comes to fresh food sources, including eight farmers’ markets; the Hartford Mobile Market (HMM), a year-round mobile produce market that operates out of a repurposed school bus; mobile Foodshare sites; community gardens; and several midsize grocery stores, which offer a culturally diverse selection of fruits and vegetables to Hartford residents. Five of the eight farmers’ markets and the HMM accept SNAP and other food assistance benefits, as well as provide incentives for customers to use their SNAP benefits. The concept of the HMM is an existing strategy to increase access to fresh fruit and vegetables that was proposed by community members who participated in an extensive research project led by the Hispanic Health Council.

KEY STATISTICS	
5 out of 8	Hartford farmers’ markets accept SNAP and also offer SNAP incentives
49%	of households in Hartford receive SNAP (FY 2016)
92%	of Senior FMNP coupons redeemed in 2016 (CT DoAg)
4,500	transactions made from the Hartford Mobile Market in 2016

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. People who have limited means to purchase food for themselves and their families and often rely on food pantries for food, are less likely to consume fruits and vegetables and are therefore at greater risk of developing a diet-related chronic disease. Food pantries might not have the knowledge or equipment necessary to store fresh fruits and vegetables for their clients. In these cases, linking food pantries with farmers’ markets and the HMM as important points of access to fresh produce may help fill this gap.

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 opportunity to double the value of their SNAP benefits at some markets (Center for Social Research, 2015). Additional barriers include a lack of resources to store fresh fruits and vegetables at food pantries and a lack of knowledge and skills among residents about how to grow and cook fruits and vegetables.

Current Work in Hartford
As part of last year’s priority policy recommendation, the Commission in partnership with the CT Department of Social Services and Eastern Connecticut State University created a promotional video in Spanish and English about using SNAP benefits at farmers’ markets and the HMM and distributed this video through various outlets. To help attract residents to farmers’ markets that accept SNAP benefits, each year volunteers distribute thousands of five dollar farmers’ market coupons and information about local health resources to residents through door-to-door outreaches, community events, churches, community organizations, food pantries and schools as part of Urban Alliance’s Revitalize initiative. In 2017, Revitalize farmers’ market coupons were used to purchase over \$5,000 of fresh fruits and vegetables over the five weeks when coupons were accepted. To encourage SNAP clients to make healthy food choices, the University of Saint Joseph provides educational workshops and cooking demonstrations through their SNAP-ED program at many food assistance sites in the City.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION USING NUTRITION PROGRAMS

TARGETS

- **Identify 8-10 food pantries to distribute printed materials** with information about Hartford farmers’ markets.
- **Convene a meeting** of farmers’ market managers to explore the possibility of a gleaning program for food pantries at farmers’ markets.

PROPOSALS

What can the City do? To promote farmers’ markets as affordable, accessible sources of fresh fruits and vegetables, the City of Hartford should share the Commission’s promotional video for farmers’ markets and Urban Alliance’s Revitalize Hartford website (www.RevitalizeHartford.com) through their social media outlets.

What can community organizations do? Community organizations can work with food pantries to educate internal staff and volunteers about using SNAP benefits at farmers’ markets and the HMM, as well as the availability of community gardens. Food pantries and other community organizations can also host educational workshops on how residents can grow and prepare their own fruits and vegetables. Partner organizations of the HMM can organize educational and promotional efforts at their individual sites.

What can the State do? The State Department of Agriculture should protect existing nutrition incentive programs and advocate for the expansion of these programs into grocery stores.

What will the Commission do? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will promote consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables using nutrition programs, including federal programs like WIC and SNAP, as well as emergency food providers like food pantries, by: ensuring existing printed resources about using SNAP benefits at farmers’ markets and the HMM are updated and effectively distributed; exploring the possibility of a gleaning program at farmers’ markets for vendors to donate unsold produce to food pantries; and supporting food pantries in developing the knowledge and infrastructure to provide fruit and vegetables to their clients.

Key Stakeholders

- Hartford farmers’ markets
- City of Hartford (Dept. of Health and Human Services)
- Food pantries
- Hartford Mobile Market
- Hispanic Health Council
- KNOX
- Mobile Foodshare host sites
- Oh SNAP! Hartford
- Urban Alliance



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

Economic Impact for Hartford

Hartford’s farmers markets and the HMM are major assets of the City. When residents utilize these markets to the fullest, they will consume more fruits and vegetables, which will in turn have long-term positive effects on the health of Hartford residents and potentially lead to decreased healthcare costs.

Synergy

This recommendation synergizes with the recommendation to support efforts to divert food waste from the City’s waste stream as it encourages educating residents on how to cook and prepare the fruits and vegetables they are able to acquire through public and private nutrition programs.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DIVERT WASTED FOOD FROM THE CITY'S WASTE STREAM

Background: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that 31% of food in the US is wasted between the source (farm) and consumer (plate). "Food waste" is food unfit for human consumption that is disposed, while "wasted, surplus, or excess food" is wholesome, nutritious food that is lost or disposed (EPA, 2017). The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy estimates that 40 million pounds of food is wasted in Hartford every year.

Why it matters: Recovering edible food for hungry people is the best use for food grown. The City of Hartford pays money to take waste away, so lessening the amount of organic material in our City's waste stream saves the City money and reduces its harmful environmental impact. Composting food waste produces organic compost to grow more local nutrient dense food.

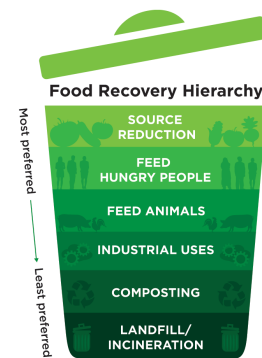
Barriers: Lack of knowledge about food waste, consumer confusion about expiration dates, and misconceptions about "ugly" food contribute to more food being wasted. There are many logistical challenges, such as maintaining food safety, when donating excess food to people in need. Composting of food waste is unfamiliar to many people and requires a change in behavior.

KEY STATISTICS

31% of food in the US is wasted (EPA, 2017)

40 million lb. of food wasted in Hartford annually (DEEP, DPW, & HACFP, 2016)

41% of waste in CT is compostable (CT DEEP, 2016)



EPA Food Recovery Hierarchy
Image source: National Restaurant Association
www.conserve.restaurant.org

Current Work in Hartford

City policy is in compliance with FDA food code that provides a friendly policy environment for food donation, shielding donors from liability. In 2016, the food industry (retailers, wholesalers, farmers, distributors, and restaurants) in Hartford donated over 1.2 million pounds of edible food to Foodshare. Since 2015, the Food Recovery Network chapter at Trinity College in partnership with Chartwells Dining Services has donated over 4,500 pounds of extra prepared food from Mather Dining Hall to McKinney Shelter. Trinity College partners with KNOX to drop off food waste generated on campus, which is converted to compost for use in the community gardens. The CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection awarded a \$10,000 Recycle CT Innovation Grant in July 2017 to Blue Earth Compost to provide a year-long community composting program for Billings Forge residents and restaurants. Because of Hartford's location, the state requires commercial food businesses that generate high volumes of food waste to separate it from the waste stream. Presently, the Marriott Hotel at Hartford's Riverfront uses Blue Earth Compost to transport organic waste to Quantum Biopower.

Economic Impact for Hartford

More donated food stretches the food budgets for low-income city residents. Saving on tipping fees provides an incentive for institutions to participate in composting. Less organic waste to the landfill saves the city money. Centralized composting and digestion create jobs, and processing donations creates a modest number of jobs. Reducing waste will reduce Hartford's carbon footprint and contribute to climate resiliency, as outlined in the City's Climate Action Plan.

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

TARGETS

- Encourage a food recovery pilot with a school or cafeteria to divert surplus food to feed hungry people.
- Host **two public events** to increase residents’ awareness of how to reduce food waste and compost organic waste.
- Compost **280,000 pounds of organic waste** in 2018.
- **Collect data** to determine the extent of institutional and residential food waste in Hartford.

PROPOSALS

What can the City do? The City should recommend that new condos and apartments compost organic waste.

What can community organizations do? Community organizations can: share and promote their successful experiences donating premade food; 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 State can implement and promote the existing waste-to-energy law, identify barriers to food recovery and consider amendments to state regulations to foster food recovery.

What will the Commission do? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will raise awareness about food waste by screening *Just Eat It* with a partner organization; explore co-hosting a Recaptured Food dinner; convene a meeting between leaders in cafeteria food recovery and institutional cafeterias to discuss the barriers, incentives, and successes of food recovery; co-host a meeting with the Hartford Business Improvement District (HBID) and Blue Earth Compost to discuss economies of scale for composting downtown; facilitate relationships between universities/restaurants/schools and food shelters/pantries/soup kitchens to develop a food recovery program; and explore the feasibility of a “Municipal Compost Bin Truckload Sale.”

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 Food Rescue US to serve surplus food to the hungry; hosting a “recaptured food” dinner to raise awareness about food waste; and volunteering and sharing expertise with the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy.

Key Stakeholders

- Blue Earth Compost
- City of Hartford, especially Dept. of Health and Human Services and Hartford Public Schools
- CT Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection
- Foodshare
- KNOX
- Local businesses and restaurants through the Hartford Business Improvement District (HBID)
- Trinity College



In-home compost bin for food scraps
Source: Blue Earth Compost
www.blueearthcompost.com

Synergy

This recommendation synergizes with the recommendation to increase fruit and vegetable consumption because increasing food recovery will result in more food, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables, at food pantries and other locations to alleviate food insecurity. Additionally, this recommendation synergizes with the school gardens recommendation. Schools with existing school gardens could benefit from composting organic waste from their cafeterias to enrich the soils of their gardens.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GARDENS AT 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.

Less than half of public 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: School gardens are an important hands-on learning tool for students as it increases interest and achievement in science and supports nutrition education. 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: There is limited time and staffing for students to go outside for gardening. Many teachers are unfamiliar and/or uncomfortable with gardening due to the lack of curriculum. During the summer, when gardens are most productive, most schools are not in session, except for limited summer school. Schools often do not have staff or parents organized to harvest produce and maintain gardens. There are costs involved in maintaining existing school gardens and more significant costs in establishing new school gardens.

KEY STATISTICS

93%

of studies on school gardens have shown an increase in student performance in science

< 1/2

schools in Hartford currently have gardens (out of roughly 50)

Current Work in Hartford

For several years, the Hartford School Garden Council (HSGC) has been actively involved in creating and maintaining school gardens at Hartford public schools, as well as providing classroom and afterschool enrichment activities. HSGC is a small group of volunteers, one of whom is a commissioner on the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy.

In addition to ongoing involvement at Breakthrough Magnet North, Environmental Studies Mary Hooker Magnet, Moylan Montessori, Noah Webster Microsociety, and Annie Fisher STEM Magnet schools, recent activities include working to expand the garden at Fred D. Wish School, distributing protocols for using vegetables and herbs grown at Hartford school gardens in school cafeterias, and starting curriculum development for the district.

For the 2017-2018 school year, three FoodCorps service members have been placed at six select schools in the Hartford Public School district to facilitate tastings, hands-on cooking and gardening lessons. Each member’s goal is to interact with at least 80 students for at least 10 hours of nutrition education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GARDENS AT HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TARGETS

Develop and implement plans for the sustainability of three school gardens at Hartford schools. School gardens will be considered to be **sustainable** when there is a dedicated team of parent and staff volunteers who will maintain the garden throughout the year and when there is garden-related curriculum used by classroom and/or enrichment teachers.

PROPOSALS

What can the City do? The City should encourage the Hartford School District to hire a district-wide school garden manager through grant funding; support the district’s development of garden-related curriculum for use district-wide and related professional development programs for teachers; and collaborate with the City’s Sustainability Manager to encourage groups of volunteers to aid in maintaining school gardens.

What can community organizations do? Community organizations can partner with Hartford Public Schools to host volunteer days at school gardens and teacher professional development days focused on gardening.

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.

What will the Commission do? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will highlight school gardening activities and promote school nutrition projects.

Key Stakeholders

- FoodCorps
- Hartford Public Schools – Superintendent, administrators, teachers, facilities management staff, family resource coordinators, students
- Hartford School Garden Council
- KNOX
- School PTOs



Second graders at Fred D. Wish School planting in their new garden beds in Fall 2017. Photo Credit: Alice Gold



The gardens at Fred D. Wish School. Photo Credit: Brunella Ibarrola



Second graders at Environmental Studies Mary Hooker Magnet integrate gardens into their curriculum by studying the plant life cycle of carrots they grow. Photo Credit: Travis Clark

Economic Impact for Hartford

Hartford families that participate in school gardens during the summer will be able to supplement their consumption of healthy food at no cost, thereby saving money on food. Over time, school gardens can have a long-term positive effect on the health of Hartford students and their families, leading to decreased healthcare costs.

Community Input

The Commission interviewed youth at Parker Memorial and Arroyo Community Centers during summer programs to ask questions about school food and gardening. We found the majority of students would like to learn how to grow their own food or had some prior knowledge about growing food. Additionally, the majority of students responded that they would eat food they grew at school.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: PROMOTE GROWING NUTRITIOUS FOOD ON MORE CITY-OWNED LAND

Background: Hartford has a long history of growing food through community gardens and urban farming. The first post-WWII community garden was established by KNOX in 1972 in Keney Park. Today, Hartford is home to over 20 community gardens and a few urban farming sites managed by various nonprofits. As a result of poverty, many Hartford residents do not have regular access to affordable and nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables. There are only a few full size grocery stores in Hartford which are not easily accessible to all residents. Therefore, food grown in Hartford helps meet this critical need, while also supporting the local economy.

Why it matters: Urban agriculture in Hartford, including small scale gardening, enables Hartford’s low-income households to stretch their food budgets while increasing their nutrition. Food grown in Hartford also reflects the cultural food preferences of the City’s diverse population. As most community gardens in Hartford are full or have a waiting list, there is clearly a need for more urban farming space, including community gardens, in Hartford.

Barriers: The two largest barriers to the expansion of food production in Hartford are the availability of additional land for urban farming and the resources to develop, organize, and safeguard land that is used for growing food. Currently, the identification, evaluation, and acquisition of future growing sites are largely handled in a non-systematic manner. Also, the City currently favors license agreements over lease agreements for land donated for the purpose of growing food. These license agreements are generally of short duration (five or fewer years) and allow for revocation for future development. This creates funding barriers for community organizations seeking grant money for community gardens or larger scale urban agriculture because prospective funders are skeptical about investing in projects that do not have long-term stability.

KEY STATISTICS	
\$450,000	in food value for Hartford residents from KNOX community gardens and incubator farm
25	acres of land in Hartford used for community gardening and urban farming

Current Work in Hartford

In 2015, the Hartford Planning & Zoning Commission updated the zoning code to permit and protect agriculture in all City zones except Downtown. A number of nonprofits, such as KNOX, Hartford Food System, Summer of Solutions, etc., operate and manage community gardens throughout the City. KNOX manages two acres of community gardens on City-owned property with the anticipation of adding another three acres of gardens through the Hartford Decide\$ project. Hartford Food System’s Grow Hartford program uses a ½ acre of City-owned land to grow food for at least one farmers’ market in Hartford and for the Hartford Mobile Market, which makes many stops throughout the City. The Keney Park Sustainability Project manages a Therapeutic Urban Agriculture Education site with an aquaponics system, four greenhouses, and growing spaces for demonstrations, all on City-owned land. Less than half of public schools in Hartford have and maintain a garden through the support of the Hartford School Garden Council. Community Solutions has made significant progress in identifying growing sites through a review of vacant land within the North Hartford Promise Zone.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION: PROMOTE GROWING NUTRITIOUS FOOD ON MORE CITY-OWNED LAND

TARGETS

- **Preserve** at least 50% of current City-owned growing space for at least the next 5 years.
- Identify and begin the process of creating **5 acres** of new outdoor growing space on City-owned land over the next two years.

PROPOSALS

What can the City do? The City can help identify and assess City-owned land to determine what land is not likely to be sold or developed, and assess, with community partners, the suitability of these properties for growing food. With this inventory of City-owned property, the City can make these lands available through long-term lease agreements to various nonprofits in order to create more community gardens for Hartford residents to grow healthy food. The City can also provide support through tax incentives, programs that promote investment in urban agriculture, including indoor aquaponics, and streamlining communications with the City.

What can community organizations do? As a result of their experience and expertise in urban agriculture, nonprofit partners can assist in identifying various properties for potential gardening and farming.

What can the State do? The State can convene key parties in the State Department of Agriculture, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and potentially their federal counterparts, to discuss resources, funding and how to move forward in supporting urban gardening and farming.

What will the Commission do? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will support the development of food production in Hartford by providing letters of support and various reports to bolster funding applications.

Key Stakeholders

- City of Hartford, especially Planning and Zoning Commission, Hartford Development Services, Hartford Redevelopment Agency
- Community Solutions
- KNOX
- Hartford Food System

Economic Impact for Hartford

Increasing the amount of food grown in Hartford provides additional income for growers who sell their produce at farmers' markets and to restaurants, and saves money for Hartford residents who grow some of their food. On average, community gardening contributes approximately \$1,000 to a household's income indirectly, a 3% boost to the average Hartford household's income (KNOX). Urban agriculture also provides jobs to Hartford residents, which is critical to alleviating poverty. In addition, community gardens increase property values and decrease neighborhood crime while promoting healthy activity.

Synergy

This recommendation synergizes with the recommendation to increase fruit and vegetable consumption in federal and private nutrition programs. Increasing the number of community gardens available in the City for residents to grow their own fruits and vegetables will increase the accessibility of fruits and vegetables and increase consumption.

Conclusions on the 2017 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 stakeholders common to multiple recommendations include: City government, community members, Community Solutions, Foodshare, Hartford Food System, Hartford Public Schools, Hispanic Health Council, and KNOX; 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: bringing together different groups to develop partnerships, working together to host educational activities, and collecting data and input from residents.

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.



Students at Fred D. Wish School planting in their garden bed. Photo credit: Valerie Bryan



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

*Achieving the targets will
create a Hartford where:*

- Locally owned midsize grocery stores are recognized by residents and officials as economic drivers and sources of fresh, healthy, and affordable food;
- SNAP recipients can purchase affordable produce at Hartford farmers' markets;
- Less food is deposited into the waste stream, and is instead used to feed the hungry or composted, following the EPA food reclamation hierarchy;
- Every student has access to a garden at their school and receives gardening education;
- More City-owned land is used for growing fruits and vegetables as community gardens and urban farms.



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

Photo credit: Hartford Food System



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

Photo credit: Foodshare



Before and after pictures of the City-owned lot on Main and Park Street. Hartford Food System currently maintains a garden on this land.

Photo Credit: Hartford Food System

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 15 volunteers and supported by a quarter-time staffperson and a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA member provided by Hartford Food System. There are five issue-based working groups currently active, and they correspond to the recommendations made in this report: Nutrition across the Lifespan, Sustainability, Growing Healthy Food, Selling Healthy Food, and Getting Healthy Food. Another working group of the Commission plans events such as the Community Food Security Awards and World Food Day Community Breakfast to engage the community.

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy completed three evaluations from 2013 to 2015. 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.

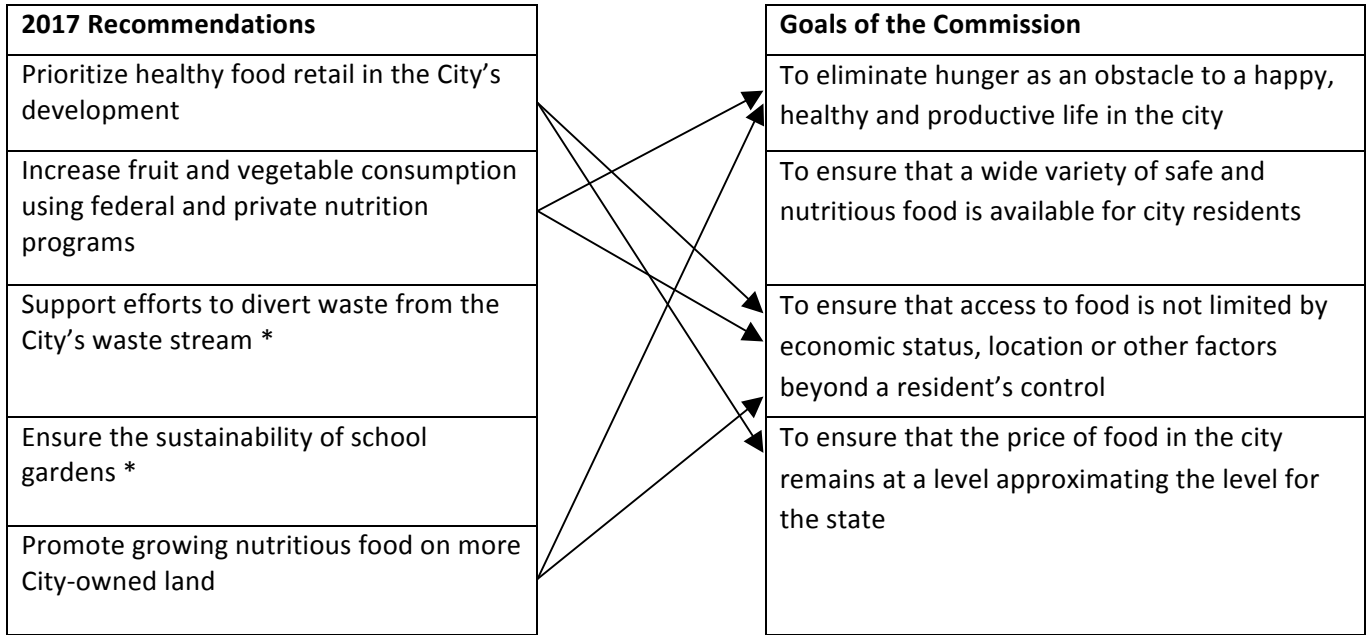
The Commission is working to build its capacity in several ways, including:

- 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;
- Amending by-laws; and
- Expanding its membership to include two youth commissioners.

The Commission and other municipal/local food policy councils (Bridgeport, New Haven, and New London County) are part of the newly developed Food Policy Council of Connecticut Collaborative. The intent is 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 26 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 2017 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.

Since 2016, 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 and state 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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