

**HARTFORD
ADVISORY
COMMISSION
on FOOD POLICY**

annual report and
policy recommendations

2019





CITY OF HARTFORD ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY

c/o Hartford Food System, 190 Wethersfield Ave, Hartford, CT 06114
Phone: 860.296.9325 Fax: 860.296.8326 Email: hartfordfood@hartfordfood.org

2019 Food Policy Commissioners

Valerie Bryan
Hartford Resident

Mary Cockram
Frog Hollow
Consulting

**Angela G.
Colantonio**
Urban Alliance

Valentine Doyle
Hartford Resident

Brunella Ibarrola
Hartford Public
Schools Food and
Child Nutrition
Services

Andrew May
Hartford Resident

Martha Page
(Chair)
Hartford Food
System

Sarah Santora
Foodshare

Sofia Segura-Perez
Hispanic Health
Council

**Danielle Smiley-
Daniel**
Hartford
Department of
Health and Human
Services

Cary Wheaton
Billings Forge
Community Works

October 16, 2019

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 and our next steps to advance these policies. 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.

The Commission continues to emphasize the importance of healthy food retail in the City's development. We promote growing nutritious food on more City-owned land. We are testing out new strategies to increase fruit and vegetable consumption using nutrition programs. We are also working to ensure the sustainability of school gardens. We continue our work to reduce food waste in the City. Further, we are closely watching developments regarding a new grocery store in the North End and the redevelopment of the Hartford Regional Market.

With this Annual Report, we are also examining what new issues are emerging in food policy that may be relevant for Hartford. 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



CITY OF HARTFORD

ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY

2019 Annual Report

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Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy 2019 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 \$33,841, the median household income in Hartford is less than half of that of Hartford County at large. Furthermore, 30.5% of Hartford residents (and more than 40% of Hartford's children) live below the poverty level (ACS 2017 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

As one of the oldest food policy councils in the country, the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy has a long history of advocacy to end hunger. The 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 - \$7,500 annual budget from the City to complete program work such as surveys or community events. It currently operates without this support and instead relies on community organizations and foundations and has done so since 2012.
- 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

- Developed and dissolved working groups as needed to address food policy issues
- 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 currently 11 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.*

Mary Cockram, *Frog Hollow Consulting.*

Angela G. Colantonio, *Urban Alliance.*

Valentine Doyle, *Hartford Resident.*

Brunella Ibarrola, *Hartford Public Schools Food and Child Nutrition Services.*

Andrew May, *Hartford Resident.*

Martha Page (Chair), *Hartford Food System.*

Sarah Santora, *Foodshare.*

Sofia Segura-Perez, *Hispanic Health Council.*

Danielle Smiley-Daniel, *Hartford Department of Health and Human Services.*

Cary Wheaton, *Forge City Works.*

The following people served as commissioners in 2018 and 2019 but have since resigned. We thank them for their service:

Dawn Crayco, *FoodCorps CT.*

Chelsea Morrison, *KNOX, Inc.*

Ron Pitz, *KNOX, Inc.*

Carol Steinke, *City of Hartford Health and Human Services Department.*

There are currently 4 vacant seats on the Commission, for which we are actively seeking volunteers. ***

**** The Commission is made up of Hartford residents, city officials, and representatives of food-related organizations such as Knox and Hartford Food System. We are interested in increasing the number of Hartford residents on the Commission, and values diversity in race, economic status, and gender; particularly, people who have experienced food insecurity. If you are interested in joining the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, reach out to Meg@HartfordFood.org.*

Overview of 2018-2019 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 on the second Wednesday of every month in the Green Room of City Hall from 3:30 to 5:15 pm.



161
Follows
(+24%)



115
Followers
(+42%)



219
Subscribers
(+29%)

To reach community members, the Commission uses Facebook (www.facebook.com/HartfordFoodPolicy), Twitter (@HartFoodPolicy), and a newsletter, all of which grew in audience this year.

Community Food Security Awards



Youth award winner Zania Johnson and Commissioner Brunella Ibarrola. Photo Credit: Danielle Smiley-Daniel



Adult award winner Shana Smith and Commissioner Sofia Segura Pérez. Photo Credit: Danielle Smiley-Daniel

In April 2019, more than 80 people, including Mayor Luke Bronin, gathered at the Lyceum to celebrate the winners of the annual Community Food Security Awards. 23 nominees in the categories of adult individual, youth individual, secular non-profit, faith-based organization, business, and government agency were recognized. Winners in each category were presented with a citation from the mayor and an original Hartford-made painting by local artist and 2017 Community Food Security Awards winner Sonsharae Owens.

Before the ceremony, attendees learned from commissioners and community

partners about important food work happening in Hartford, including KNOX, Hartford WIC program, FoodCorps, and the City of Hartford Office of Sustainability. Attendees enjoyed refreshments from the Kitchen at Billings Forge (now Forge City Works). Mayor Bronin addressed the awardees and attendees, affirming the city's commitment to ending hunger. The ceremony started with a tribute to former Foodshare executive director Gloria McAdam, who passed away in January 2019. Christine O'Rourke, Vice President of Foodshare, spoke about Gloria's legacy. She transformed Foodshare into a large organization striving to meet the needs of greater Hartford. This event was made possible by the **Betty Knox Foundation**, which invests in projects that enhance the city of Hartford. From the awardees to the food, art, and support, the Community Food Security Awards is a celebration of Hartford.

This year's awardees include:

- In the **youth individual** category, FoodCorps service member **Zania Johnson** was this year's winner. Zania has worked with more than 1,200 Hartford students, introducing them to delicious, healthy foods. She plans to become a pediatrician.
- In the **adult individual** category, Hartford Mobile Market director and North End Farmers' Market manager **Shana Smith** was this year's winner.

Shana serves thousands of customers every year and makes sure her customers get the fresh, healthy food they need.

- In the **secular non-profit** category, **Hands on Hartford** was this year's winner. Their food pantry and community meal program serve hundreds of clients, distributing over 200,000 pounds of food in 2018.
- In the **business** category, **the Kitchen at Hartford Public Library** was this year's winner. They train more than 100 people each year for well-paying, sustainable careers in the culinary arts.
- In the new **faith-based** category, **Christ Church Cathedral** was the first ever winner. They serve nearly 10,000 meals annually to Hartford residents in need through the Church Street Eats program.
- In the new **government agency** category, **Hartford Public Schools Food and Child Nutrition Services** was the first ever winner. They work hard to provide fresh, healthy, increasingly local food to Hartford's 21,000 school students every day at no cost.

The Commission chose these awardees from an incredible group of nominees this year, which included **Joey Abad** of the West End Farmers' Market; **Janet Bermudez** of Hands on Hartford; **Andrece Bramwell-Williams**, formerly of Foodshare; community meal maker **Michelle Brisett**; the **City of Hartford Office of Sustainability**; the **Connecticut Department of Agriculture**, **First Presbyterian Church of Hartford**, the **Hartford Yard Goats**; community gardener **Alicia Hendriks**; **Carrie Howe** and the **Night Angels**, **Keney Park Sustainability Project**, the **Muslim Coalition of Connecticut**, **Pond House Café**, **Temple Beth Hillel of South Windsor**, and **Cassie Theriault** of UConn Health.



Community Food Security Awards at the Lyceum.
Photo Credit: Joey Abad



Commissioner Angela Colantonio presents the non-profit award to Hands on Hartford. From left to right: Donna Manocchio, Bianca Almanzar, Wanda Guzman, Janet Bermudez, Angela Colantonio, and Abbie Kelly.

Photo Credit: Danielle Smiley-Daniel

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS



Connecticut apples for sale at the North End Farmers' Market.
Photo Credit: Hartford Food System

In order to address the barriers to healthy and affordable food for many Hartford residents, the Food Policy Commission has been working on the following recommendations identified in 2017 to improve food access, sustainability, and security. Working on these same issues for the last few years has allowed the Commission to delve deeper into these subjects and develop more targeted recommendations this year. 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.

2017-18 Policy Recommendations	2019 Policy Recommendations
Prioritize healthy food retail in the City's development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the redevelopment of the Hartford Regional Market • Support the development of new food retail for Hartford's North End neighborhoods
Increase fruit and vegetable consumption using nutrition programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support use of WIC benefits at Hartford farmers' markets
Support efforts to divert wasted food from the City's waste stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize food waste reduction among Hartford's businesses and institutions • Encourage residential and institutional use of composters
Promote growing nutritious food on more City-owned and public land, including schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a systematic approach to establishing and maintaining Hartford school gardens

PRIORITIZING HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL IN THE CITY'S DEVELOPMENT

WHAT? Lack of full-service food retailers in Hartford has resulted in sales "leakage" from Hartford to suburban supermarkets, with associated losses of economic and health benefits to the City.

WHY? Strategies to develop more high quality food retail would retain residents' food purchasing dollars in Hartford and reap many health and economic benefits for the City.

HOW? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy advised the City to publicly identify healthy food retail as an economic priority. Healthy food retailers, specifically midsize grocery stores, must be recognized as community assets.



Produce section at C-Town Supermarket on Wethersfield Ave.

Photo Credit: C-Town Supermarket

2018-19 ACTIVITIES

The HACFP Healthy Food Retail Working Group has made progress toward this policy recommendation. Mayor Luke Bronin has identified food retail as an economic priority for the City at Commission meetings and events. The Commission continues to promote this as an avenue to increase food security and economic development in Hartford. In 2019, Commissioners worked with other local partners to advance the development of a grocery store in the North End. Meanwhile, Hartford Food System has worked with a C-Town market in Hartford to offer incentives for fruits and vegetables for SNAP customers. A group of Hartford residents has progressed with their planning of a food co-op.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Commission is focusing on two major new developments that would improve healthy food retail in Hartford: supporting the development of a grocery store in North Hartford, and supporting redevelopment of the Hartford Regional Market.

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT REDEVELOPMENT OF HARTFORD REGIONAL MARKET

In 2014, the Commission recommended the development of a Hartford food hub, or a centrally located facility that offers production, aggregation, distribution, and marketing services to small and mid-sized food producers. This recommendation was tied to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's plan to redevelop the state-owned Hartford Regional Market in order to increase its ability to serve more customers and produce more Connecticut grown food. In September 2013, a feasibility study was initiated to explore the viability of renovating the Regional Market. In January 2014, the Phase 1: Orientation and Assessment report was completed by the Consultant engaged by the Department of Agriculture. An additional report was completed in May 2014, which included proposals for program elements, design concepts, construction phasing, and operations pro forma, and other project information. Since that time, state budget limitations meant that only essential maintenance was done, but no real improvements. In 2018, the overall management of the re-development of the Regional Market was assigned to the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) with day-to-day operations provided by the Department of Agriculture. CRDA commissioned a consultant to provide recommendations on the farmers' market expansion; among the conclusions were several essential needs, including:

- Getting caught up on maintenance, such as repaving parking and areas around loading docks; improving drainage to eliminate the problem of standing water; repairing fencing; adding a security station at the entrance gate; and running water lines and power to the farmer's market area.



A rendering of the Hartford Regional Market.
Image Credit: Dusty McMahan (2018)

- Signing long-term leases with existing commercial tenants, making it possible for longtime commercial tenants to expand and obtain financing from lenders.
- Considering an enterprise fund, authority or co-op structure. These structures would allow the market to respond quickly to the needs of tenants.

A revamped and improved Hartford Regional market could be a critically important link in the food system in Hartford, providing fresh, local produce and other foods. A successfully executed project would be very beneficial to Hartford, as it would make the Regional Market

more of a “food destination” and would likely result in a significant increase in food-related employment. Since many of the current jobs at the Regional Market are held by Hartford residents, we believe that a renovated market would enable more city residents to access employment, with economic benefits that would accrue to them and to the City. **We encourage City leadership to do whatever is needed to support the work underway.** The Commission stands ready to help in any way feasible to ensure that this long-delayed work finally gets traction and gets completed. **City leaders should make sure that the Hartford legislative delegation and the Governor are aware of the importance of this work moving forward and urge that funding be secured to continue momentum on the project.**

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW FOOD RETAIL FOR HARTFORD’S NORTH END NEIGHBORHOODS

North Hartford needs access to healthy, high-quality, affordable food. Residents’ health and life expectancy is suffering directly because of the foods that are (or are not) accessible. According to CT Health Foundation, those living in the North Hartford Promise Zone live on average nearly 16 years less than people in West Hartford, just three miles away. Recent studies also show that neighborhood residents experience far higher rates of diet-related health issues. In order to combat this, access to healthy, high-quality foods at affordable prices is needed. In order for residents of North Hartford to access these foods, they often must travel to the surrounding suburbs to shop at their full-service grocery stores, which have the buying power to ensure their produce is less expensive. This exodus means about \$40 million is spent outside the city of Hartford annually. It also demands a huge amount of time and resources from the residents of North Hartford, over 40 percent of whom rely on public transportation.

North Hartford residents deserve access to healthy, quality and affordable foods — we deserve a full service grocery store. The plethora of bodegas and small grocery stores alone cannot combat the food-related diseases plaguing the residents, especially since many of them do not carry fresh produce and those that do charge higher prices, due to their limited buying power. The location of the full-service grocery store should enable residents from multiple neighborhoods to easily accomplish their grocery shopping. There have been sites suggested including the vacant lot behind the Keney Clock Tower, one of the lots opening up for development near the stadium, and perhaps others. An ideal location will ensure that residents, many of whom are elderly and/or struggle with mobility, will only have to take one bus to access the kind of food and choices they deserve. Although the construction of a store may be a short nuisance for site neighbors, it will ultimately enhance the neighborhood while serving the community and providing jobs and fresh food for Hartford families. **The Commission recommends that City leaders take steps to support this project.** Improved access to the foods that families need and want will not be the panacea to all the issues that North Hartford residents face, but it will be a huge step towards the justice and equity they all deserve. City leaders should do everything in their power to address this food justice gap in Hartford.

INCREASING FRUIT & VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION USING NUTRITION PROGRAMS

WHAT? Hartford has several valuable sources of fresh, local produce, such as farmers' markets and the Hartford Mobile Market (HMM), which could be leveraged more fully to increase fresh food access in the city.

WHY? Increasing access to fresh produce improves the health and wellbeing of Hartford residents, but many recipients of nutrition programs are unaware of the City's fresh produce assets.

HOW? The City should encourage the use of farmers' markets and the HMM by sharing the Commission's video and other promotional materials for farmers' markets and the HMM. Community organizations should educate staff and volunteers about these resources for their clients.

2018-19 ACTIVITIES

Building on progress achieved in 2018, the Healthy Food Access Working Group broadly shared the English and Spanish versions of a radio announcement and video promoting the use of SNAP benefits at Hartford farmers' markets. This information was shared through 89.9 WQTQ, La Mega 910, Exitos 105.3, WRTC 89.3 at Trinity College, El Show de Analeh, local WIC offices, United Way, and multiple social media outlets. Additionally, through Urban Alliance's Revitalize initiative, 14 food pantries distributed information about Hartford farmers' markets and a \$5 farmers' market coupons to their clients, which exceeded the group's target for the second year in a row.

Recognizing that the farmers' market managers meet separately, the group has shifted from its other original target related to convening the farmers market managers to exploring transportation barriers and engaging the faith community in gardening efforts. Consequently, a representative of the Transport Hartford initiative at the Center for Latino Progress was engaged in the working group to provide more background information about transportation barriers in the city and group members have learned more about a church that runs the Promise Zone Community Farmers Market and a church youth ministry that started a community garden.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Healthy Food Access Working Group has turned its focus toward WIC benefits. **Possible strategies include: advocating for E-WIC (electronic WIC) to be used at farmers' markets; doubling WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons; raising funds for an additional or expanded mobile market for increased reach.**

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT USE OF WIC BENEFITS AT HARTFORD FARMERS' MARKETS

As the group has expanded its understanding of the use of federal benefits at farmers' markets, promoting the use of WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checkbooks has emerged as a new area of focus. While over 90% of Senior FMNP checkbooks are used at the farmers markets, less than half of the WIC FMNP checkbooks are exchanged for fresh produce. This represents a significant opportunity to support the group's policy recommendation to increase fruit and vegetable consumption using federal nutrition programs.

Therefore, group members are working to leverage existing resources and research to better understand why WIC program participants are not using their FMNP benefits. More specific recommendations will be developed once this information is available.



Produce being sold at the North End Farmers' Market. NEFM accepts and doubles SNAP and WIC benefits.

Photo Credit: Hartford Food System.

SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO DIVERT FOOD FROM THE CITY'S WASTE STREAM

WHAT? It is estimated that 40 million pounds of food is wasted in Hartford every year.

WHY? Reducing and re-directing wasted food can save the City of Hartford money that would otherwise be spent on trucking waste to a landfill. Recovering safe surplus food can alleviate hunger, and composting food waste can provide rich soil that can be used in urban gardens.

HOW? The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will raise awareness of food waste, facilitate conversations for a food recovery program, and convene an informational meeting for restaurants to compost. Community organizations can share data about food waste.



Blue Earth Compost unveiled its food scrap collection truck earlier this year, indicating increased interest in reducing food waste in the Greater Hartford Area.

Photo Credit: Blue Earth Compost

2018-19 ACTIVITIES

In an effort to reduce food waste, Commissioner Val Bryan set up a meeting with State Representative Julio Concepcion in January 2019. Additional attendees included Coryanne Mansell from Center for EcoTechnology (CET), Shubhada Kambli, Hartford Office of Sustainability, and Sam King of Blue Earth Compost. The meeting focused on composting efforts already underway in Hartford, and expanding composting to the Legislative Office Building and possibly other venues.

As a result of this initial meeting, Representative Concepcion set up a meeting on June 11, 2019 with Business for Downtown Hartford (BFDH) focused on waste reduction for the Hartford business community. A number of businesses attended. A panel of presenters included Coryanne Mansell from CET and Caren Harder from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Lisa

McIntyre from the Marriott hosted the presentation. CET and DEEP are very willing to provide free technical assistance to businesses that are interested in pursuing composting, recycling, etc. It would be most helpful if members of the Sustainability Working Group and others from the Advisory Commission on Food Policy worked with BFDH to identify businesses to contact regarding CET's and DEEP's services and encouraged them to follow-up.

Sustainability working group member and Food Policy Commissioner Mary Cockram supported Hartford Food System's re-submission of a \$25,000 grant to work with City senior centers to understand and decrease food waste. The project will save money through right-sizing what is cooked and compare the nutrient content of food that is served with food that is eaten. The one-year grant will start in October 2019 and uses the technical assistance of a local social enterprise, Phood.

Sustainability working group member and Food Policy Commissioner Andrew May worked to make low-cost composters available to city residents. At the Knox Harvest Fair in November 2018, a composter was raffled off as a promotional teaser. In coordination with the Office of Sustainability, city residents were able to sign up for and pick up free composters during fall 2019.

Sustainability working group members coordinated with Trinity's Joe Barber to restart weekly food recovery runs from the Bistro Café in fall 2018. Students have taken ownership to deliver food to Immaculate Conception shelter. When working group members realized that a new local branch of Food Rescue USA had been formed in West Hartford, they reached out to its organizer, Kathy Beckwith, to coordinate. She has been attending WG meetings and the working group has done some initial surveying of shelters to understand their interest in recovered food and capacity to accept it. In the first four months of 2019, the new local chapter delivered 20,000 meals to Hartford shelters.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

This year, the Sustainability Working Group made a new partnership with the new branch of Food Rescue US which formed in West Hartford in early 2019.

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: INCENTIVIZE FOOD WASTE REDUCTION AMONG HARTFORD'S BUSINESSES AND INSTITUTIONS

The Commission will examine ways to incentivize reducing food waste (both through food recovery and composting) in Hartford businesses, focusing on the downtown, and in other institutions, particularly senior centers, where Hartford Food System will be examining food waste reduction as part of an EPA grant.

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ENCOURAGE RESIDENTIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL COMPOSTING

The Commission will promote the use of residential composters, including through giveaways and sales where possible. The Commission will continue to work with Trinity College on their food recovery and composting efforts.



Volunteers with Food Rescue US pick up donated food from Trader Joe's in West Hartford which would have otherwise been thrown out.

Photo Credit: Food Rescue US

PROMOTING GROWING NUTRITIOUS FOOD ON MORE CITY-OWNED AND PUBLIC LAND, INCLUDING SCHOOLS

WHAT? Less than half of public schools in Hartford have active gardens. The Hartford School Garden Council (HSGC) supports schools in the installation and maintenance of gardens.

WHY? School gardens are an important hands-on learning tool for students as it increases interest and achievement in science and supports nutrition education.

HOW? A districtwide school garden manager will help build garden-based curriculum and garden maintenance at school gardens.

2018-19 ACTIVITIES

Commissioners worked with the Hartford School Garden Council and administrators from Hartford Public Schools (HPS) to develop a grant-funded School Garden Coordinator position to develop educational programming at the following Hartford schools: Noah Webster MicroSociety Magnet, Annie Fisher STEM Magnet, Fred D. Wish, Breakthrough North Magnet and Rawson STEAM. The position will also help to engage parents, manage the gardens during the summer with support from volunteers; and collaborate with FoodCorps servicemembers and representatives from community groups. Over time other Hartford schools that have gardens may be selected to be a part of the School Garden Coordinator's garden-based learning program.

Although many students, particularly at Wish and

Breakthrough North Magnet, were involved in gardening activities during the 2018-2019 school year, the Commission did not achieve its target of having a dedicated team of parent and staff volunteers to maintain the school gardens throughout the year and having garden-related curriculum used by classroom and/or enrichment teachers. However, with the help of the School Garden Coordinator, the likelihood of achieving this is much greater for the five selected schools.



Second graders at Mary Hooker Environmental Studies Magnet School study the plant life cycle with carrots they grew.

Photo Credit: Travis Clark

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

There has been no systematic approach to establishing gardens at Hartford schools. The Commission is interested in ways to make the city's school gardens sustainable for years to come and envisions **a school garden in every school in Hartford in the future.**

2019 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: DEVELOP A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING HARTFORD SCHOOL GARDENS

Some gardens are not well utilized and have not involved significant numbers of students in garden activities and learning. The Commission and the Hartford School Garden Council will identify schools that want to increase student involvement in gardens, and then work with staff or community organizations to involve students in garden-based learning, and to involve staff, parents and volunteers in garden maintenance. **The Commission will also develop recommendations for establishing and maintaining Hartford school gardens.** The Commission is also **recommending the School Garden Coordinator position become full-time** and is seeking support for the position. The Hartford School Garden Council and Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will continue to publicize the Hartford school gardens.

FOOD POLICY FOR 2020 AND BEYOND

Emerging Issues

The Commission is building on progress from the 2017-18 policy recommendations this year, but is also interested in the following issues:

- Engaging healthcare institutions in food policy (such as: educating doctors about nutrition and food insecurity; leveraging the Community Health Needs Assessment to study food access issues)
- Engaging religious institutions to address food insecurity (such as: growing food on church property; doing outreach for SNAP and other federal nutrition programs at synagogues and mosques, etc.)
- Addressing transportation as a barrier to food access (such as: examining bus routes and the feasibility of using public transit to buy groceries; examining public transit cost as a barrier to food access)
- Food system careers and career-readiness: to ensure safe, secure, supportive jobs for Hartford residents
- Incorporating nutrition education into preschool curriculum

The Commission will further examine these issues and work with community residents to learn the community's priorities regarding food access and sustainability in Hartford.

Developing a Strategy to Promote Food Policy During the 2020 Connecticut Legislative Session

The Commission is dedicated to advocating for healthy, sustainable food policy at the city and state level, and will work next year to promote food policy during the 2020 Connecticut Legislative Session. This strategy will include:

- Working with other city commissions and local partners to host trainings about legislative advocacy
- Tracking bills introduced that are related to food and farms
- Working with the Mayor's office to create shared policy agendas
- Supporting bills using public testimony, letters to Hartford legislators, and media if appropriate
- Coordinate with other food policy councils in the state to identify shared policy goals
- Identifying a policy sub-committee of the Commission to work on the items described above

Conclusions

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy uses a combination of public awareness, advising city officials, convening local stakeholders, and monitoring state and federal policy change in order to ensure greater food access in Hartford. The policy recommendations outlined above are the result of this year's collaborations with numerous residents and community organizations. By continuing to work on these issues and exploring the emerging issues outlined above, the Commission hopes to achieve a Hartford with bountiful, affordable, fresh food for all residents; school garden education for all Hartford children; and reduced food waste for a healthier climate.

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy is also working closely with statewide efforts to develop a statewide food action plan, which is being led by the Connecticut Food System Alliance. This plan will include a statewide vision for food access and food grown in Connecticut and represents a public-private partnership to reduce hunger and enhance sustainability in our state. This plan will center food justice, meaning that the people most likely to be harmed by our current food and farm system (people of color, children, urban residents, and more) are empowered to shape how we grow, buy, and eat food in Connecticut.

If you would like to be involved with the Commission's efforts to reduce hunger and promote sustainability, please volunteer with the Commission by contacting Meg@HartfordFood.org.

Acknowledgements

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy would like to thank the following individuals for their services to the Commission and their contributions to this report:

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HARTFORD 
FOOD SYSTEM

Hartford Food System
190 Wethersfield Ave.
Hartford, CT 06114