

Food Policy Councils

Food Policy Councils Promote Availability of Food for Persons in Need

In many low-income communities, access to fresh, affordable and nutritious food is limited for reasons such as unemployment and transportation. Typically, in these communities there is not an easily accessible full service grocery store that sells fresh foods. Several fast food restaurants and corner markets are usually found in these communities. A growing strategy that is being used by some of these communities to address issues related to the lack of access to nutritious food is the creation of Food Policy Councils.

History of Food Policy Councils

The first Food Policy Council (FPC) in the United States began about 30 years ago in Knoxville, Tennessee. During the past ten years, there has been a significant growth in the number of FPCs, with more than a hundred Food Policy Councils nationwide. The Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council monitors and evaluates the performance of Knoxville's food system in terms of costs, availability, accessibility and implications for public health/economic efficiency, public awareness of food issues, improvement of food supply and distribution network in Knoxville. Five of the 11 members of the Knoxville-Knox County FPS are appointed by the City Mayor and six by the County Mayor.

<http://www.ci.knoxville.tn.us/boards/food.asp>

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) bring together people from diverse backgrounds who are involved in the local food system. FPC members are typically involved in growing, distribution and production of food products. FPCs are varied in their mission and activities but are usually established by state or local governments or through grassroots efforts by concerned citizens. Several federal, state and local agencies/departments are responsible for governing and monitoring how food system operates.

Food Policy Councils are becoming more common as cities and states are becoming more concerned about their food systems. Food Policy Councils are innovative collaborations between citizens and government officials' to explore ways to improve local food systems. Many of the collaborative are designed to improve access and affordability to healthy foods. The primary goal of many Food Policy Councils is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas and recommendations for improvement through public policy changes.

Other Localities

Mark Winnie served as consultant and on-site trainer for the establishment of the Nashville Food Policy Council. Mr. Winnie is the co-founder of the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, an advisory body to serve as Hartford's "food advocate." The Commission works to insure citizens have access to fresh, affordable and nutritious food. It studies the availability and quality of food in Hartford and monitors the city's food distribution system. The Commission is staffed by a local non-profit that serves as food advocates and works to address the causes of hunger and poor nutrition as well as improve food security in the community. <http://www.hartford.gov/government/FoodCommission/default.htm>

Mr. Winnie currently serves on the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Food Policy Council Santa, which is dedicated to creating and maintaining a regional food system to provide safe and nutritious food at reasonable prices to all residents, particularly those in need. Development of a FPC for Santa Fe began in 2006, when the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported that New Mexico was the most food insecure state in the U. S. <http://www.santafefoodpolicy.org/>

Food Policy Councils provide a range of advantages for the development of effective food delivery systems: forums for discussing food issues; encourage coordination between sectors in the food system; evaluate or influence policy; and start or support programs that address local needs. In addition, FPC's identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state systems by engaging in research that supports policy recommendations.



Nashville Food Policy Council

In 2011, The Metropolitan Council passed a Resolution (RS-2011-1524) requesting the Metropolitan Board of Health to create a Food Policy Council to implement a campaign to facilitate healthy eating and active living.

The Nashville Food Policy Council (NFPC) has been formed to work interdependently with the Mayor's Office and Metropolitan Government of Nashville to strengthen and align efforts to create food systems change in Middle Tennessee. The mission of NFPC "is to increase the availability of and access to healthy affordable food and encourage its use by engaging and educating the community to increase awareness on issues related to food security. In addition,

the NFPC seeks to create strategic partnerships with key stakeholders to specifically address the availability, access and appropriate use of healthy and affordable food and influencing policy and regulations that address issues related to food security and that promote a more sustainable food system”.

The NFPC was instrumental in providing information to the Metro Council during its deliberation on Urban Chicken legislation that ultimately passed. In addition, the NFPC has conducted research and interviews related to Community Garden initiatives that support intergenerational gardening in schools and the community. Intergenerational gardening brings together seniors and school age students to teach and learn gardening skills.

Additional information Food Policy Councils is available from these web sites:

<http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/government.html>

<http://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/briefingpapers/foodcouncils.htm>

For more information, please contact Julius Witherspoon, Planning Analyst, at 615-880-2532, or julius.witherspoon@nashville.gov

Additional information about Economic Opportunity is available in the annual Community Needs Evaluations completed by Metropolitan Social Services-Planning & Coordination:
<http://www.nashville.gov/sservices/planningcoordination/commmunityneeds.asp>

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<http://www.nashville.gov/sservices/planningcoordination/index.asp>