

Local Food System

1. Overview

Food systems are drawing the attention of planners and policy makers from around the U.S. The traditional focus of planners on public resources has seldom focused on the private nature of food markets, however, the acknowledgement of the public health, economic, and environmental effects of food systems is on the cutting edge of modern planning to create more healthy and economically sustainable communities.

Consider the movement away from local markets in the past 100 years to giant conglomerates and the vertical integration of producers who ship food from long distances to a more centralized big box store. Questions emerge about transportation costs, environmental impacts, effects on vulnerable populations and the financial independence and security of populations being able to fend for themselves.

This chapter documents the existing local food system in Winnebago County. Policy guidance is included in the policy document and is intended to promote a stronger, more economically vital and self-reliant system of providing locally grown products for the population.

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2. Non-Farm Food Production

The growing average age of the American farmer along with the consolidation of farms and the emergence of large commercial farms, raises questions about the future of locally available foods and the biodiversity of crops produced. Non-farm food production provides valuable opportunities for communities to supplement food supplies and lower costs for the delivery and distribution of products. Local regulations, however, can create impediments to non-farm food production. Careful consideration of the public impacts of certain regulations is needed to address benefits and costs of public policy decisions.

The following is a list of non-farm food production ideas for communities along with considerations for supportive policies for implementation:

- **Gardens.** Support local gardening with Master Gardener lectures, programs and training. Encourage home composting to reduce food wastes and disposal costs. Foster neighborhood interaction, the sharing of diverse, locally grown foods.
- **Bee Keeping.** Work with local bee-keepers on the protection of bee keeping sites and opportunities for growth. Introduce local beekeepers to farm markets.
- **Poultry.** Identify opportunities for land use regulations that support small scale poultry production. Hold public workshops to identify tolerances for land use adjacencies and conditions required for permitting.
- **Community Agriculture.** Look for suburban locations for farmstead preservation where a co-op may exist, providing space for gardening and farm enthusiasts to interact and produce convenient produce stands.
- **Edible Landscapes.** Thousand are spent each year on public open space landscaping and private landscaping in high employment areas. Fruit trees and other decorative, food producing

plants can be used in the landscape with little maintenance. The evolution of new cultivars has provided a new opportunity for low maintenance or maintenance free plant types that offer food for the local population.

3. Community Gardens

Vacant, underutilized, or temporarily undeveloped lands can offer great opportunities for community gardens. Synergistic land use relationships such as a corporate headquarters with a garden and/or growing structures that offers produce to workers or the temporary donation of land on a medical or senior housing campus can create a win-win situation for partners.

There are many prospective user groups that can be engaged to create community gardens from local gardening or master gardener clubs, to ethnic and culturally diverse groups to school programs and business interest such as a local seed supplier. New opportunities for community gardens can emerge from community workshops or lectures by locally successful organizers of existing gardens.

Beneficial community gardens can be all sizes and configurations from larger suburban plots to small square foot urban gardening. Table 6-1 lists the community gardens that operated in 2015.

The Sherman Road Community Garden was developed by a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental partners.

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides the land for gardening.
- Winnebago County UW-Extension provides leadership for garden registration, educational programs, and gardener support. Extension is also responsible for general garden maintenance.
- ADVOCAP supports to the garden committee, garden promotion, and provides gardener support.
- Winnebago County Master Gardeners provides educational programs and demonstration garden plots.
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has provided design and layout assistance of the community garden that address erosion control, parking, and garden access.
- Winnebago County Land & Water Conservation Department has provided design and layout assistance of the community garden and garden mapping and equipment.
- Winnebago County Parks Department has provided equipment used to install stakes and signs and equipment to deliver water.

Table 6-1. Community Gardens: 2015

Name	Location
Amos and Carol Ihde Garden	7834 State Road 76 (Neenah)
Casa ESTHER Church Garden	107 S Webster Avenue (Omro)
Clearwater Community Garden	Marathon Avenue (Neenah)
Goodwill Garden	1800 Appleton Road (Menasha)
Mosaic Garden	1478 Midway Road (Menasha)
Ron and Linda Wacholtz	
Sherman Road Community Garden	Sherman Road (Oshkosh)
Third Street Gardens (UW Oshkosh)	UW Oshkosh campus (Oshkosh)
UW-Fox Garden	1478 Midway Road (Menasha)

4. Farm Markets

The number of farm markets in the United States continues to grow, reports USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), reaching a total of 4,685 in August 2008. Local farm markets provide a great opportunity for local growers to converge and offer a greater diversity and quantity of products to the public. The public benefits from the social aspects of farm markets as a community event, often combined with local music, arts and instructive presentations.

As the popularity of farm markets grow, attention must be given to the logistics of these markets to create rewarding environments for both the consumer and producer. Ideas such as limiting the number of green bean sellers can affect the overall diversity of the market while allowing the seller to sell enough products for their mobilization of goods to pay off. Additional conveniences such as truck-farmer provisions where producers can simply park and open their tailgate, takes the work out of setting up and taking down tables. Lastly, farm markets can grow exponentially in popularity with effective programming and the integration of music, sales or coupon events, promotions and synergistic markets such as arts and crafts.

There were nine farm markets operating in Winnebago County in 2015 (Table 6-2).

Table 6-2. Farm Markets: 2015

Name	Location	Description
Menasha Farm Fresh Market	Main Street (Menasha Marina)	Thursday – 2:00 to 6:00 pm
Neenah Farmers Market – Saturday	Shattuck Park (Neenah)	Saturday – 8:00 am to noon
Neenah Farmers Market – Wednesday	Shattuck Park (Neenah)	Wednesday – 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Downtown Farmers Market	Opera House Square Park (Oshkosh)	Wednesday – 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Festival Foods Farmers Market	2415 Westowne Avenue (Oshkosh)	Tuesday – 7:00 am to noon
Omro Farmers Market	Main Street (Omro)	Friday – 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Oshkosh Farmers Market	Main Street (Oshkosh)	Saturday – 8:00 am to 12:30 pm
Sawyer Street Market	317 N Sawyer Street (Oshkosh)	Friday – noon to 6:30 pm and Sunday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Town of Menasha Farmers Market	1500 W American Drive (T. of Menasha)	Every other Saturday – 8 am to noon

5. Roadside Stands

Throughout the county there are numerous roadside stands from April through October. Some operators establish a fixed location with regular hours while others operate intermittently from various locations, such as from the back of a pickup truck parked in a parking lot or on a vacant parcel of land.

6. Food Stores

Local food stores can also contribute to local food systems by working with local as well as national producers and considering convenience to all segments of the population. The recent trends of big box food stores moving to suburban locations can leave poorer areas of metropolitan areas with fewer choices, and often higher priced and less nutritious choices.

Land use planning that encourages urban infill over suburban sprawl can keep commercial nodes backfilled when stores go dark, promoting dense compact development patterns that provide good centralized locations for food stores.

Additional models in food stores are emerging with smaller convenience sized prototypes in urban centers to the public market concept whereby centralized stores are offered an opportunity to lease smaller booth type configurations with other local food stores, offering the consumer an Asian-style dense market with a large variety of choices in both indoor and outdoor locations.

Table 6-3. Food Stores: 2015

Name	Location	Description
Pick 'n Save	1900 Jackson Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Pick 'n Save	828 Fox Point Plaza (Neenah)	Supermarket
Pick 'n Save	1940 S. Koller Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Piggly Wiggly	525 E Murdock Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Piggly Wiggly	1151 Midway Road (Menasha)	Supermarket
Piggly Wiggly	142 Alder Avenue (Omro)	Supermarket
Copp's	1539 S Commercial Street (Neenah)	Supermarket
Bee's Oriental Foods Market	1120 N Main Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
Carlson Enterprises	105 Washington Avenue (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Lor Family Store	425 Ohio Street (Oshkosh)	
La Avendia	817 Oregon Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
Murdock Oriental Store	113 W Murdock Avenue (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
Zwiegl's Food Store	1529 Knapp Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Lakeshore Mart	7893 S US Highway 45	Convenience store
Oshkosh Oriental Food	1001 N Main Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
McKnight & Carlson	448 N Main Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store
Nayarit Market Mexico	258 W 8th Avenue (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
Aldi	1995 S Koeller Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Open Pantry Food Mart	2124 W 9th Avenue (Oshkosh)	Convenience store
Collins Produce Market	125 County Road CB (Neenah)	
Wal-Mart Supercenter	351 S Washburn Street (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Auntie's Deli	4018 Fairview Road (Neenah)	Specialty food store – ethnic foods
Festival Foods	2415 Westowne Avenue (Oshkosh)	Supermarket
Festival Foods	647 S Green Bay Road (Neenah)	Supermarket
PDQ (Store 909)	1065 Racine Road (Menasha)	Convenience store
Sarah Lee Bakery Outlet	2245 State Road 44 (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
Tamara's	1529 Oregon Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
Manderfield's Home Bakery	811 Plank Road (Menasha)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
Great Harvest Bakery	116 W Wisconsin Avenue (Neenah)	Specialty food store – retail bakery

continued

Table 6-3. Food Stores: 2015 - continued

Name	Location	Description
Schoenberger's Pastry Shop	1529 Oregon Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
SJW Bakeries	374 S Koeller Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
La Sure's Cakes & Café	1570 Ripon Lane (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – retail bakery
Oaks Chocolates	1206 Oregon Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – candy
Hughes Home Maid Chocolate Shop	1823 Doty Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – candy
Fine Country Gourmet	417 N Main Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – gourmet food
Nutrition Discount Center	463 N Main Street (Oshkosh)	Specialty food store – health and diet foods

Key Terms in This Chapter

Convenience store – A retail store that offers a limited range of foods often with non-food product lines.

Supermarket – A retail food store that offer a full range of foods.

Specialty food store – A retail food store that specializes in a single food category, including bakery, ethnic food, meat, produce, gourmet food, candy, and soon.

7. Emergency Food Resources

According to the American Planning Association's "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning" published in 2007, hunger and food insecurity are prevalent in the United States. APA's Policy Guide references the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (2006) report that indicates in 2005, 11 percent of all U.S. households were "food insecure" because of a lack of sufficient food.

Centralization of food producers, transport costs and convenience in local markets may exacerbate the problem, making communities more and more reliant on outside sources. In order to address this growing threat to local sustainability and self-sufficiency, consideration may be given to the realm of opportunities listed in this chapter for local food production, public education on topics such as food preservation, canning techniques and local resources such as community gardens.

Assessing a region's local food needs during a crisis such as a major natural disaster, terrorist attack, or disease can assist planners and policy makers in understanding what emergency food resources may be needed in a calamity, but may also create less reliance on outside food sources through the implementation of various local food systems planning objectives.

Table 6-4 lists the community meal centers in the county along with food pantries and food banks. (See the inset box for definitions of each.) The vast majority of these are operated by faith-based organizations that are typically open during certain times during the week. A significant number of these organizations are reporting record number of people requiring assistance, including the proportion of families with children. These are, for the most part, located in more urban areas of the county, which could potentially create an under-served rural population.

Key Terms

Community meal center – A place where prepared meals are offered to the hungry on a regular basis and generally at no cost. Community meal centers are often operated by church groups or other local community organizations. Also known as “soup kitchens.”

Food bank – A nonprofit organization that collects food from a variety of sources and distributes it to food pantries, community meal centers, homeless shelters, and similar organizations that exist to feed low-income residents in the community. Food is generally donated to a food bank by for-profit growers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers who in the normal course of business have excess food that they cannot sell.

Food pantry – A place where food is offered to low-income residents for free or a low cost. Food pantries are often operated by church groups or other local community organizations.

In addition to the resources listed, each of the local school districts provide free or low-cost meals to students who qualify based on their family income.

Table 6-4. Emergency Food Resources: 2015

Name	Location	Description
Second Harvest Food Bank	1436 Progress Lane (Omro)	Food bank
Evangel Worship Center	357 Broad Street (Menasha)	Food pantry
Father Carr's Food Bank	1965 Oshkosh Avenue (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
His Church-World Outreach Center	2704 Jackson Street (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
Lutheran Pantry (Zion, Peace, & First English Lutheran Churches)	714 Division Street (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
Omro Community Food Pantry	310 N Webster Avenue (Omro)	Food pantry
Oshkosh Area Community Pantry	2551 Jackson Street (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
Salvation Army/ADVOCAP Commodities	417 Algoma (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
St. Jude the Apostle People's Pantry	216 W South Park (Oshkosh)	Food pantry
St. Joseph Food Program	1465A Opportunity Way (Menasha)	Food pantry
St. Thomas Church, Double Portion Soup Kitchen and Food Pantry	226 Washington Street (Menasha)	Food pantry and community meal center
ADVOCAP	Menasha, Neenah, Omro, Oshkosh, Pickett and Winneconne	Community meal center
Father Carr's Place	1965 Oshkosh Avenue (Oshkosh)	Community meal center
Meals-on-Wheels	36 Broad Street (Oshkosh)	Meal delivery
Meals-on-Wheels	116 Main Street (Menasha)	Meal delivery
Salvation Army	417 Algoma Blvd (Oshkosh)	Community meal center
Trinity Episcopal	311 Division Street (Oshkosh)	Community meal center

8. Farm to School Activities

Most of the public school districts serving Winnebago County participate in one or more Farm to School activity (Table 6-5). They could be procuring their food locally, engaging in nutritional and agricultural activities, participating in on site school gardens, and/or taking part in engagement activities such as taste tests, farm field trips or farm to school community events.

Table 6-5. Farm to School Activities: 2015

School District	Community Event	Engagement Activity	Local Food Procurement	Nutrition - Agriculture Educational Activities	School Garden
Berlin Area School District	-	-	-	-	-
Menasha School District	-	Yes	Yes	-	-
Neenah School District	-	Yes	Yes	-	-
New London School District	-	-	Yes	-	-
Omro School District	-	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Oshkosh Area School District	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Ripon Area School District	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes
Weyauwega-Fremont School District	-	-	-	-	-
Winneconne Community School District	-	Yes	Yes	-	-

Source: 1. USDA Farm to School Census (2011-2012), 2. Wisconsin Farm to School Survey (2011-2012), 3. AmeriCorps Farm to School Program (2012-2013)
Data compiled by Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

9. Connecting Farmers to Buyers and Sellers

The Northeast Wisconsin Food Hub is a virtual marketplace that allows institutions such as schools, hospitals and small groceries and local farmers access to one another. The Food Hub is a program coordinated by Goodwill Grows at Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin. Collaborators include: re:TH!NK, Live54218 and all Food Hub program participants. The Food Hub serves buyers and sellers of local food in and around Oshkosh, Appleton and Green Bay.