

Food System Plan Presentation

Whatcom County Council 4/11/23

Presentation Outline

- I. Background: Food System Committee and Plan
- II. How this plan was made
- III. Plan Content
- IV. Questions/Discussion

Background

Food System Refresher

A network of people and activities connecting food production, food processing, distribution, consumption, food waste management, as well as all the associated inputs, influences, and policies.



Food System Committee

9-member committee, representing 9 separate sectors from across

Whatcom County tasked with:

- Drafting, implementing, providing oversight for, and regularly updating a countywide food system plan
- Connecting with community partners and stakeholders
- Identifying and prioritizing action items
- Making recommendations to County Council



Food System Plan

“A set of interconnected, forward-thinking activities that strengthen a community and regional food system through the creation and implementation of plans and policies” - American Planning Association

A food system plan can:

- Foster profitable agriculture and food business,
- Support entrepreneurs in fishing and agriculture,
- Improve access to healthy food,
- Protect soil and water for future generations,
- Reduce food waste,
- Celebrate diversity of food and agriculture in our community.

Why Whatcom County Needs a Food System Plan

- People are having a harder time affording food.
- Fewer people are choosing farming as a career.
- Severe weather events driven by climate change like flooding, drought, and fires are impacting our ability to grow and harvest food.
- Food system workers are subjected to more unhealthy air and higher working temperatures.
- Demand for locally-produced food is high, yet there are barriers for producers to enter local markets.

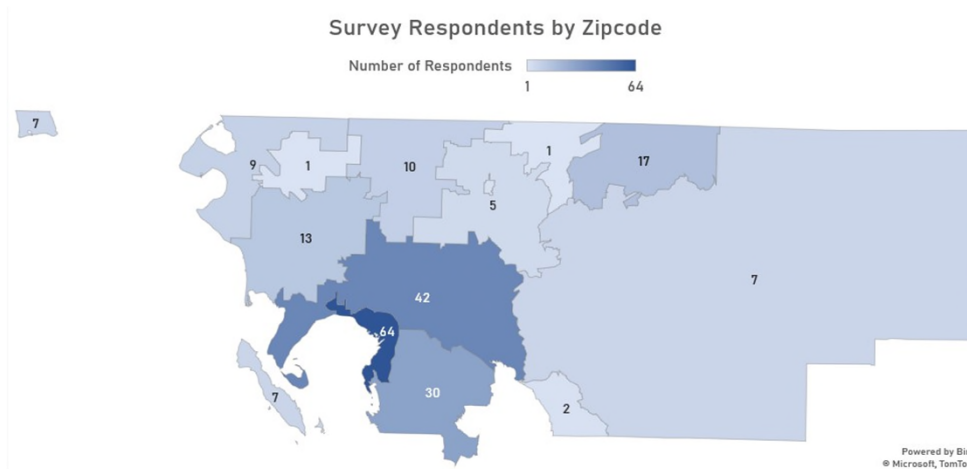


How this plan was made

Food System Plan Timeline



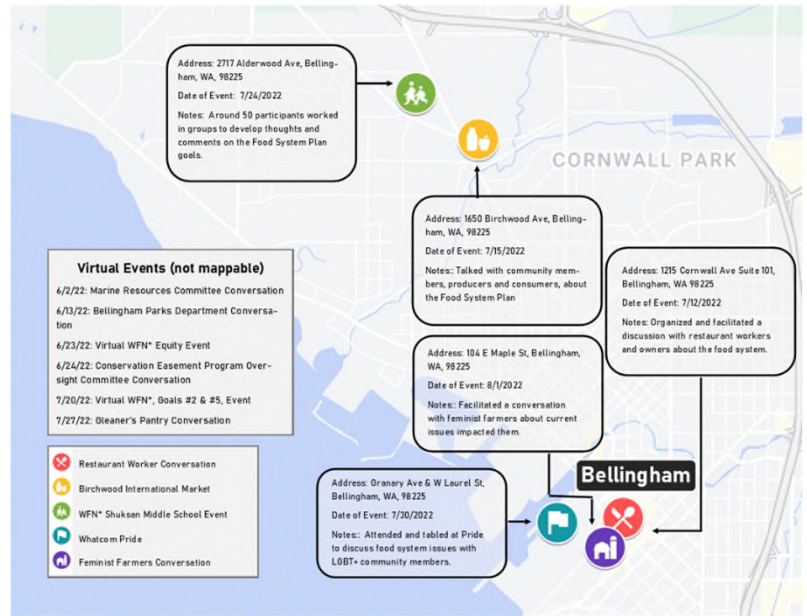
Community Engagement



First Survey responses by zip code

Community Engagement (continued)

Summer 2022 events



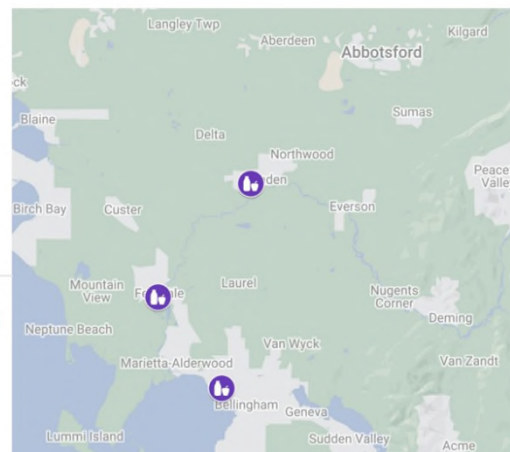
Community Engagement (continued)

Winter 2023 events

In-person (right)

3 virtual events

- Events**
- Northwest Farm to Table Trade Meeting 2/7 at BTC
 - Food System Committee Open House 2/13 at Pioneer Pavilion
 - Whatcom Farm Expo 3/4 at Northwest WA Fairgrounds
- Locations of where the Food System Committee is sharing the Food System Plan**



Synthesizing and Developing The Plan



Plan Content

- **Goals** state the desired outcomes and future vision for Whatcom County's food system.
- **Objectives** are more specific, measurable strategies to guide local work to reach each goal. Each goal has multiple objectives that support it.
- **Actions** are the specific policies, programs, and initiatives to meet the objectives.

Goal 1: Cultivate equity and justice in our food system

Objective 1: Increase health, wealth and leadership with BIPOC and under-represented communities across our food system.

Objective 2: Strengthen support for immigrants to Whatcom County.

Objective 3: Empower food system workers' to lead healthy and safe lives

Goal 2: Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Objective 1: Protect agricultural land in Whatcom County and increase the acreage used for local and regenerative food production.

Objective 2: Improve the health of our county's soils.

Objective 3: Conserve water and support water efficiency projects and policies.

Objective 4: Ensure water quality through habitat restoration and improved agricultural practices.

Objective 5: Protect and restore natural ecosystems and wildlife corridors that community members rely on for food provision.

Goal 3: Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy

Objective 1: Increase the supply of local, sustainable food produced in Whatcom County.

Objective 2: Remove barriers to and build consumer demand for locally- produced agricultural products and facilitate markets for local producers and food businesses.

Objective 3: Expand workforce development and readiness to prepare community members for successful food system employment.

Objective 4: Support new and beginning farmers in acquiring farmland and support effective transition of farmland to the next generation of farmers.

Objective 5: Invest in local and cooperative ownership of food system businesses.

Goal 4: Ensure access to healthy food for all

Objective 1: Build and design our communities to ensure food access and eliminate food deserts.

Objective 2: Create and promote opportunities for people to grow, prepare, and share their own food.

Objective 3: Invest in programs that make healthy food more affordable.

Objective 4: Scale up food recovery efforts in Whatcom County.

Goal 5: Mitigate emissions from food system activities and adapt our food system to a changing climate.

Objective 1: Reduce GHG emissions from farming and food system activities.

Objective 2: Reduce waste in our food system and specifically reduce food waste by 50%.

Objective 3: Adapt our agricultural production systems and practices to a changing climate.

Objective 4: Protect food system workers during extreme weather events.

Objective 5: Fortify our food system against - and support recovery after - climate disruptions.

Actions Are Organized Into Five Key Categories



Policy Solutions:

These are policies (ordinances, resolutions, taxes, economic development incentive, etc.) that the County could enact to strengthen the food system.



Community Collaborations:

These are the potential innovative partnerships between community food system partners to advocate for the local food system.



County Leadership:

These are opportunities for Whatcom County to lead by example within their own operations and internal policies.



Infrastructure:

These are investments in the physical assets of the local food system in the region, which includes the facilities and transportation networks needed to move food from farm to fork.

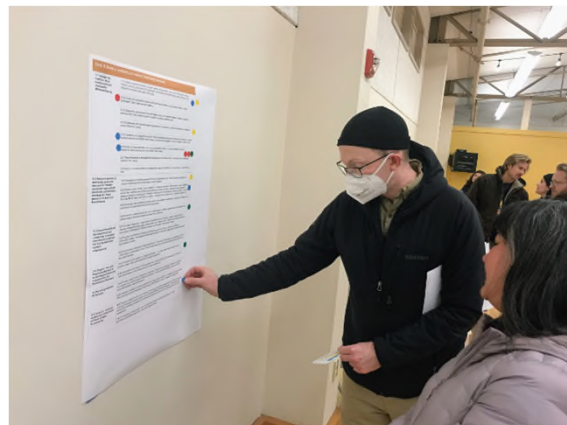


Education and Programming:

These are the community education programs about the food system that build awareness and knowledge amongst residents. Food system programs provide a variety of services to County residents - from cooking classes to composting initiatives.

Cream of the Crop Actions

- Asked the community to choose actions that were feasible and most important
- Created a list of 12 actions that highlight some of the diversity and caliber of the actions in the plan



Cream of the Crop

1.1.2 To improve access to financial tools for food systems development (i.e., access to capital, low interest loans, microloans, grant programs, and other funding opportunities), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities



5.4.3 Support local, essential farm workers' advocacy for improvements in protections from extreme weather conditions at the state level.



Cream of the Crop

2.1.5 Support land trusts and cooperative projects to develop permanently affordable housing communities adjacent to farmland that provide farmland access for the residents for commercial and non-commercial local food production.



4.2.2 Increase support for community educational programs for gardening, seed banking, cooking, and food preservation. Focus efforts on Low-Income/Low-Access areas in the county.



Cream of the Crop

1.1.1 To remove barriers to engagement in local food programs (i.e., CSAs, farmers markets, Market Match, community gardening, etc.), create funding, partnership, and collaboration opportunities for organizations led by and for BIPOC and other socially disadvantaged communities



3.1.6 Analyze County permitting and zoning processes related to meat processing to remove barriers for small-scale butchers and WSDA meat cutters.



Cream of the Crop

4.3.1 Adequately fund the Whatcom County food bank network to meet the dramatic increase in food insecure individuals in the county. Ensure that a portion of the increased funding to food banks are directed to purchase food directly from Whatcom County producers.



5.1.5 Encourage integrated crop and livestock production on farms in a closed loop system to reduce the transport of manure and the use of chemical fertilizers.



Cream of the Crop

5.2.3 Expand curbside food waste and yard waste pickup for composting countywide.



5.3.1 Promote adoption of farm management practices that maximize soil carbon storage and increase water and nutrient availability.



Cream of the Crop

5.5.2 Conduct a food supply chain audit to understand where bottlenecks in food distribution/processing exist and what local infrastructure is needed to fill in supply chain gaps in case of climate disruption.



3.1.2 Create and expand the network of shared-use kitchens and processing facilities for food businesses, food producers and retailers.



Questions/Discussion

Next Steps

To put this plan in action, we are bringing a resolution to adopt this plan to the Council for your consideration.