



Memorandum

TO: Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

FROM: Ali Jensen, staff for the Whatcom County Food System Committee

DATE: April 14, 2023

RE: **Food System Plan**

The Food System Committee has completed their work on the draft Food System Plan and approved it on February 28th, 2023. This plan was presented at the Public Works and Health Committee of the Council meeting on April 11th and will be presented for adoption at the April 25th Council meeting. A resolution will accompany the plan.

The Food System Plan was created with months of community input, subject matter expert interviews, and feedback from the community. I want to highlight some of the engagement that went into this plan, as this has been a common question throughout the adoption process.

In February 2022, the consultant New Venture Advisors (NVA) kicked off the Food System Plan process. In our first meeting with them, we developed a community engagement and outreach plan. We created a survey, hosted and attended several events in the summer of 2022, held subcommittee meetings, had the draft list of goals, objectives, and actions out for public comment for over a month, and did a roadshow of presentations to share and receive final feedback on the plan.

The following is a brief summary of the community engagement and corresponding number of participants:

- The 2021 Community Food Assessment was formed with input from 58 Subject Matter Experts.
- 227 community members filled out the Food System Plan survey, which was open from May through July, 2022.
- Over 120 community members participated in an event either hosted by or tabled by Food System Committee members and staff in during the summer of 2022.
 - Some events were specific to different sectors in our food system, such as a restaurant worker conversation and a farmer conversation.
 - Some events were cohosted by community partners, such as the Shuksan Middle School event, which was cohosted by the Whatcom Food Network.
 - Some events focused on specific goal areas, such as a virtual event that focused on Goals 2 and 5, pertaining to the environment.

- In the fall, there were 11 subcommittee meetings, which focused on specific goals in the Food System Plan and included participation from both Food System Committee members and other subject matter experts in the community. These subcommittees refined the community input.
- The draft goals, objectives, and actions were published on December 15, 2022. This plan was sent to stakeholders, including Whatcom Family Farmers and the Conservation District. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback via an online form. 20 people responded to the form and an additional 5 people emailed county staff directly with comments, which were considered by the Food System Committee at the January 2023 meeting.
- Committee members and County staff attended and hosted eight events to share the draft Food System Plan. Over 275 participated in those virtual and in-person events, which includes the Whatcom Farm Expo and an Open House at Pioneer Pavilion in Ferndale.

Survey results, content from the summer outreach events, and a story map of community engagement can be found on the [Food System Committee's webpage](#).

The final plan outlines goals, objectives, and actions that will lead to a healthier food system in Whatcom County. Each action in the plan is identified by five key categories: policy solutions, community collaborations, county leadership, infrastructure, and education and programming. These categories are intended to show how each action can be executed and who will be involved in implementing it.

To implement the plan, it will take a continued commitment of the county and the community. The plan will be administered by Whatcom County Health and Community Services, with oversight by the Food System Committee and support from the community. The Food System Committee will oversee the creation of an implementation plan, determine food system indicators to track progress, and report updates to the County Council.

Since the presentation on April 11th, Food System Committee staff has collected and analyzed letters to the Council and will provide an update on April 25th. The proposed resolution will be brought forward for Council deliberation at the April 25th meeting.

Please call Ali Jensen at (360) 778-6121 if there are any questions. Thank you.