

# FOOD & AGRICULTURE POLICY ACTION PLAN

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*CITY OF RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA*



**Riverside Food Systems Alliance**  
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**Adopted by Riverside City Council**  
**May 2015**

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## Executive Summary

The following provides a summary of the seven core areas of the Riverside Food and Agriculture Policy Action Plan, and offers recommendations that are explained in detail under 'Proposed Actions' in this document, starting on page 25.



Riverside, the City of arts and innovation

### ***1. Growing Food: Sustaining a vibrant community of farmers/food growers***

**High Priority: Land preservation.** Develop an improved multi-faceted policy for long-term preservation of land most suitable for agriculture, including zoning, entitlement processes, and options such as a public source to purchase land or development rights and a Transfer of Development Rights program for the Greenbelt.

**High Priority: Support farmers.** Identify existing technical assistance programs and solutions that enable farmers to sustain natural resources, build soils, use best management practices and least toxic alternatives, and enhance the productivity of their land; expand these programs to meet the needs of all food growers in Riverside as required.

**High Priority: Water use and renewable energy.** Develop a strategy to ensure availability and to optimize the use of water and other natural resources in agriculture.

**Medium Priority: Innovative market-based strategies.** Identify and implement market-based strategies to protect natural resources.

## ***2. Processing and Distribution Infrastructure***

**High Priority: Food processing and hubs.** Work with existing distribution, processing, and cold storage facilities to fully use existing capacity. As needed, develop one or more private, public, and/or cooperative food hubs and food processing facilities.

**High Priority: Cooperatives.** Foster the growth of cooperatives and other collective organizational models for producers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers.

**High Priority: Support direct sales.** Encourage support for maintaining existing farmers markets and expanding farmers markets and other point of sale venues.

**Medium Priority: Cottage food businesses.** Develop a cottage business program to encourage value-added food products.

## ***3. Food & Agriculture System Economic Strategy***

**High Priority: Food sector economic development strategy.** Integrate food systems and local agriculture as an economic sector with existing business networks and organizations. Develop an 'Eat Riverside' program branding Riverside as a food destination with ideas like 'Restaurant Week' or 'Local Food Week'.

**High Priority: Diversify agriculture production.** Create a comprehensive specialty food and crop variety program with UC Cooperative Extension and the Riverside County Farm Bureau. Focus on innovations for citrus and on crops suitable for the local climate that will meet local demand.

**High Priority: Publicly accessible data.** Create and maintain print and online information about agriculture and food systems resources.

**High Priority: Expand participation in the food economy.** Create or expand programs to reduce barriers for new food entrepreneurs and beginning farmers, and encourage value-added activities.

**High Priority: Food jobs.** Develop a comprehensive apprenticeship program focused on living wage food related jobs (including farming) in cooperation with education institutions.

**Medium Priority: Procurement.** Create a guide for healthy local food procurement for schools, child care entities, health care institutions, senior living facilities, and public venues, and a set of incentives and programs that connect producers and institutional users.

#### ***4. Build Community Capacity***

**High Priority: Reliable and consistent funding.** Encourage stakeholders to join together to fund an organizational structure for implementation of the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan.

**High Priority: Expand community food production.** Develop a comprehensive strategy to encourage growing food through a model agriculture code and outreach to expand food growing by individuals and businesses.

**Medium Priority: Food waste.** Implement a strategy to manage food waste.

#### ***5. Educate, Inspire, and Sustain Demand***

**High Priority: Local food public education campaign.** Work with government, private sector, and nonprofit associations to partner on a campaign to sustain demand for local food by educating around nutrition/local flavor and the environmental impacts of food choices.

**High Priority: Schools and youth.** Work cooperatively with the School Districts to strengthen farm to school programs, engage parents and other adults, and support youth education about local food and farming.

**Medium Priority: Food and health.** Forge partnerships with health care providers to integrate healthy food and active living programs. Encourage providers to prescribe healthy, locally grown food.

**Medium Priority: Art and science.** Involve the arts, sciences, and literary communities in education around healthy eating and locally grown food.

#### ***6. Access for All***

**High Priority: Resources for healthy food.** Bring together existing agencies and coordinate policies to most effectively connect those in need with resources. Fund a campaign to encourage signup for WIC and SNAP.

Create a program to leverage nutrition assistance programs for fresh, local, and nutritious foods.

**Medium Priority: Coordinate food assistance.** Work with food banks, emergency food providers, and home meal delivery organizations on a strategy for healthy meals and more fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Medium Priority: Community access.** Encourage and support healthy food retail outlets.

## ***7. Ensuring Results***

**Strategic Consideration:** Review regulations and develop outcome oriented, win-win strategies.

**Strategic Consideration:** Break the barrier between regulation and promotion. Regulate to promote what you want to have happen, not to stop things that you don't want to have happen.

**Strategic Consideration:** Facilitate collaboration between policy makers and stakeholders.

**Cooperative Framework: Partner for a regional strategy.**

**Underlying Principle:** All programs should embrace cultural diversity and the strengths of traditional diets, and take resources, education and advocacy, and strategic opportunities to where people live and gather and to traditional cultural institutions. Programs should engage a diverse array of partners.

**Evaluation:** Measure the effectiveness of these strategies and set verifiable goals.

# Why Food & Agriculture Policy?



Couple shopping at Riverside's Downtown Farmers Market

Food security is a fundamental requirement for a community to survive and thrive. An increasing number of local municipalities have realized that building a strong local food system will improve community and individual health, promote social equity, strengthen the local economy, and protect the environment. By adopting the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan, the City of Riverside will renew its heritage as a center for fresh food production and will realize a myriad of benefits for residents, businesses, and the entire community.

The Riverside Food Policy Action Plan proposes a series of steps to improve the "food system," the agents and institutions engaged in production, processing, distribution, access, consumption, and disposal of food. Food system activities consume a major amount of fossil fuel energy, land area, and water in production, processing, transportation, and disposal activities. Food waste comprises 25% or more of the solid waste disposed of in a typical city. With strategic changes in the way the food system operates, these consumption and waste patterns will change over time. Maintaining and improving the security of local food supply also improves local emergency preparedness and local self-reliance.

The food system is an important part of community and regional economies. Research suggests that the returns to the local economy for each dollar spent at local community-based restaurants, farmers markets, and grocers is more than two times greater than the usual impact of spending. The more locally produced and locally managed the food supply is, the stronger the local economy will be, and the more benefits in the form of jobs and economic activity will be realized.

The food system is also a major issue for public health. Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke and hypertension, which are critically linked to diet and low physical activity, are one of the major causes of premature death among American adults. Obesity and associated costs and diet-related diseases significantly impact the health of residents. Our current agricultural production system delivers large quantities of empty calories and has generated an obesity epidemic – which, in turn, leads to higher medical costs (estimated at \$3000 per year per overweight person). Increasing demand for healthy, local agricultural products will encourage farmers to engage in healthier and less carbon-intensive production which will in turn also benefit consumers.

People living on limited incomes in particular often rely on what appears to be cheap and convenient food resources, sometimes because they perceive



healthier food as likely to be more expensive. They then fall victim to the health consequences that result from unhealthy eating habits.

The fact is that hunger and obesity are both more prevalent among households with limited incomes. They are not opposites. Because of the counter-intuitive nature of our current food system, which provides fast, easy access to cheap calories that are nutritionally impoverished, hunger and obesity are directly connected. Only healthy food habits – which can include education and access to healthy food by ensuring its availability and directing resources in ways that encourage healthy eating — can break that cycle.

Developing a healthy local food system will also contribute to community building. The traditional phrase used to describe community interactions, ‘breaking bread together’, exemplifies the role that growing, sharing, and eating food plays in family and community life. A local food strategy will facilitate getting people together at farmers markets, community gardens, and shared meals, and that, in turn, will strengthen neighborhoods and communities, promote public safety and community spirit, and contribute to the City’s long-term community and civic health.

Many national organizations have come to understand the role that local food plans can play in making our cities more livable and vital. The American Planning Association, for example, has recommended the inclusion of food policies in local and regional plans, and the American Public Health Association has adopted a policy recommending a food system approach as key to better human health.

Developing and implementing a local food policy is not a simple task. Transforming the food system requires careful analysis and a comprehensive understanding of the whole food chain in order to truly bring about change. It’s easy to suggest, for example, that buying local food will reduce your ecological footprint, but that’s only true if the local growing and transportation system is designed to minimize the use of fossil fuels. For example, local farmers carrying their produce directly to consumers in pick-up trucks is often less efficient and has a more negative impact on the environment than bringing farmers together to pool their resources and use larger, more fuel-efficient trucks. The details really matter.

Innovative and flexible business models that can fit into the existing system make a substantial difference. Farmers, wholesalers, and food users can count

on the current food supply chain to be reliable. That reliability is critical to farmers, and it is risky to try to create a whole new supply chain. It often works better to figure out ways to insert healthy local food sources into the existing chain.

Labor is a critical element of the food system. A healthy food system must also ensure fair labor practices, quality working conditions, and living wages to workers involved in agricultural production and to those employed in every stage of the food system, including production, packaging, distribution, marketing, and retail environments.

The food system and agriculture generate somewhere between 15% and 20% of America's carbon emissions (the percentage varies depending on the study and what it counts). American food travels an average of 1500 miles from farm to plate. Then there is the processing, storage, marketing, packaging, and shopping involved, and the embedded carbon in each element of this system. Growing food locally can reduce a whole array of emissions. Buying locally will reduce the energy consumption in transport, storage, and food preservation, which will reduce climate impacts. Local buying can also involve less food packaging, further reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Public policy can promote local buying habits by encouraging small scale processors, regional distribution systems, and more sustainable transportation modes (fuel efficient trucks or trains where possible).

Implementing the Riverside Food Action Plan means:

- strengthening community and regional food systems;
- increasing opportunities to purchase and grow healthy food;
- increasing access to healthy and local food for all of Riverside's residents;
- mitigating negative environmental and ecological impacts;
- encouraging the use of renewable energy resources and minimizing the waste of water and energy;
- stimulating demand for healthy foods, especially in low-income communities; and,
- creating new opportunities for economic development and promoting new jobs and businesses.

None of the proposed actions in the Riverside Food Action Plan are magic. They all require a social commitment and an array of individual actions. The role of government is to provide the right mix of policies, funding, research, incentives,

education, and encouragement – and to open up the opportunity for creativity and innovation. We must continue to reshape our food system towards a healthier, more local, and more sustainable model. If we do so, the re-creation of our food system can make a huge contribution to so many important elements of our community and our planet. And all of us can lead healthier and better lives as a result!



Eastside Community Garden in Riverside



Sue Struthers of Riverside Food Co-Op

## Background on the City of Riverside: History and Opportunities



View of downtown Riverside and the Mission Inn

The City of Riverside is one of the easternmost urban communities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. It is the last stop on a major Metrolink line to Los Angeles, and the County seat for Riverside County, which stretches an immense distance into the desert far to the east -- to Palm Springs and beyond to the Arizona border.

The City covers 81.51 square miles, and had a population of some 304,000 people in the 2010 census. Riverside's natural environment is dry and warm most of the year, with the limited rainfall characteristic of Southern California. Riverside has a temperate climate, near to the mountains and deserts and not far from the ocean.

Riverside's northern edge is the Santa Ana River watercourse and riverbed. The Santa Ana rises in the San Bernardino Mountains to the north, and runs westward to the Pacific. The Cityscape is defined by major hills, which also delineate major drainages, including the La Sierra Hills, Mt. Rubidoux, Box Springs Mountain, and Sycamore Canyon, while much of the neighborhood

terrains have smaller hills as well. Running between the hills are arroyos, natural drainage courses that carry water from the hills either north to the Santa Ana River or across the alluvial plain on which most of the City is situated.

Riverside's varied landscape and large area relative to its population is complemented by an urban pattern that includes many single family homes, some modestly larger buildings in its historic downtown and on the University of Riverside campus, and significant amounts of open or lightly utilized land. By comparison, the City of Los Angeles, one of the densest major cities in the United States, has more than 3 million inhabitants in a land area only about 5 times that of Riverside.

This relatively low density has allowed Riverside to maintain orange groves and other open space, much of it connected to its agricultural past, along with a diverse array of parks. The heart of Riverside's greenbelt is in and around the Arlington Heights neighborhood, and includes the California Citrus State Historic Park and Victoria Avenue, a mile-long scenic drive. A significant amount of private lands have been protected for more than thirty years -- by Proposition R in 1979 and Measure C in 1987. These were approved by the voters to preserve some 4600 acres then largely in citrus production. This land is currently in use as citrus groves, plant nurseries and very-low-density residential development. The City is organized into 26 neighborhoods, each of which has its own character and community based organizations.

The protection of the greenbelt was an emphatic statement that Riverside voters valued the citrus industry heritage that lent Riverside the motto of "The Citrus Capital of the World." Fed by water from the Gage and Riverside Canals, the citrus industry thrived for more than a century. The first orange trees were planted in 1871, and by 1882 Riverside had almost a quarter of a million, close to half of the total for California. By 1895 Riverside had the highest per capita income of any City in the state, with the agricultural production complemented by the industrial processing and storage systems and a network of rail lines employing the newly invented refrigerated railroad cars. Riverside was the organizational center for the Sunkist Cooperative, which continues to have a major presence in the City even as it has spread to encompass growers and facilities throughout California and Arizona.

The Riverside combination of a proud agricultural heritage, a diverse landscape, a wide variety of neighborhoods, a significant amount of available land, a protected greenbelt area, and a burgeoning interest in local food mean

that Riverside is well-positioned to create a local food system that can bring all of these factors together to promote a healthy citizenry, a thriving environment, and a strong economy.

Many provisions of the Riverside General Plan 2025 provide a frame for this work:

“Objective LU-6: Retain functional agricultural areas within Riverside, particularly within the greenbelt area, while allowing for sensitive, low-intensity residential uses.

Policy LU-6.1: Enforce and adhere to the protections for agricultural areas set forth in Proposition R and Measure C.

Policy LU-6.2: Preserve the viability of the Gage Canal to enable continued agricultural uses within the City.

Policy LU-6.3: Protect and maintain the Arlington Heights Greenbelt agricultural character through adherence with applicable provisions of the Subdivision and Zoning Codes in addition to Proposition R and Measure C.

Policy LU-6.4: Review development within agricultural areas to encourage efficient land use and facilitate long-term perpetuation of citrus stock.”

## Grow Riverside and the Riverside Food Systems Alliance



Participants from various backgrounds in one of several workshops working together to draft the Food Policy Action Plan.

The Riverside Food Action Plan is an outgrowth of the first ‘Grow Riverside: Citrus and Beyond’ conference, sponsored by the City of Riverside and an array of community organizations, businesses, farmers, and governmental and non-profit partners, which took place in March of 2014. The conference was managed by Robert Puro, Managing Partner of Seedstock. The goal was to bring together people concerned with agriculture and food from a range of perspectives to explore the future of “The Citrus Capital of the World.”

As noted above, in 1979 a voter initiative set aside some 4600 acres of Riverside land (the ‘Greenbelt’) for agricultural purposes, originally for citrus production, to ensure that Riverside still merited that moniker. But only about 1000 acres remain in citrus trees, and this presents both a challenge and an opportunity for residents, businesses, farmers, and the City of Riverside. The ‘Grow Riverside’ conference drew more than 400 participants for two days of plenaries and workshops exploring the possibilities for strengthening the food system in Riverside and creating new momentum around local food in the

community. The conference looked at ways to respond to these changing conditions in the Greenbelt, as well as increasing public interest in local food and new opportunities to develop healthy local food systems.

Concluding with a dinner at the California Citrus State Historic Park, 'Grow Riverside' emphasized the opportunity to build on Riverside's rich history of agricultural production and create ways to revitalize citrus production where feasible, while also opening up the system to encourage growing, processing and consuming fresh fruits and vegetables as part of a new emphasis on local food.

The second 'Grow Riverside' conference will be held in June 2015. It will build on the momentum generated by the first conference and the follow up activities that have taken place since the initial gathering.

Riverside decision makers were inspired by the success of the first conference, and have sought to ensure that the conference became the beginning of a new conversation, a dialogue that would result in not just talking about local food and agricultural possibilities, but beginning to take concrete steps to introduce new local food policies and activities. Immediately following the conference, the City reengaged with the 'Meeting of the Minds' group that planned the initial conference, and committed to a second conference along with exploring possible action steps.

The City engaged the services of Richard Conlin, co-chair of the Puget Sound Regional Food Policy Council and a former Seattle City Councilmember who developed the Seattle Local Food Action Initiative, to bring together community stakeholders to create the Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) and to develop this Food Policy Action Plan.

Richard Conlin began this work in August of 2014 by reaching out to individuals and organizations identified by City staff and inviting them to participate in the RFSA. Some 35 community members and staff people responded to these original contacts by agreeing to begin meeting in September to start the hard work of imagining a food policy for Riverside.

The Riverside Food Policy Action Plan is also complementary to and builds on the foundation that has been laid in Riverside County through:



- The Healthy Riverside County Initiative, which combines four components -- healthy eating, active living, tobacco control, and the built environment – to address issues of chronic disease;
- The Healthy Riverside Coalition, a collaboration that does policy development, advocacy, and community engagement to promote healthy lifestyles;
- The County Nutrition Action Plan, which brings together nutrition assistance programs and organizations to combat obesity; and
- The Ag Trail, a project to promote agriculture and connect Riverside County farms to homes and businesses.

## Activities of the Riverside Food Systems Alliance

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA), which has grown to include some 85 participants on its mailing list, met seven times between September 2014 and March of 2015. Generally between 25 and 35 of the interested participants were in attendance. The goal of these meetings was to build common ground among a variety of stakeholders in the City of Riverside and surrounding communities, and to identify policy initiatives that would contribute to strengthening the existing food system in Riverside and developing new ways to encourage local food production and consumption.

Participants come from a wide range of perspectives, sectors, and organizational bases. They include:

- City of Riverside staff, along with Councilmember Chris MacArthur
- Staff from other governmental agencies and elected officials, including representatives of Congressman Takano, the Health Department, and the Riverside County Agriculture Commissioner
- Farmers and farmer representatives
- Business people, including restaurant owners, investors, health care executives, food system entrepreneurs, and farmers market operators
- Academics, extension staff, and students
- Community members and people from cooperatives and neighborhood organizations
- Representatives of human services and community development organizations

At the initial meeting of the RFSA, held September 25 in the City Attorney's Conference Room at City Hall, participants began the discussion by answering the following questions in a round robin exercise:

- What action would be the highest priority for advancing a healthy local food system?
- What is the best opportunity or resource to call on to achieve this priority?
- What is the biggest challenge or obstacle that will cause difficulties?

The answers to these questions were compiled by the consultant, and were then presented back to the group at the October 9 meeting, held in the Mayor's Conference Room at City Hall. After a discussion and comment period, each

participant was given five dots and asked to rank the priorities identified at the September 25 meeting. Participants then broke up into small groups to discuss the results of the ranking exercise and take the next step in honing priorities.

The third meeting was held on October 23 at the Fairmount Park Boathouse. This beautiful facility in the Olmstead-designed Fairmount Park became the venue for the subsequent meetings. At this meeting, participants reviewed and commented on an initial draft of possible goals, and small groups then reviewed the six identified issue areas to establish priorities.

Following these initial meetings, the consultant created a second draft of a Mission and Goals statement, which was reviewed by the group at the November 20 meeting. This meeting then broke into a small group session, with each table assigned to review one of the six priority issue areas and identify action steps that could be taken to implement the priority. After the initial session, a second small group exercise was conducted, with participants allowed to go to the table of their choice. This technique ensured that a broad mix of interested parties reviewed each priority issue area in the initial round, and then that those most concerned with that priority had the chance to hone in further using their specific expertise.

The group next met on December 18, made final comments on the Mission and Goals document, and then considered the first draft of the Food Policy Action Plan. This was reviewed through two processes. First, each participant was asked to go through the document individually and make comments, changes, or suggestions. Then, participants met in table groups, with each table again assigned to go over one of the issue areas.

The next meeting, on January 22, applied some finishing touches to the Mission/Goals/Priority Issues documents, and then spent most of the time conducting a major review of the Food Policy Action Plan. In two small group sessions, RFSA members reviewed the documents comprising the Action Plan, validated the core approaches, and suggested modifications, changes, and additions that were important to take the document into the final draft stage. The group also discussed the future of the Riverside Food Systems Alliance, and agreed that they would like to see the RFSA continue after completion of the initial Food Policy Action Plan. A subcommittee was empowered to discuss and develop a future structure and organizational plan for the RFSA.

Key City officials, including Councilmembers, the Mayor's office, and the City Manager's office, were briefed on the draft plan in late January, and expressed enthusiasm about the core recommendations.

The final draft of the Action Plan was presented and discussed at the March 5 meeting, which concluded the involvement of the consultant with the RFSA. The Action Plan was then ready for final edits and formal presentation to the City staff and elected officials.

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance provided the intellectual firepower and community knowledge that informed the creation of this document. Because a wide variety of stakeholders were involved, this document represents a broad consensus of people who want to see a strong and thoughtful food policy for the City of Riverside. The volunteer energy that was engaged in this process was truly extraordinary. The Riverside Food Policy Action Plan exists because of the dedication and commitment of this group to putting the work in to ensure that actions happen in a positive and careful way that respects all of the many community interests involved.

## Mission, Goals, and Priority Issues for the Riverside Food Systems Alliance

The RFSA participants adopted by consensus a Mission Statement, a set of goals, and a list of priority issues. These documents, in turn, informed the creation of the Food Policy Action Plan.

**Mission:** Establish and grow a resilient and productive local food and agriculture system that provides a year round supply, supports community involvement, and enables profitable enterprises for farmers and allied businesses while providing for the needs of the community and the sustainable use of natural resources.



Ghamlouch family at their family farm in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt

### **Goals:**

- 1. Agriculture:** promote an environmentally sustainable and economically viable community of farmers, inside and outside the City; maximize opportunities for farming across scales; preserve a significant amount of land that is best suited to farming and ensure that soils are maintained at their highest capability; ensure that the Greenbelt is treated respectfully, with citrus and non-citrus agriculture and nurseries all practicing a good neighbor policy.
- 2. Economic Development:** advance infrastructure that meets the needs of all different sizes of farms; enhance the economic viability of local and regional food systems; foster an Eat Riverside program; support vocational training and living wage jobs and occupations; promote innovation, the transparency of the food system, and equal access to markets; ensure that research and educational institutions are well-integrated into the community and linked to practitioners.
- 3. Education:** foster education about and understanding of food, agriculture, and environmental quality; provide educational resources to farmers; raise awareness of the Riverside food system; facilitate outreach and education

among elected leaders and communities; encourage residents, businesses, institutions, and organizations to connect with farms and use local food.

4. **Equity:** promote access to affordable, nutritious food for all community members; encourage all community members to be stakeholders in the Riverside food system; support providing the resources and opportunities for all community members to act to improve their own diet, nutrition, and health.
5. **Health:** improve public health through better access to nutritious, local, high quality, and safe food; ensure that food is produced and processed safely; reduce environmental health risks.
6. **Stakeholders:** listen to all stakeholders and strive for win-win solutions to problems; keep lines of communication open; engage diverse communities; look for and facilitate partnerships; build on the strength of individual, community, and institutional assets; connect with the region.

### **Priority Issues:**

1. **Growing Food: Sustaining a vibrant farming community**
  - Create robust conditions for a vibrant community of farmers
  - Land use policy
  - Soil building/ecological services to enhance productivity of land
  - Proper water management/availability/cost
  - Promote financial, ecological, vocational training incentives
2. **Processing/Distribution Infrastructure**
  - Foster a system built on cooperation for locally grown whole and processed produce that provides efficient and effective production and distribution from farm to consumer
3. **Food System Economic Strategy/Farm to Fork**
  - Shift demand in favor of local product
  - Facilitate increasing the quality and quantity of sustainable supply

#### 4. Build Community Capacity

- Create a funded and sustainable organizational structure for coordination of this work
- Integrate model urban agriculture and health codes
- Adopt policies that will support the engagement of community members in growing food

#### 5. Educate, Inspire, and Sustain Demand

- Tell the Riverside food story through formal and informal educational resources
- Develop career paths for food and farming
- Teach sustainability and the history of food in the community

#### 6. Access for All

- Create a comprehensive strategy that gets healthy food to all

#### 7. Ensure Success

- Develop metrics to evaluate the success of the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan



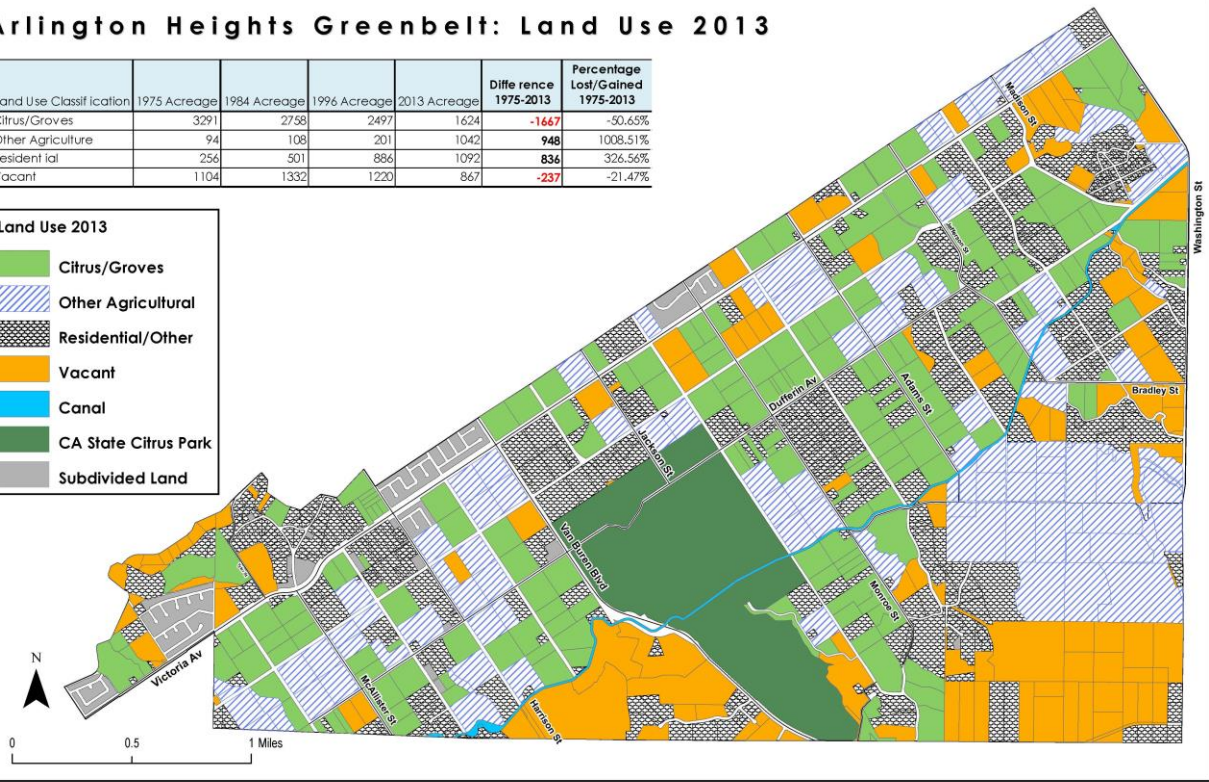
June 2015 GrowRIVERSIDE: The Future of Local Food Conference

## Arlington Heights Greenbelt: Land Use 2013

Land Use Classification	1975 Acreage	1984 Acreage	1996 Acreage	2013 Acreage	Difference 1975-2013	Percentage Lost/Gained 1975-2013
Citrus/Groves	3291	2758	2497	1624	-1667	-50.65%
Other Agriculture	94	108	201	1042	948	1008.51%
Residential	256	501	886	1092	836	326.56%
Vacant	1104	1332	1220	867	-237	-21.47%

**Land Use 2013**

- Citrus/Groves
- Other Agricultural
- Residential/Other
- Vacant
- Canal
- CA State Citrus Park
- Subdivided Land



Trends in agricultural activities and landscape in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt from 1975 to 2013.



## **Food Policy Action Plan: Proposed Actions**

*The following Action Plan turns the priority issues identified by the RFSA into a set of seven specific actions, backed by a work plan and a list of key participants for each action.*

### **1. Growing Food: Sustaining a Vibrant Community of Farmers and Food Growers**

**Create robust conditions for a vibrant food growing community: land use policy, soil building and ecological services to enhance productivity of land, proper resource management including availability and cost, and financial, ecological, and vocational training and incentives.**

**Narrative: Expanding local food production is critical to the vision of a successful local food policy for the City of Riverside. The Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) identified preserving land, supporting farmers, managing water use, and promoting renewable energy as the highest priorities for expanding food production. The RFSA suggested consideration of innovative, market-based strategies as an arena to explore in order to most efficiently reach these goals.**

#### **Policies to Pursue:**

##### **a. High Priority: Preserve land**

###### **Actions:**

Inventory lands and soils and review existing land use policy.

Develop an improved multi-faceted policy for long-term preservation of land most suitable for agriculture, including zoning, entitlement processes, and purchasing land that is at risk to keep or place it in agricultural production.

Create a streamlined development process for farmers and growers that includes planning and entitlement, county and state health regulations, and other permitting required to begin operations, ideally with 'one-stop permitting', i.e., having a single contact point for prospective farmers to get information and guidance through the processes of all involved agencies.

Consider options including land trusts, identifying a public funding source to purchase land or development rights, creating a Transfer of Development Rights program for part or all of the Greenbelt and other important food production land, organizing a campaign to encourage offsetting estate taxes with land donations, and creating investment vehicles for long-term agricultural production on protected land, such as an 'Ag Easement' program where land is committed to food production and easements are sold or leased back to farmers.

Allow flexibility to permit compatible land uses that will preserve future agricultural options.

Inventory existing public properties for opportunities for producing food, provide this information to the public and decision makers, and develop a strategy to commit suitable public properties to food production.

Align policies with federal, state, and county policy frameworks.

**Work Plan:**

Create a City staff working group to review existing land use policy and develop recommendations that will best position Riverside to support a vibrant food growing community. This group should engage relevant community members who can provide assistance and advice, and review AB 551 and other Farm to Fork legislation and policy frameworks at all levels of government to ensure that Riverside's new policies are aligned with them and take maximum advantage of potential synergies.

Work with University of California Riverside, United States Department of Agriculture and/or faculties and specialists in the University of California Cooperative Extension system to develop an inventory of land and soils and identify areas of the City and/or properties that are available and most suitable for agriculture.

Adopt a new land use policy that will encourage agricultural use of these lands, and incorporate it into the City of Riverside General Plan. Include provisions that will allow flexibility to permit compatible land uses that will preserve agricultural options for the future.

Have the City staff group work with the real estate industry and other interested parties to review entitlement processes and identify any changes that could encourage agricultural uses.

Have the City staff group work with other engaged agencies to develop the 'one-stop permitting' process to the extent feasible.

Convene a roundtable including existing land trusts and people interested in the land trust concept and identify any needed expansion of capabilities and possible approaches that will strengthen the resources available for purchasing land and easements.

Convene a meeting of local governmental agencies and community based organizations interested in promoting local food and review possible public funding resources that could be used for land preservation. Identify one or more possibilities and pursue action by the appropriate legislative body (including the State legislature if new resources or legal authority would be the best way to approach this).

Engage a consultant to explore and potentially design a Transfer of Development rights program for part or all of the Greenbelt and other important food production land.

Identify a non-governmental organization (potentially the Riverside Land Conservancy) that will work with the financial community, the accounting community, and other relevant actors to conduct a public campaign to encourage land donation as an estate tax offset.

Foster the creation of a working group from the business and agricultural communities to identify and design effective ways to implement investment vehicles that will work for both sides. If additional legislative authority is needed, pursue action by the appropriate legislative body.

Commission City staff to inventory existing public properties that can be put into food production and ask them to develop a legislative policy blueprint for doing so.

**Key Actors:** City staff, University of California Cooperative Extension, Riverside Land Conservancy, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, California State Department of Conservation, Southwest Resource Management Association, United States Department of Agriculture, real

estate and agricultural communities, California Baptist University, California Polytechnic Pomona, other universities and colleges, County of Riverside Department of Public Health, County of Riverside Environmental Health

**b. High Priority: Support farmers**

**Actions:**

Identify existing technical and financial assistance programs and solutions that enable farmers to sustain natural resources and biodiversity, build soils, enhance the productivity of their land, and use best management practices and least toxic alternatives to ensure safe food production.

Promote and expand these programs as required.

Work with UC Cooperative Extension and resource conservation entities to provide growers with research based information and education about crop production to assist them to maximize their production capabilities and preserve the health of their land.

Seek a funding source to compensate farmers for ecosystem services to clean air and water, mitigate flooding, conserve water and soil resources, and reduce greenhouse gases.

Foster the creation of grower cooperative arrangements to share resources such as equipment, tools, and knowledge about best practices and marketing.

Assist farmers in developing labor plans where needed.

Create a clearinghouse for funding sources for compensation and support, such as government grants, philanthropic organizations, etc.

**Work Plan:**

Convene a meeting including UC Cooperative Extension, resource conservation entities, the Farm Bureau, and other entities that are or could be engaged in providing technical assistance to farmers. Invite this meeting to develop a framework for a coordinated approach that will ensure that farmers receive the assistance that they need.

Invite UC Cooperative Extension and other key entities to help farmers identify ways to improve management and the health of their land. Encourage entities working with farmers to disseminate this information and assist farmers to use it where appropriate.

Ask the technical assistance entities to develop a plan and pro forma for creating grower cooperatives. Convene a meeting of farmers and potential farmers to identify opportunities and needs. Recruit a lead agency or group of interested parties to initiate a cooperative.

Engage a consultant or agency staff member to work with State and local agencies involved in resource conservation and greenhouse gas reduction to develop a framework for a program that will compensate farmers for ecosystem services. If additional legislative authority is needed, pursue action by the appropriate legislative body.

Ask Universities and farm organizations to identify strategies to support educational opportunities for beginning and new farmers.

**Key Actors:** UC Cooperative Extension, University of California Riverside, University of California Davis, California Polytechnic, California Baptist University, Riverside Public Utilities, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation, grower cooperatives, Farm Bureaus, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner

**c. High Priority: Support efficient water use and renewable energy**

**Actions:**

Develop a strategy to ensure availability and optimize water and other natural resources used for agriculture. This may include incentives for conservation, crop choice, irrigation upgrade, water reuse, and the use of technical tools.

Encourage renewable energy generation and use on farms and in production and processing facilities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, cut production costs, and improve resiliency.

**Work Plan:**

Ask Riverside Public Utilities and other water providers to initiate a comprehensive strategy for reaching out to agricultural producers in

conjunction with entities engaged in providing technical assistance to encourage farmers to implement an array of best management practices for water use. Ask Riverside Public Utilities and other water providers to identify ways in which conservation can be valued as a resource and the supply of water for food production ensured.

Convene a meeting that brings together energy utilities, financial experts, and renewable energy promoters to identify the most cost effective way to deploy renewable resources in food production. Work with farmers and their representatives to determine how to make cost effective investments in renewables and engage the financial and utility communities in designing investment vehicles and financing strategies based around valuing conservation and renewables as a resource.

**Key Actors:** California Department of Food and Agriculture, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner, County of Riverside Department of Public Health Gage Canal Company, Riverside Public Utilities, City Economic Development staff (convener)

#### **d. Medium Priority: Develop innovative market-based strategies**

**Actions:**

Identify and implement market-based strategies to protect natural resources such as marketing programs or new brand development ('Green Riverside'; 'Riverside Grown') that encourage land owners, managers, and tenants to use agricultural lands productively while ensuring biodiversity.

**Work Plan:**

Convene a task force of persons from the resource conservation, financial, and business communities to brainstorm and develop one or more strategies that will be successful in accomplishing this task.

**Key Actors:** University Business Schools, private sector economists and developers, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, City Economic Development staff (convener)



**Charlotte Davidson and Anthony Adler on their organic citrus farm located in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt**



**Riverside Unified School District's Executive Chef Ryan Douglas preparing May 2015 Farm-to-Fork Dinner at Fox Farm in Riverside**



**Culinary team for the March 2015 Farm-to-Fork Dinner in the Groves**



**Robert Puro of Seedstock**



**Riverside's Wood Streets Green Team**

## **2. Processing and Distribution Infrastructure**

**Foster and promote food production, processing, and distribution systems and channels that provide efficient and effective farm to fork access for locally grown whole and processed food and agricultural products.**

**Narrative: Growing food is only the first step in ensuring that it is available to local consumers. Existing processing, distribution, and warehousing systems are often focused on aggregating large quantities of food products and distributing them on a large scale. This system can be difficult to access and use to match local food growers with local consumers. The RFSA identified encouraging more local infrastructure as a key way to ensure that a local-to-local, farm-to-fork system can best function. In order to do this, the group recommends setting a priority on expanding local food hub and processing functions. There may be existing capacity that is not well used that could be built on, or existing buildings that could be locations for new capacity. The RFSA suggested that building on the region's heritage of agricultural cooperatives would be an excellent way to support this kind of infrastructure, and that consumer cooperatives could be effective ways to foster markets. An additional high priority is to support direct sales at farmers markets and other local point of sale venues. Facilitating cottage food production was identified as another action area that should be developed.**

### **Policies to Pursue:**

#### **a. High Priority: Develop food hubs, processing, storage and distribution.**

##### **Actions:**

Identify and work with existing food hubs and distribution, processing, and cold storage facilities to fully use existing capacity.

As needed, develop one or more new private, public, and/or cooperative food hubs to serve as facilities for food sales, storage, and processing, including incubator, commercial and wholesale kitchens.

Consider existing warehouses, packing houses, and other structures as possible places to adapt for such facilities.



### **Work Plan:**

Task the City's economic development staff with inventorying existing facilities and identifying potentially available capacity, as well as researching other distribution models to better understand best practices. Include the food truck community and other mobile options as part of the research. Staff can then work with owners and producers to develop linkages.

If this work suggests that additional capacity is needed, direct staff to look for available structures that are not in use, or identify locations where a food hub would be possible to site. Empower City staff to work with local businesses and investors, producer cooperatives and farmers, and potential food hub operators to create a business plan and foster the launch of a new food hub enterprise. The City could potentially employ Community Development Block Grant, Section 108 loans, or New Market Tax Credits to assist in financing such a facility. Financing could also potentially involve EB5 visa funds.

**Key Actors:** Riverside Community College, California Baptist University, La Sierra University, other higher education institutions, Riverside County Department of Environmental Health, Share Kitchen, 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest, City staff, City and County Economic Development staff, Western Riverside Council of Governments, Farm Bureaus, UC Cooperative Extension, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner, County of Riverside Department of Public Health, investors such as Cutting Edge Capital, Riverside Unified School District (already a food hub), Alvord Unified School District, Riverside Food Co-op, Old Grove Orange

### **b. High Priority: Encourage cooperative development.**

#### **Actions:**

Foster the growth of cooperatives and other collective organization models for producers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers.

#### **Work Plan:**

Direct staff to partner with UC Cooperative Extension, the Farm Bureau, and producer cooperatives and farmers (this group can be called the 'Farm Team') to interview and work with existing producer cooperatives to

determine what opportunities exist to foster additional producer cooperative systems, including equipment sharing. If there is a need for new cooperative structures, have the Farm Team propose that to farmers and provide technical assistance if farmers are interested in developing such structures.

Direct City economic development staff to enter into discussions with the existing Riverside Food Cooperative to determine what assistance would be needed and possible to develop a full consumer cooperative facility. This could include supporting marketing studies, connecting and evaluating the success of such cooperatives in other areas, and assisting in developing a business plan, locating facilities, and securing initial capital. If other groups emerge that are interested in sponsoring consumer cooperatives, task staff with making connections and offering assistance to groups that have potential viability.

**Key Actors:** City staff, City and County Economic Development staff, Western Riverside Council of Governments, Farm Bureaus, UC Cooperative Extension, investors such as Cutting Edge Capital, Riverside Unified School District, Riverside Food Co-op, Old Grove Orange

**c. High Priority: Support direct sales.**

**Actions:**

Encourage support for maintaining existing farmers markets and expanding farmers markets to sites across the City, especially where there is little or no current access. Continue work to streamline permitting and coordinate regulations.

Encourage other local point of sale venues such as farm stands, food trucks, mobile fresh food distribution systems, street vendors, cottage food operations, Community Supported Agriculture, and indoor markets.

Support mobile farm product handling stations for farms to facilitate compliance with regulations under the Food Safety Modernization Act and enable efficient packaging for storage and shelf life.

### **Work Plan:**

Direct the Farm Team to convene a meeting of existing farmers market operators and potential partners from nearby locations. This group should assess the viability of communities and potential locations, and develop a long term plan for expanding farmers markets where feasible. Support this group in reviewing permitting and regulations and consider any possible modifications or consolidation that could facilitate farmers market operations and development and reduce costs. Work with the group to develop a strategy to enliven farmers markets by adding food/cooking demonstrations, crafts, music, and other activities that can enhance their ability to be a fun and central destination.

Assign City economic development staff the task of reviewing current regulations concerning other point of sale venues, identifying barriers to operation, and recommending policy changes that would encourage such operations while ensuring public safety. Include a diverse array of options, such as growing on demand initiatives and direct access for restaurants and small processors. City Council and City Departments can then implement changes that will facilitate additional point of sale venues, and publicize the City's interest in supporting such activities.

To help link small scale farmers to distribution facilities, ask the Farm Team to determine whether mobile food handling stations will be an effective and useful way to supplement food hub operations. If there is a market need for these stations, empower participants to develop a business plan and seek ways to fund and operate such stations.

**Key Actors:** City staff, Southland Farmers Market Association, other farmers market operators and mobile food providers, private sector actors, UC Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, producer cooperatives and farmers, Family Services Association, County of Riverside Department of Public Health, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner, County of Riverside Environmental Health

#### **d. Medium Priority: Stimulate more cottage food businesses.**

##### **Actions:**

Develop a cottage business program to encourage value-added food products.

Consider creating a micro-loan program for cottage food production.  
Promote awareness of and compliance with AB 1616, Cottage Food Law.

**Work Plan:**

Task City staff with identifying possible incubator kitchen facilities at city-owned facilities such as community centers, and developing a work plan and program to make them available to cottage food producers. If a food hub is developed, include a cottage food business incubator kitchen in the project.

Develop a partnership involving the City and other organizations to use electronic media and other appropriate mechanisms and venues to publicize the opportunities for business development under AB 1616, and convene a workshop bringing together potential cottage food business developers to explore opportunities.

Direct City staff to examine possibilities for a micro-loan program, potentially deploying CDBG or Section 108 funds, or working with community development nonprofits, universities, or other financial partners to spur the creation of such a micro-credit program.

**Key Actors:** City staff, Community Garden Council, County Public and Environmental Health, City and County Economic Development staff



Brian Griffith, citrus grower in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt

### **3. Food System Economic Strategy**

**Develop consumer demand to favor local food products, increase the quality and quantity of sustainable supply (build the supply of local product to meet increased local demand), and develop career paths in the food sector and farming.**

**Narrative: The food sector can be a sustainable and substantial element in an economic development strategy. Often such strategies focus on sectors that have opportunities for dramatic expansion, such as technology or biosciences; while those sectors can be transformational, the food sector can provide a core of consistent living wage jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities that can grow steadily over time. A local food strategy can ensure that consumer expenditures stay in the community and achieve significant multiplier effects. The RFSA recommends realizing this potential by using an array of branding, development, financing, marketing, job training, and business skill enhancement programs, supplemented by specific projects including food business related events and a guide for local food procurement.**

#### **Policies to Pursue:**

**a. High Priority: Create a food sector economic development strategy.**

#### **Actions:**

Integrate food systems and local agriculture as an economic sector with existing business networks and other stakeholder organizations.

Develop an 'Eat Riverside' program branding Riverside as a food destination including ideas like 'Restaurant Week' or 'Local Food Week'.

Initiate a restaurant and chef network to connect with farmers and promote sustainable restaurants using a green restaurant checklist.

Connect local suppliers to restaurants, and support developing local healthy food menu labeling.

Host regional food business-to-business and food-to-neighborhoods events.

### **Work Plan:**

Develop a partnership between City economic development staff and the Chamber of Commerce and other economic development entities to include food as an economic sector in development planning.

Direct City staff and other entities to bring together a task team including key representatives of restaurant businesses to create a branding program and a restaurant and chef network. The task team will work to identify businesses or organizations that can donate services to develop the green restaurant checklist, support local healthy food menu labeling, and produce branding materials; if enough donations cannot be obtained, recommend that the task team raise funds to carry out these projects.

Develop a partnership including City staff and other entities to identify resources and partners to convene events. The business-to-business events will aim at linking food businesses to each other, identifying producer/user connections and facilitating possible synergistic links among businesses. Food to neighborhoods events will be designed to work with neighborhood leaders to identify communities where new food enterprises can be successful. Staff and other engaged entities can then follow up to ensure that relationships are built and sustained in these areas.

**Key Actors:** City and County Economic Development staff, Chamber of Commerce, other business and economic development entities, restaurant and chef associations, neighborhood leaders, County of Riverside Department of Public Health, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner, County of Riverside Environmental Health

### **b. High Priority: Diversify agriculture production.**

#### **Actions:**

Create a comprehensive specialty food and crop variety program with UC Cooperative Extension, Cal Poly Pomona, Riverside County Farm Bureau and other organizations. Focus the program on innovations for the existing citrus industry and on other crops suitable for the local climate that are not currently grown locally in sufficient quantity to meet local demand.

### **Work Plan:**

Support UC Cooperative Extension and the Farm Bureau in bringing together experts to define potential innovations and to enhance the existing research, publicity, and outreach program and expand it as appropriate and needed. Task City staff with assisting in identifying potential implementers and developing ways to connect and build interactive communication with farmers and food producers.

**Key Actors:** UC Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Cal Poly Pomona, related organizations, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner

**High Priority: Create and maintain print and publicly accessible online information about agriculture and food systems resources.**

### **Actions:**

Create and maintain print and online agriculture and food systems information about resources in Riverside and the surrounding region for use in policy, education, community planning and activities, research, and economic development. Information in the database should include agricultural segments (and their characteristics), processing and distribution, food retailers (grocery, restaurants) and other outlets, institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.), community health statistics (i.e. heart disease, diabetes, obesity), demographics, and environmental indicators.

### **Work Plan:**

City economic development staff has already begun developing the online map and data base. Encourage this work to continue and include any needed funds to develop these tools in the City budget.

**Key Actors:** City Economic Development staff, County of Riverside Department of Public Health and Environmental Health, County of Riverside Agricultural Commissioner



Jessica Bao, mushroom farmer in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt

**c. High Priority: Expand participation in the food economy.**

**Actions:**

Identify current programs to reduce barriers for new food entrepreneurs and new, beginning, and minority farmers and encourage value-added activities. Expand these programs and create new ones as needed. Examples include business planning and marketing programs and revolving loan, micro-loan, and low-interest loan funds.

Increase access to capital by bringing in mission-driven investors and lenders to fund agriculture and food-related businesses and part-time and urban farmers.

Create food enterprise zones with incentives for urban food production, value-added food processing, and healthy food retail outlets.

Create a program to develop and write grants that focus on agricultural opportunities to support City work and assist farmers and entrepreneurs.

**Work Plan:**

Task City economic development staff with convening a task force of economic development and financing entities to review existing programs and design expansion plans or new programs to reduce barriers and introduce new opportunities for new food entrepreneurs. Staff can actively recruit new investors and lenders to participate in this program.

Launch this program in conjunction with key publicity and outreach activities for the food systems economic sector.

Sponsor the 'food enterprise zone' program to provide incentives for development in strategic locations identified by the two conferences. Ask staff to develop a package of possible incentives in conjunction with key actors in the food sector.

**Key Actors:** City Economic Development staff, other economic development entities, financial services sector, County of Riverside Department of Public Health



**d. High Priority: Match workers with jobs in food businesses.**

**Actions:**

Develop a comprehensive apprenticeship program focused on living wage food related jobs (including farming) in cooperation with higher education institutions, supported by a cooperative K-20 Career Track.

Inspire and motivate by making career, employment, and business opportunities core to the strategy, including apprenticeship, internship, and entrepreneurship.

**Work Plan:**

Support City staff in bringing together a work team from K-12 schools, vocational training organizations, and colleges and universities to identify a set of optimum locations and organizations that will commit to being involved in the K-20 Career Track. Encourage participants to create an academic team to design the curriculum for the food apprenticeship program.

Support institutions involved in this program in identifying staff, developing the curriculum and program, and actively recruiting participants and students who are seeking new career paths or advancement. Support a partnership between these institutions and businesses in the food economic sector to create clear training-to-job pipelines.

**Key Actors:** City Community Development and Economic Development staff, school district staff, vocational training organizations, colleges and universities, Chamber of Commerce and other business entities and organizations

**e. Medium Priority: Encourage local healthy food procurement.**

**Actions:**

Create a guide for healthy local food procurement for schools, child care entities, health care institutions, senior living facilities, and public venues, and a set of incentives to encourage them to use the guide.

Develop a way to connect producers and public and private institutional users.

Encourage public venues to meet nutrition standards for food provided. Network with vendors to source healthier and local food and agricultural products.

**Work Plan:**

Direct City economic development staff, in cooperation with the food economic sector, to develop the healthy food procurement guide, or to request funding for a consultant to do this work.

Empower City economic development staff to identify possible incentives and work with the Mayor, Council, and other governmental entities to provide these. Direct staff to create an inventory of facilities that could use the guide, and to visit them and persuade them to implement it.

Task Staff with developing a network function linking venues with vendors.

**Key Actors:** City economic development staff, food producers and distributors, institutional buyers and facilities

Citrus groves in the Arlington Heights Greenbelt



#### **4. Community Capacity**

**Create a funded and sustainable organizational structure for coordination of the work of promoting local food, align and integrate model urban agriculture and health codes, and adopt policies that will foster the engagement of community members in growing food.**

**Narrative: The RFSA has developed these proposed policies and created a work plan with specific responsibilities for a number of actors. In order to ensure that these activities are carried out, the RFSA recommends that an organizational structure, either in a new or existing entity, be funded to coordinate this extensive body of work.**

**While much of the work program for this Food Policy Blueprint focuses on market activities, supporting commercial growing, distribution, and other economic activity, there are important opportunities to engage community members and businesses in growing, producing, and distributing local food that may or may not enter the market economy.**

##### **Policies to Pursue:**

##### **a. High Priority: Ensure reliable and consistent funding.**

###### **Actions:**

Encourage stakeholders, including city and other governmental, private, and nonprofit associations to join together to fund an organizational structure for coordination and implementation of the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan.

###### **Work Plan:**

Identify a Subcommittee of the RFSA that will review potential funding sources and carry out the appropriate proposal writing and advocacy activities.

Consider additional staffing for food policy in City government in addition to the two economic development staff positions if the work of implementing the Food Policy Action Plan requires more staff support to effectively carry out this work.

**Key Actors:** City of Riverside, Riverside Food Systems Alliance, local investors and organizations

**b. High Priority: Encourage expanded food production in community settings.**

**Actions:**

Develop a comprehensive strategy to encourage growing food through a model agriculture code, a program to increase the number of community kitchens and community gardens at schools, parks, and other private nonprofit and publicly owned locations, and a campaign to encourage expanding individual growing activities in yards and planting strips, including harvesting rainwater, converting to edible landscaping, and fully using the landscape including swales.

Encourage growing food in a variety of locations, including indoor greenhouses, market gardens, aquaponics, rooftop gardens, and food forests.

Initiate an EcoDistrict program, an incentive/encouragement program in which neighborhoods commit to increasing sustainable food production, sustainable resource management, and implementing and improving natural drainage infrastructure.

Use neighborhood gatherings, community gatherings, and festivals to encourage local food growing.

Support local food growing activities with education and skill development opportunities.

**Work Plan:**

Direct City staff to review existing codes and develop a model code for Council adoption that will permit and encourage growing food on individual properties and in community gardens and remove barriers that may exist in current code. This should include land use codes relating to growing on or in buildings as well as limitations that might apply to outside growing. Publicize these opportunities and encourage residents and businesses to engage in them through a concerted effort involving all City agencies and

using a variety of channels including events and electronic and written media.

Direct City staff to inventory existing community gardens and prepare a plan for increasing the number of gardens on city and other land. The plan should consider what resources the City can invest in this activity and propose investments.

Task City neighborhoods staff with developing an EcoDistrict program in conjunction with utilities and other resource agencies. Identify policy and numeric targets to qualify as an EcoDistrict, resources or benefits that could be provided to communities that self-designate, and an outreach plan to encourage EcoDistricts to form.

**Key Actors:** City of Riverside, UC Cooperative Extension, neighborhood organizations, Community Garden Council, County Riverside Environmental Health

**c. Medium Priority: Reduce food waste.**

**Actions:**

Implement a strategy to manage food waste through collecting household food waste and promoting food waste reduction at city facilities, restaurants, institutions, and businesses. Use Master Gardeners and Master Composters to conduct composting workshops around the City. Consider a 'Zero Food Waste' campaign to encourage waste reduction.

**Work Plan:**

Adopt a comprehensive food waste reduction strategy that includes these programs to be implemented through the solid waste collection and management system.

**Key Actors:** Riverside Public Utilities, waste management companies, Master Gardeners and Master Composters, County of Riverside Environmental Health

## **5. Educate, Inspire, and Sustain Demand**

**Tell the Riverside food story through formal and informal educational resources and teach sustainable food systems and the history of food in the community.**

**Narrative: Production and demand are two sides of the same coin, and any strategy must incorporate both elements to be successful. Riverside has many characteristics that should make it an ideal location for local food, but these characteristics must be fostered, encouraged, and activated by educating and engaging the public. A comprehensive approach will include using a wide range of methods to support understanding local food in the context of Riverside’s agricultural heritage and encouraging individuals to consume local food, while working with institutional venues to ensure that local food is a cornerstone for the meals they provide.**

### **Policies to Pursue:**

**a. High Priority: Invest in a local food public education campaign.**

#### **Actions:**

Work with government, universities, private sector, and nonprofit associations to partner on a campaign to sustain demand for local food by educating around nutrition and local flavor as well as the environmental impact of food choices, and establish a ‘Riverside Agricultural Heritage Month’.

Use emerging technology, web-based applications, and community-based communication outlets to educate people about healthy food and publicize local food resources available to consumers. Develop a ‘Guide to Sourcing Local Food’ with an online interactive platform.

Focus on interactive programs and educational experiences that are appropriate for different audiences and respectful of the resources they have available. Collaborate with stakeholders to drive implementation.

#### **Work Plan:**

Bring together the City, schools, universities, and agricultural and food related organizations to create the local food/local agricultural heritage

campaign. Identify free or online media that can be used to kick off the campaign, and seek donations of design and production services to create appropriate materials. Enlist businesses that will benefit from this campaign to sponsor and fund this project. Make culturally relevant materials and venues a key element of this campaign.

**Key Actors:** School Districts, Master Gardeners, city staff, formal and non-formal education entities, Wood Street Green team, Public Health, local chambers, restaurant associations, co-ops, environmental and sustainability community based organizations, local farmers and growers

**b. High Priority: Engage schools and youth in supporting local, healthy food.**

**Actions:**

Work cooperatively with the School Districts to strengthen the Farmers' Market Salad Bar and other farm to school programs.

Leverage the educational role of the schools to engage parents and other adults.

Support and fund school gardens.

Work with local farmers and food-related businesses to create out-of-classroom experiences for children and supplement the K-12 curriculum.

Engage community resources such as 4H and Future Farmers of America to support education about local food and farming.

Seek additional funding for cooking and nutrition education in schools.

Establish 'Grow Riverside' internships for university and college students with farmers and food system providers.

**Work Plan:**

Bring together the City and the School Districts to support and strengthen school local food programs, school gardens, and parent engagement opportunities. Include voluntary organizations such as PTSA's and entities such as UC Cooperative Extension in the planning and design of next steps.

Approach the Farm Bureau and other farmer organizations and food-related businesses to develop the out-of-classroom experiences.

Develop ways to engage community resources and new funding for cooking and nutritional education in schools and activities such as internships.

**Key Actors:** UC Cooperative Extension, Master Gardeners, Riverside colleges and universities, School Districts and related organizations, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, Riverside County Education Department, 4H, FFA, formal and non-formal education entities, youth organizations and non-profits serving youth, County of Riverside Department of Public Health

**c. Medium Priority: Engage health care providers in supporting local, healthy food.**

**Actions:**

Forge partnerships with health care providers to integrate healthy food and active living programs and encourage providers to prescribe healthy, locally grown food.

**Work Plan:**

Encourage Kaiser to lead a project to identify and engage hospitals and other health care providers and persuade them to include healthy local food in their institutions and prescribed remedies. Kaiser can use its work to demonstrate a model for how to make this effective.

**Key Actors:** Kaiser, Path of Life, Safe House, County of Riverside Department of Public Health and clinics

**d. Medium Priority: Involve art and science in supporting local, healthy food work.**

**Actions:**

Create a program component that brings in the arts, sciences, and literary communities to support education and involvement around healthy eating and locally grown food. This can include connections with programs such as Artwalk, Riverside Reads, the Riverside Art Museum, the Inlandia Institute, and the Long Night of Arts and Innovation.



**Work Plan:**

Recommend that the Riverside Arts Commission convene a work group that brings together institutions, organizations, and individual artists to identify ideas for projects and programs that encourage healthy eating. Propose that the arts and science communities encourage a range of activities and incorporate healthy food activities into community programs and institutions.

**Key Actors:** Arts Commission, Chambers, Downtown partnerships, formal and non-formal education entities, RAM, Metropolitan Museum, libraries, Citrus Heritage Park, Riverside Citizens Science



Riverside's Downtown Farmers Market on Saturdays

## 6. Access for All

**Create a comprehensive strategy that gets healthy food to all.**

**Narrative: Access to healthy, local food is a critical part of a comprehensive local food policy. Many low income consumers lack the resources and information necessary to ensure that they can secure food at all, and engaging in the local food economy may increase the cost of the food – generally there will be positive returns in terms of nutrition and health benefits, but the lack of resources may make it difficult to realize those benefits. There are many agencies and organizations that are dedicated to addressing issues of hunger and nutrition, and, with additional resources, these agencies will be the key actors in developing a healthier population and ensuring that the benefits of a local food economy are widely shared.**

### **Policies to Pursue:**

- a. High Priority: Increase resources for getting healthy, locally grown food to all.**

#### **Actions:**

Work with existing agencies and policies to connect those in need with resources.

Support access to healthy food in School District nutrition programs and other places where there is the opportunity to serve significant numbers of people.

Develop and fund a concerted campaign to encourage signup for WIC and SNAP, and build alliances and coalitions that will integrate WIC, SNAP/CalFresh, and other programs to communicate a common message, share resources, and get people linked in.

Create a program to leverage nutrition assistance programs and increase their use and redemption at outlets offering fresh, healthy, and nutritious foods; this project could be built around increasing the value of SNAP/CalFresh and WIC dollars when they are used to purchase fresh produce.

Partner with local farms to identify new ways to get local healthy food to those in need.

**Work Plan:**

Convene a work group including the City, Health Department, United Way, food banks, and other agencies and entities involved in food assistance and develop a plan to coordinate resources and outreach strategies around healthy, locally grown food.

Ask School District leadership to ensure that healthy meals are available for all students regardless of income. This may require expanding outreach to parents to ensure that all eligible students are signed up for free/reduced price meals. If additional resources are needed, encourage School Districts to seek grant funding and assistance from the work group designated above to identify possible options.

Designate a backbone agency to coordinate a signup campaign for WIC and SNAP, and to bring together other programs around messaging and outreach. Through the work group, collaborate with governmental entities, foundations, and United Way to identify funding for this effort.

Empower the work group to identify resources from the private, non-profit, and governmental sectors that can be used to finance a 'Fresh Bucks' program that will increase the value of SNAP and WIC dollars when they are used to purchase fresh produce.

Support the work group in reaching out to farmers, farmer organizations, community gardens, and home gardeners to identify opportunities for donations or subsidized purchase of fresh produce that can be deployed to support those in need.

**Key Actors:** FSA—Mobile Fresh, Community Kitchens, Path of Life Ministries, Health Department, City and County, United Way, food banks, other agencies and entities involved in food assistance, School Districts, community gardens, home gardeners

**b. Medium Priority: Coordinate food assistance.**

**Actions:**

Work with food banks, emergency food providers, and home meal delivery organizations on a strategy for healthy meals, more fresh fruits and vegetables (including the use of wholesome unmarketable produce).

Encourage education on the nutritional value of fresh fruits and vegetables and on how to grow, use, and cook them.

Assist these entities to sponsor gleaning programs, gardening activities, and expanded ability to refrigerate foods.

**Work Plan:**

Create a commitment through the work group process to promoting healthy diets for food assistance clients, and assist them in identifying opportunities to educate and assist clients, including sponsoring gleaning programs and community gardens. Ensure that food assistance programs have the financial resources needed to provide adequate refrigerator capacity to keep fresh foods available and avoid spoilage.

**Key Actors:** United Way, public human service agencies and providers, food banks and other food providers, County of Riverside Department of Public Health

**c. Medium Priority: Expand community access.**

**Actions:**

Improve access to healthy foods by sponsoring a program to encourage and support healthy food retail outlets, healthy corner stores and pharmacies, and mobile food options including pop-up stores and carts.

Support and expand low-income CSA models to increase fresh food access.

Work with transportation and planning agencies to promote walkability, food access, and transit ridership.

Encourage widespread implementation of a Healthy Food Vending Machine policy modeled after the current guidelines.

## **Work Plan:**

Engage key retailers in designing and implementing ways to encourage the provision of healthy local foods at a variety of retail outlets.

Partner with producer and consumer cooperatives that use the CSA model to identify ways to do outreach to low income populations and creative ways to deploy food assistance resources to support CSA access.

Form a City staff led work group that engages transportation and planning staff in analyzing ways to promote walkability and transit ridership in planning for healthy food access.

Ensure that vending machines in City, Health Department, and health provider facilities follow the Healthy Food Vending Machine guidelines, and contact other major institutional and business entities that have vending machines to urge them to adopt a similar policy.

**Key Actors:** government and private human services staff, Chamber of Commerce and other business organizations, cooperatives, City transportation and planning staff, Health Department, health providers, vending machine operators and owners, store owners



Fresh, local food served at farm-to-fork dinners

## 7. Ensure Results

**Create a strategic environment that will promote success for the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan and develop metrics to evaluate its accomplishments.**

**Narrative: Incorporating a set of strategic directions will be essential to implementation of the Riverside Food Policy Action Plan. These include:**

- **Developing outcome oriented, win-win regulatory strategies;**
- **Breaking the barrier between regulation and promotion;**
- **Ensuring that policy makers are fully engaged;**
- **Creating cooperative frameworks that involve all stakeholders and regional partners;**
- **Embracing cultural diversity; and**
- **Developing metrics to measure improvements in the community.**

### **Policies to Pursue:**

#### **a. Strategic Consideration: Change the regulatory environment.**

##### **Actions:**

Review regulations and develop outcome oriented, win-win strategies.

##### **Work Plan:**

Survey farmers and entities engaged in technical assistance to identify regulations that present significant barriers to sustaining food production. Convene work groups of regulators and affected parties to explore possible approaches to making these regulations work effectively while reducing or eliminating barriers. If additional legislative authority is needed, pursue action by the appropriate legislative body.

**Key Actors:** City Economic Development staff (convener), regulators, farmers, technical assistance providers

**b. Strategic Consideration: Break the barrier between regulation and promotion.**

**Actions:**

Regulate to promote what you want to have happen, not to stop things you don't want to have happen.

**Work Plan:**

Direct staff to consider this in reviewing regulations and developing new ones.

**Key Actors:** City, County of Riverside Department of Public Health, other regulators

**c. Strategic Consideration: Inform, educate, and engage policy makers and engage a diverse array of organizations and participants.**

**Actions:**

Inform, educate, and engage policy makers and engage a diverse array of organizations and participants.

Develop a strategy to facilitate collaboration between policy makers and stakeholders of the Grow Riverside initiative to drive the effectiveness and impact of the Riverside Food Policy initiatives.

**Work Plan:**

Bring together the City and RFSA members to convene a meeting to brainstorm ways to engage policy makers and other organizations on an ongoing basis. This work should be coordinated with any follow-up activities of the RFSA and the ongoing organizational structure.

**Key Actors:** City, RFSA members

**d. Cooperative Framework: Bring together all parties to support local food.**

**Actions:**

Partner for a regional strategy: California Food Policy Council, County Nutrition Action Plan, Southern California Healthy Food Alliance, University of California Cooperative Extension, California Alliance for Family Farms, Farm Bureau, Agriculture Commissioner, Riverside Conservation Authority, HEAL Zone, Riverside/Corona Resource Conservation District, Kaiser, the Riverside Land Conservancy, colleges and universities, and any other relevant agencies and organizations.

**Work Plan:**

Make this an underlying principle for all activities. Remind work groups convened to implement this Food Policy Blueprint to seek partnerships whenever they design and implement activities.

**Key Actors:** City can coordinate

**e. Underlying Principle: Embrace cultural diversity.**

**Actions:**

All programs should embrace cultural diversity and the strengths of traditional diets, and take resources, education and advocacy, and strategic opportunities to where people live and gather and to traditional cultural institutions. Programs should engage a diverse array of partners.

**Work Plan:**

In every activity, identify a point person who will be responsible for facilitating cross-cultural communication and outreach and for raising these issues whenever policy initiatives are being designed and implemented. Sponsor as a City project the development of a Race and Social Justice screen to use to evaluate proposed initiatives.

**Key Actors:** All



**f. High Priority: Evaluate and assess outcomes.**

**Actions:**

Set verifiable goals and develop metrics that report on implementation and measure the effectiveness of these strategies and actions.

**Work Plan:**

Direct City staff to work with educational institutions to identify data that should be collected and a set of indicators to be reported on a regular basis.

Convene a forum to identify goals over time for each of the indicators.

**Key Actors:** City staff, RFSA



Mother and child at Tequesquite Community Garden



Rodney Taylor, RUSD's Director of Nutrition Services speaking with Robert Puro of Seedstock

## Next Steps

The City of Riverside has already positioned itself well to implement key recommendations of the Food Policy Action Plan by bringing on two new staff members in the Department of Economic Development with the specific mission of working on the food economy. These staff members have drafted a work plan that encompasses their engagement with the Food Policy Action Plan.

The City has other enthusiastic staff members who have been engaged in 'Grow Riverside' and in the RFSa process, and there is strong support from City elected officials. The RFSa has established a steering committee and work groups oriented around the six core food policy areas. There is a strong sense of enthusiasm among RFSa members and in the community. There are also many great connections with academic institutions, other governmental agencies, and businesses and organizations in the community.

The 'Grow Riverside' conference in June is a wonderful opportunity to engage even more people in seeing the vision and getting involved in making it happen. With all of these possibilities for leverage and activation, Riverside is well poised to dramatically transform its food systems by implementing this Food Policy Action Plan.

City staff members have noted, however, that in the past there have been several efforts to develop policies relating to concerns like the future of the Greenbelt and other food related issues, and that those initiatives wound up faltering and not producing results. They are convinced that the level of commitment and energy that is palpable in 2015 will prevent such a situation arising this time. But it is important to remember that this work is complicated and challenging, and requires significant investment of energy, patience, and resources.



Farm-to-Fork Dinner in the groves

The opportunities are clear and compelling. Persistence is the critical virtue that will bring them from proposals to fruition. Riverside can have an incredible food future. The soil is fertile, the seeds have been planted, and the sprouts are emerging from the ground, green and lush. The time is now for patient cultivation – and then reaping a plentiful harvest.

## **A Vision for the Future**

What will Riverside's future food system look like? It can already be visualized. It will be a future where everyone, regardless of their economic or social standing, will have access to healthy, nutritious, locally grown food.

It will be a future where good soils in the Greenbelt and beyond will be used to grow local food.

It will be a future where neighborhoods flourish and people share food they grow with each other and with those in need.

It will be a future where enthusiastic farmers meet hungry consumers at farmers markets and at many other places where fresh food will be readily available.

It will be a future where new businesses and restaurants are springing up and thriving by transforming good health and good flavor into profitable enterprises and energetic cooperatives.

It will be a future where young people start growing food and experiencing fresh flavor in their schools and communities, and carry those memories and values into the rest of their life.

It will be a future where active living and good nutrition reduce the incidence of degenerative disease, and where health care providers can focus on other priorities knowing that a healthy living baseline will be maintained.

Riverside will be a more resilient and sustainable city that approaches the coming decades with optimism and a strong sense of community.

This Food & Agriculture Policy Action Plan is a step towards that bright and tasty future. Now is the time to make it work.

## Riverside Food Systems Alliance Participants

***This list includes all individuals who attended RFSA meetings or asked to be on the notification list. Inclusion on this list does not necessarily indicate that an individual endorses all RFSA recommendations.***

Kimberly Adams  
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Cecilia Arias  
Scott Berndt  
Mark Berndt  
Jane Block  
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Barry Busch  
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Brent Casey  
Steve Davey

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Patricia Lock Dawson	Gayle Hoxter
Leah Di Bernardo	Deborah Jackson
Anthony Donaldson	Angela Janus
Pamela Earle	Eddy Jara
Gail Egenes	Keith Jones
Norman Ellstrand	Joyce Jong
Beverly Eskew	Tracy Kahn
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Ronaldo Fierro	Bob Knight
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Daniel Francis	Alannah LeBlanc
Jessica Fuller	Melanie Ling
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Mike Gardner	Christopher Manning
Erin Gettis	Steve Massa
Deborah Ghamlouch	Peggy Mauk
Hassan Ghamlouch	Tom Mazzetti
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Brian Griffith	Robin Meadows
Ken Gutierrez	Nick Melquiades
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Jenita Patel

Sala Ponnoch

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Kirsten Rolosan

Joey Romero

Diana Ruiz

Cheryl Ruzak

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