

2014 & 2015 Accomplishments

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND LOCAL FOODS

The existing Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan (BVCP) contains language focused on agriculture and food and states that a “strong local food system can positively impact the resiliency, health, economy and environment of the Boulder Valley and surrounding region.” At City Council's January 2014 retreat, the promotion of local food was identified as a city priority. Council proposed action items to fulfill this priority over the next two years, including development of a local food policy; incorporating elements of such new food policy into revisions of the BVCP; establishment of a cross-departmental team; and appointment of staff leads to address certain issues.

Based on council’s direction and staff’s evolving understanding of local food issues, the city accomplished the following in 2014 and 2015:

- **Agricultural Resources Management Plan** – Held a public comment period and study session with Open Space Board of Trustees and submitted an information packet to City Council on the topics of diversified vegetable production, alternative agriculture activities, and structures in support of agriculture, all in furtherance of developing an Agricultural Resource Management Plan in 2016.
- **Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Revisions** – Identified local food as a topic of focus for the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan update, presenting an opportunity to incorporate lessons learned into the comprehensive plan’s local food policies. The bulk of the work is expected to be completed in 2016.
- **Cottage Foods and Fresh Produce** – Passed an ordinance allowing retail sale fresh produce and cottage foods as a home occupation.
- **Cross-departmental Coordination** - Established a cross-departmental team to increase communications and awareness among departments on local food issues and assigned a staff member with responsibilities to continue coordination of these efforts. The team developed an inventory of related departmental efforts and developed, and is continually updating, a centralized webpage for the community, available at: www.bouldercolorado.gov/policy-advisor/local-foods.
- **Edible Landscapes** – The city’s Department of Open Space and Mountain Parks continued edible landscaping at the Ranger Cottage and OSMP-Forsberg building. Parks and Recreation conducted an ecological inventory of parks and other areas to convert to edible landscapes and, in the process, converted the north library garden into an edible educational demonstration garden complete with berries, veggies and plants for pollinators.

- **Food Justice and Access Needs -**
 - **Harvest Bucks Program** - The Department of Human Services in partnership with Boulder Farmer’s Market and Boulder County piloted the “Harvest Bucks” program for city of Boulder residents in 2014. The city contributed \$10,000 to the pilot program. The success of the pilot led to the expansion of support from partners, with the city providing \$15,000 in 2015. The program goal is to provide additional assistance for residents who rely on federal nutrition assistance from the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance) program or WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program to purchase locally grown, healthy foods from farmer’s markets. Participants received an incentive that matches the amount spent in federal benefits on fresh fruits and vegetables at the market. The Harvest Bucks Program has demonstrated successful outcomes of increased accessibility and affordability of healthy, local produce. The incentive has increased purchase of healthy produce at the markets by Harvest Bucks participants.
 - Parks and Recreation worked with Boulder Housing Partners and Youth Services Initiative (YSI) to look at opportunities to expand local food growing on neighborhood parks adjacent to housing projects.

- **Goal and Metric Development - Indicators** - Developed recommendations of indicators and data to collect on the current and potential production of local foods, a necessary precursor to development of goals, performance metrics and a citywide local food policy.

- **Growing/Urban Gardens** – The Parks and Recreation Department considered opportunities to expand community gardening in parks as well as community amenities to support local food (e.g., pavilions, picnic areas, and gathering areas). This included renewing a working relationship with Growing Gardens to support affordable access to and education surrounding healthy foods and urban gardening.

- **Identification of City Lands For Local Food Production** - The Open Space and Mountain Parks department assessed their portfolio of properties to determine their appropriateness for diversified vegetable production as part of a larger agricultural plan that is expected to be submitted for review by the Open Space Board of Trustees and City Council in the first quarter of 2016. Factors to be considered in the analysis include soil type and slope, water availability and number of run days, availability of outbuildings and relevant infrastructure, and compatibility with other management targets including ground nesting birds, prairie dogs, rare plants, and raptors.

- **Increasing Processing Options** – Open Space and Mountain Parks continued efforts with Boulder County Parks and Open Space and local processors (e.g., Innovative Foods & Bay State Milling)

to find regional processing and markets for other agricultural items already being produced on OSMP property, primarily beef and wheat, and non-GMO corn.

- **Leasing New Open Space** – Open Space and Mountain Parks readied two properties for use for diversified vegetable production for the 2015 growing season. This included nine acres of the Andrus property leased to 63rd St. Farm and fourteen acres of the Manchester property leased to Cure Organic Farm.
- **Leasing Water** - Continued leasing water to Boulder County farmers and ranchers that can be used in the late season to extend the growing season.
- **Local Food for Council Meals Pilot** – Completed an internal pilot to purchase local food for council meals.
- **Market Hall Feasibility** - Convened a working group, comprised of existing city partners, city staff and local experts who are operating in the food sector, for monthly meetings to take forward the community’s vision to have a year-round local foods market hall in the Civic Area. Then hired a consultant to undertake a feasibility analysis for such public market hall.
- **Procurement Policy** – Staff began exploring how the city could encourage and incentivize buying local food when city funds are involved, possibly moving toward a city procurement requirement in the future. As a first step, staff developed recommendations for updating current city guidelines encouraging healthy food purchases that include local foods.
- **Regional Partnerships** – Assuming a leadership role in the creation of a regional coalition, known as “Making Local Food Work,” which focuses on inspiring and supporting education events and serving as a central repository/clearinghouse for ongoing local food efforts in the region and, in relationship thereto, creating and launching [The Shed](http://www.TheShedBoulderCounty.org), a regional website available at www.TheShedBoulderCounty.org.

Contact

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