

Local Foods Stakeholder Meeting

September 11, 2014

Meeting Notes

Action Items:

- RVARC to compile and distribute notes.
- RVARC to independently determine commission goals for future meetings. New meeting dates will be released and a future agenda drafted.
- Stakeholders to send recommendations for topics they would like to explore further in determining the extent of our food system and food access.

Funding Sources Discussed:

Freedom First Credit Union is a CDFI, have been focusing on local food initiatives, geared towards small business loans.

Regional Commission has a subscription to a grant search software so let us know if you would like access to this. Also a data source for grant applications.

Spotlight Presentations Summaries:

RCGA

This organization has served Roanoke for 5 years, and has built six public community gardens, and two school gardens. They are working on another school garden next year and have applied for funding for three more school gardens. They also have two to three potential

garden projects in the works for next year in Gainsboro and Wasena, and are consulting with the City of Roanoke to establish a fruit orchard in a public park. Their newest garden is the Growing Goodwill garden, and they have also been approached by Goodwill to work on establishing a greenhouse which could be used as part of the Goodwill program to train senior citizens in applicable job skills. Lastly, RCGA seeks to promote education in how to garden and forage through workshops held around the city.

The organization has a board of seven members. Their offices are in Grandin, near Post Office and Grandin Gardens. The staff includes Mark Powell, Director; a full-time Vista worker responsible for grant writing and other development projects; a part-time person in program development who is grant-funded through the City of Roanoke and Carilion; and two Goodwill supported senior citizens in job training positions who work about 20 hours a week. RCGA identifies their biggest need as financial support from the community.

Food Access Report

Amanda McGee, intern and Masters candidate at Virginia Tech, is putting together a report of food access in the PDC that should be available once it is complete and published in the spring. It uses USDA data, Census data, data the Locavore Directory and RCGA, and data from RVARC concerning PDC infrastructure. The report mainly consists of maps that are designed to show the number of different demographics lacking food access

and the availability of infrastructure for those populations. Examples of some of the raw maps produced are available in the attachment. Please speak up if there are any suggestions in terms of data that should be included in mapping.

Suggested Projects:

Mark would like to see a map of fruit trees (send him the San Fran urban tree canopy mapping app)

Food by bike map/path for the City

Other topics:

Small groceries supply many of these areas – how can we encourage them to include local food on their shelves? How do we preserve small businesses through local food? More on the ground data collection would be needed to assess the feasibility of this. Including interviews in community about whether they would buy, and of grocery/corner store to see if they would carry local food.

How are we making sure to include minority populations? What minority driven organizations are working in food? West End Center? New Horizons? WIC representatives?

We need to establish a vision of the group and defined goals. Some suggestions included:

- Local food plan

- Food policy council
 - o Both require accumulating information about the local food system in existence, facilitated by community presentations.
- Also RVARC can provide a supportive role (and the group by extension) to current projects by existing organizations.

Carilion:

- Obligated by the IRS and ACA to conduct a Community Health Needs Assessment every 3 years
- First report completed in 2012
- Next Needs Assessment begins in January
- Want information to mobilize community action for health improvement
- Current projects include: fostering community collaboration in all markets; helped create Healthy RV; internal programs; twice a year funding to community partners working on needs identified by Needs Assessment
- Plan to improve community health to come out of Assessment, through program implementation