



Office of the Mayor

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To: Madison Food Policy Council Members

From: Mark Woulf, Food and Alcohol Policy Coordinator

Re: **Food Access Priorities and Working Groups**

Food access, in a variety of ways, was identified as one of the “Top Ten” goals for the Food Policy Council (FPC) in March 2013. Knowing that the issue of food access is extremely complicated and broad, members were asked to provide their priority topics within the realm of food access at the September Madison Food Policy Council meeting. Below, based on member feedback, analysis of academic papers, and known needs for the city of Madison, is a compilation of suggested working group topics. In order for the working group structure to be fruitful, working groups that the FPC decides to create should be based on priorities of the body and the appropriate time commitment by interested members. In other words, only as many working groups should be created as interest and time of FPC members allow.

As discussed at our last meeting, each working group will appoint a chairperson to be in charge of leading each group. Chair Fey will be providing additional information on proper rules for chairpersons in conducting committee business. I will also be providing additional information on legislative options and procedures to use as a guide (i.e. ordinances, resolutions, etc.) for the FPC. Chairpersons are expected to be the “expert” on their respective working group topic. They will be responsible for sharing inevitable overlap with other working groups and pulling in key stakeholders based on the conversation area. It is important to note that most working groups will have to do extensive information gathering as a first task.

Please read over the suggested working group topics and use as a guide for discussion and decisions on food access related working group formation. Members are encouraged to bring forth other potential working group topics to replace the staff suggestions or as potential future topics.

Topic: *EBT access at farmers’ markets*

This community is very lucky to be one of, if not the most advanced, in terms of the farmers’ market infrastructure. It seems essential to capitalize on this existing infrastructure by creating a working group to help improve access to these markets. This working group would be responsible for expanding the use of SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) at farmers’ markets through: securing EBT machines at every market, setting up sustainable staffing at markets in need, and incentive programs for SNAP users. Most of the farmers’ markets currently accept SNAP, but

not all. There are many grant opportunities for markets that do not currently have access to an EBT machine. There are not; however, many funding opportunities to ensure proper staffing of SNAP programming at farmers' markets. There is also the MadMarket Double Dollars program, currently in its first year of existence. There is a critical need to scale the program up, both in terms of fundraising and administration of program.

Topic: *Transportation to healthy food outlets*

Once again, in the spirit of taking advantage of existing opportunities, we are positioned well with one of the best bus transit systems, one of the best bike path systems, and some of the best pedestrian-friendly corridors in the country. Generally, we do not have a lack of full-service grocery stores within the city. However, we do have several neighborhoods that have a severe lack of access to a full-service grocery store, or at least an outlet that offers fresh, healthy, affordable food. This group would be responsible for analyzing our current transportation systems with the goal of looking for opportunities to alter or expand existing routes to improve transportation to food outlets, including, but not limited to, grocery stores, farmers' markets, and food pantries. This group should also study, or find a community partner to help study, the average transportation access for underserved neighborhoods (i.e. # of households with access to vehicles, distance from bus routes, bike routes, etc.).

Topic: *Food Education Opportunities*

This focus area could be formed in two different ways:

- 1) The working group is to bring together key groups who perform the task of nutritional and food preparation community education. The group will be responsible for identifying gaps and suggesting funding sources that may be federal or state pots of money. The key will be to determine whether supporting existing programming or creating new programming, or both, is the proper way to improve education in terms of nutrition and food preparation.
- 2) The other way to approach this issue is to broaden the topic to "academic partnerships." In other words, the group would encompass some of what is outlined in #1, but more broadly bring together academic resources to assist in asset mapping and needs assessments. The point of broadening this group would be to bring together adequate resources to help widen our knowledge of our current state of the food system.

Topic: *Increasing permanent retail in underserved neighborhoods*

Modeled after other communities, this focus group would be first tasked with asking existing grocers, small retailers, and other successful boutique models of food retail what type of incentives would have to be in place in order to locate in an underserved neighborhood. This is a complex issue that has much to do with matching a successful, profitable business model to an underserved neighborhood. The place to start seems to be one where the working group would gather information and, perhaps based off of that information, suggest a public/private program to incentivize new retail within underserved neighborhoods.

Topic: *Access to Alternative Food Sources*

“Alternative food sources” is a reference to community-supported agriculture, food banks, food pantries, mobile food markets, community dinners, and other emergency food sources. There are many ways to approach the issue, specifically, one would be to analyze ways to make CSA’s more accessible to low income participants. Another may be concentrated on the excess products that food banks receive and solutions to minimize the waste by looking at canning programs or other preservation techniques. This is a fairly broad area, so some discussion should go into focusing on the most pressing and attainable area.
