



DOUGLAS COUNTY, KS FOOD SYSTEM PLAN

QUICK GUIDE



DEVELOPED BY



Review the Douglas County Food System Plan in full at www.douglascountyks.org/fpc/food-system-plan

PURPOSE

Communities engage in planning activities to help guide future decisions. Planning can include land use, housing, transportation, economic development, and other key areas that shape a community. Local food system development is a new area of focus in planning—both nationally and in Douglas County.

This community plan, for the first time, provides strategic recommendations to help guide the development of the local food system in Douglas County, Kansas. Several themes emerged from the community in creating this plan:

Build relationships and understanding across the urban-rural divide

Find balance across the goals

Respect individual rights while upholding the common good

Implement actions and policies based upon community context

The plan was created as part of the process to update the Lawrence-Douglas County Comprehensive Plan (see insert box below), and **sets a framework for the next 10 years** to guide policy changes by our local governments, to shape the work of the Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC), and to inspire community actions and partnerships.

We hope you find something in this plan that excites and inspires you! If you do, please join us in building a more robust local food system. See [Moving the Plan Forward, page 11](#), for how you can get involved.

Formed in 2010, the Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC) is a body of 23 stakeholders from across the local food system, appointed by the Douglas County and City of Lawrence Commissioners. The Council advises these elected officials on food-related policy issues and provides a community forum for local food system development. Learn more at www.douglascountyks.org/fpc

Comprehensive plans, such as **Horizon 2020**, establish policies and guidelines for how a community will change over time. While updating the Lawrence-Douglas County Comprehensive Plan, nineteen topics were identified as important to include in the revision. These were summarized in an **Issue Action Report**.¹ Two issues directed the creation of the Douglas County Food System Plan:

Issue 13: Enhance Agricultural Uses & Rural Character in Douglas County

Issue 14: Encourage/Support Local Food System Development

Based on these issues, the DCFPC was asked to develop a set of goals, objectives, and policies. The Report directed the DCFPC to “ensure the master plan is fitting the true needs of the community.” This Food System Plan will be incorporated by reference into the comprehensive plan. This means that although composed separately, the Food System Plan also functions as part of the comprehensive plan.

WHAT IS THE FOOD SYSTEM?

Our local food system includes how we produce, buy, eat, and dispose of food in Douglas County. The journey our food takes from field to plate is influenced by ecosystems, education, culture, funding, research, and public policies. Working together can lead to many benefits in our community. This work includes strengthening connections between area producers and consumers to keep food dollars local.



Throughout this plan, you'll find key data points about our local food system. For a more comprehensive look at our food system, review the [2017 Douglas County Food System Assessment](#).

www.douglascountyks.org/fpc

What does local mean?

This report does not explicitly define “local.” It is important to remember that developing our local food system is not a choice between 100% locally-produced food or 100% imported food. The Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC) has decided to not set a working definition of “local” for the Council’s work (such as grown only in Douglas County, or grown within 200 miles of Lawrence). Nationally, we see a trend towards letting institutions, like a school district, set their own local definition — not public policymakers.² Regardless, the DCFPC serves as an entity to reduce barriers and support local food connections to benefit Douglas County residents.

What benefits can come from a strong local food system?

Economic vitality

- Profitable agricultural businesses
- Successful food entrepreneurs
- Good jobs and career opportunities

Wellness

- Access to nourishing foods
- Food and gardening skills
- Great tasting local produce

Ecological resilience

- Healthy and abundant soils and waters
- Ability to endure extreme weather events
- Waste reduction and reuse

Equity

- Good food for all
- Celebration of diversity
- Empowerment and inclusion

HOW WAS THIS PLAN CREATED?

Nearly a year's worth of community effort led to the creation of this plan. The DCFPC oversaw a robust community engagement process and conducted a secondary data review of our food system — from agricultural production to health to economic impact. The DCFPC collaborated closely with the Sunrise Project Community Coordinators, who assisted with targeted story collection within Lawrence. DCFPC staff also researched food systems planning examples in other communities.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2016, a wide range of community members helped identify needs, barriers, and topics of interest to address with this plan. The public engagement efforts included:

- 13 focus groups with community organizations
- 7 Community Coordinators reaching over more than 200 residents
- 480 respondents to a Lawrence Listens survey
- 5 public forums throughout Douglas County

Based upon community input and background data, the DCFPC and Community Coordinators came to consensus around five working goals, using the criteria framework described at right. From there, a draft plan was released to the public in January 2017, open for comments. Over the next five months, the groups worked with staff to review and refine the plan, including sharing it with elected officials and community partners. Technical assistance was provided during this review stage from PolicyLink and Public Health Law Center. Each step along the way informed the final plan before you today.

How were the plan's policies chosen?

A set of 5 criteria was used to select the objectives and policies included in this draft.

Need

Does this approach address an existing community barrier, resource gap, etc?

Community Interest

Have we heard about this topic from the community?

Impact

Do best practices suggest this approach could help us reach a goal?

Feasibility & Funding

Could this really get done?

Influence

Does this approach fall within the plan's jurisdiction?

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GOAL #1: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS, FOOD ENTREPRENEURS, AND FOOD SECTOR WORKERS THRIVE IN OUR REGIONAL ECONOMY

OBJECTIVE #1: Develop Local Food and Agricultural Businesses.	1. Maintain currently adopted policies for food systems economic development.
	2. Create a local food system low-interest revolving loan fund.
	3. Create a staff liaison to help local food producers navigate Douglas County policies and permits.
	4. Review existing resources to support food-based entrepreneurs and develop tools to address gaps.
	5. Invest in shared-use facilities for food-business production and retail.
	6. Target small business support to benefit immigrants, low-income residents and peoples of color.
	7. Apply economic development tools to support businesses addressing critical community food needs.
	8. Conduct periodic farm tours with local officials and agency staff.
	9. Ensure producers can develop skills in agricultural best practices in urban and rural settings.
OBJECTIVE #2: Promote local food, farms, and agricultural heritage tourism.	1. Review the impact of Douglas County agritourism policies and implement changes as needed.
	2. Execute an educational campaign about agritourism policies and business opportunities.
	3. Create a regional agricultural and heritage district.
	4. Promote and attract events that celebrate and enhance area agriculture and local food activities.
	5. Utilize the Transient Guest Tax program and Natural Heritage Conservation Council Grants to support local food, farms and agricultural heritage tourism activities.
OBJECTIVE #3: Increase local food purchasing.	1. Invest in signage, shared infrastructure, and coordinated marketing to support Douglas County farmers markets.
	2. Develop partnerships to support the adoption of local food purchasing guidelines and policies.
	3. Maintain an up-to-date Douglas County local food directory and associated efforts.
	4. Create a sustainable “buy local” consumer campaign with community partners.
OBJECTIVE #4: Expand workforce development and readiness within the local food system to prepare community members for successful employment.	1. Create skill and technical training opportunities for jobs and careers in food, culinary, and agricultural sectors.
	2. Develop a local initiative to help agriculture producers find farm workers.
	3. Support establishment of high-quality jobs in food-related sectors.
	4. Educate local businesses, residents, and policymakers about importance of safe, affordable housing and reliable transportation for food sector worker success.
	5. Support youth educational opportunities to develop food sector job skills, including food production and preparation.

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GOAL #2: AS OUR CITIES GROW, WE PRIORITIZE NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND MAINTAIN WORKING LANDS TO PROMOTE SOIL HEALTH.

OBJECTIVE #1: Protect high quality agricultural lands.	1. Utilize the protection of High Quality Agricultural Land as a key assumption in the sector planning process.
	2. Develop a method to monitor High Quality Agricultural Land protection efforts.
	3. Establish tools to protect High Quality Agricultural Land for farming that are economically feasible for the land owner. a. Create a dedicated fund for conservation easements. b. Identify local uses for Impact Fees, Transfer of Development Rights, public-private partnerships, or other funding mechanisms.
	4. Develop incentives, regulatory tools, and zoning standards that direct high density residential and commercial development within incorporated cities and their Urban Growth Areas.
	5. Assess feasibility of an agricultural reserve overlay district to encourage preservation of agricultural lands.
	6. Seek input of local farmers in planning and zoning matters.
OBJECTIVE #2: Conserve soil and water resources.	1. Maintain and increase financial support for soil and water conservation organizations.
	2. Identify alternative vegetation management policies for public roadsides to guide strategic weed control and establish native plants.
	3. Ensure public landscape maintenance adheres to best management practices, including integrated pest management, and does not negatively affect food production and water sources.
	4. Support the Governor's Vision for Water and the goals of the Kansas and Marais des Cygnes Watershed Regional Advisory Committees.
	5. Implement water rate policies that promote conservation and prioritize food production.
	6. Adopt policies to allow safe use of graywater and rainwater for irrigation.
	7. Study local water use patterns to identify potential areas for policy change to promote conservation.
OBJECTIVE #3: Improve soil and water quality.	1. Provide financial and in-kind support for implementation of practices that improve soil health and water quality.
	2. Engage in public restoration projects for critical water bodies and protective buffer zones.
	3. Utilize the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) framework and Kansas Watershed Regional Advisory Committee goals to inform local efforts and secure funding for high-priority projects.
	4. Conduct an analysis of local impacts from pesticide drift.
	5. Strengthen communication between specialty crop growers and agricultural chemical applicators.
	6. Minimize use of volatile chemicals on public land and review practices surrounding the sale of these products.

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GOAL #2: CONTINUED

OBJECTIVE #4: Support intergenerational land transition and beginning farmer land access.	1. Develop policy tools and programs to help directly link farmers with lands for production.
	2. Execute a communication campaign about changes to Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations.
	3. Expand the availability of business finance and technical assistance to support new food producers.
OBJECTIVE #5: Build the resilience of agricultural ecosystems.	1. Align County land use planning with findings from the Douglas County Natural Resources Inventory to advance protection of ecologically sensitive areas.
	2. Utilize the "Climate in the Heartland" report and similar research to identify adaptation actions to support local food production.
	3. Support programming to help agricultural producers and landowners adopt practices and technologies to enhance resilience.
	4. Encourage partners to share the importance of soil health and its economic benefits for agricultural risk mitigation.

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GOAL #3: WE BUILD AND DESIGN OUR COMMUNITIES TO ENSURE FOOD ACCESS, FOSTER HEALTH, AND ELIMINATE FOOD DESERTS.

OBJECTIVE #1: Reduce built environment and transportation barriers that limit food access.	1. Assess the policy barriers that may prevent grocery store locations in recognized food deserts.
	2. Ensure adequate mixed use neighborhood development in Lawrence.
	3. Design and build streets and public right-of-ways to include safe and convenient multimodal transit connections between residential areas and food access points.
	4. Locate publically supported food access programs along bus routes, bike routes, and connected pedestrian paths.
	5. Operate Lawrence transit routes to include access to grocery stores, food pantries, and established farmers markets.
	6. Identify and address policy barriers that limit mobile food distribution options.
OBJECTIVE #2: Expand urban agriculture and community-based food production.	1. Expand food production on public land.
	2. Integrate fruit tree plantings and harvest programming as part of Park and Recreation operations.
	3. Promote urban agriculture policy outreach through accessible publications and community events.
	4. Create a future vision and action plan for the City of Lawrence Common Ground program, targeting expansion to engage underserved communities.
	5. Collaborate with community partners providing food production education to build residents' skills.
	6. Encourage private developers to incorporate food production in their projects and landscapes.
	7. Develop resources about policies that support agriculture-based cluster subdivision developments.
OBJECTIVE #3: Make Healthy Food Choices More Convenient.	1. Maintain support for strategies and actions identified in the Lawrence-Douglas County Community Health Plan.
	2. Establish policies that support healthier food environments.
	3. Develop supports for neighborhood retailers to stock and promote nutritionally-dense food options, including fruits and vegetables.
	4. Adopt public procurement guidelines that ensure the availability of nutritious food options.

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GOAL #4: OUR COMMUNITY FOSTERS AN EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEM

OBJECTIVE #1: Apply equity principles to local government food system efforts.	1. Develop new relationships with organizations and businesses working with underserved and traditionally marginalized residents to identify collaborations to address community needs.
	2. Engage underserved and traditionally marginalized residents in public local food programs.
	3. Utilize community partner funding to encourage programming that empowers underserved and underrepresented residents.
	4. Develop strategies to ensure public communications are accessible to all.
	5. Adopt a policy to encourage diversity in local government appointments to advisory boards and commissions.
	6. Identify opportunities to build community food security preparedness.
OBJECTIVE #2: Expand City- and County-led initiatives to make food more affordable.	1. Reduce and eliminate the sales tax on groceries.
	2. Support public food assistance programs for families with children.
	3. Support public food assistance programs for seniors.
	4. Support the expansion of the Double Up Food Bucks program.
	5. Expand reach and awareness of public programs and educational opportunities that increase food access and build food preparation skills.
	6. Maintain and develop policies and programs to reduce poverty.
OBJECTIVE #3: Strengthen collaboration with community partners to ensure all residents have enough food.	1. Analyze the current demand for emergency food assistance with community partners to identify gaps and pursue needed change.
	2. Prioritize City and County funding for community partners providing healthy food to residents in need.
	3. Engage in inter-organizational collaboration among emergency food providers.
	4. Expand summer meal participation and feeding sites throughout Douglas County.
OBJECTIVE #4: Celebrate diversity and cultural heritage as part of local food promotion.	1. Target entrepreneurship support to help minority-owned and ethnic food businesses.
	2. Expand food service offerings in public spaces to include foods from diverse cultural traditions.
	3. Facilitate connections between area agricultural producers and ethnic food retail outlets.
	4. Promote diverse food traditions held by Douglas County residents as part of public health campaigns.

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GOAL #5: OUR COMMUNITY ELIMINATES WASTE IN OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

OBJECTIVE	POLICY
OBJECTIVE #1: Foster a community culture of waste reduction.	1. Research and identify local policy opportunities to discourage waste generation and encourage diversion as appropriate.
	2. Support organizations, institutions, and businesses to conduct food waste audits and implement best practices.
	3. Encourage consumer educational programs about meal planning, cooking, and food preservation.
	4. Adopt public procurement policies that guide waste reduction.
	5. Develop a strategy to target public events as “Zero Waste Events”.
	6. Develop a communications campaign with community partners to promote waste reduction and encourage behavior change.
OBJECTIVE #2: Encourage food recovery practices and policies to supply safe, nourishing food to families in need.	1. Prioritize community partner funding to support food recovery.
	2. Support the coordination and collaboration of pantries and emergency food providers to increase the scale, efficiency, and efficacy of recovering safe, healthy food from area retail food outlets.
	3. Develop an outreach strategy to promote food donation and recovery with local businesses and food service operations.
	4. Promote donations to emergency food providers from home and community gardens.
	5. Encourage and enable on-farm gleanings programs with area growers.
OBJECTIVE #3: Create composting programs for commercial, institutional, and residential settings.	1. Maintain implementation of the 2012 Solid Waste Task Force report and implementation of Douglas and Jefferson Counties Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.
	2. Analyze the feasibility of expanding City of Lawrence Solid Waste composting operations to include food waste and compostable food service items.
	3. Encourage Douglas County communities to work with private waste haulers to expand commercial and residential services to collect food waste.
	4. Maintain and expand public outreach, funding, and trainings to support backyard composting.
	5. Support business and institutional participation in commercial and site-based food waste composting programs.

MOVING THE PLAN FORWARD

The Food System Plan will serve as a guidance document for City of Lawrence and Douglas County for the next 10 years, 2017-2027. Success in implementing the objectives and policies depends upon the work of many different actors throughout our local food system.

ROLE OF THE DOUGLAS COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

As an advisory body, the Douglas County Food Policy Council (DCFPC) will serve as the principle implementation body for the Food System Plan. Staff members from Lawrence and Douglas County will support the DCFPC to accomplish its work. Once adopted, the DCFPC and staff will oversee an on-going process to:

- **Prioritize initiatives**, including creating work timelines and identifying available resources.
- **Clarify responsibility** for working on specific actions.
- **Assess progress** and identify indicators to track progress.
- **Maintain community engagement**, identifying community partners to collaborate with for specific initiatives — with particular attention to health equity and the sustainability of adopted policies, practices, and programs.
- **Ensure accountability** in meeting goals and objectives.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Do your interests connect to something in the plan? There are multiple ways you can build upon the connections between your priorities and our community's local food system goals. Throughout this document, the importance of collaborations to further policy change and create community impact is a common theme. Community organizations, institutions, businesses, and residents all play a role in helping transform this plan from a vision to reality.

Engage with the DCFPC!

- Attend a meeting and share your ideas
- Host a meeting of the DCFPC and share about your work
- Invite the Council to give a presentation
- Join the Council as a member or work on an initiative with a subcommittee

All DCFPC meetings are open to the public

Take action with the plan!

- See what inspires you and aligns with your current work
- Spearhead a new effort or build new collaborations
- Enhance fundraising
 - Ask the Council for a letter of support for a grant you're writing
 - Invest in plan objectives and policies

Connect

 www.douglascountyks.org/fpc

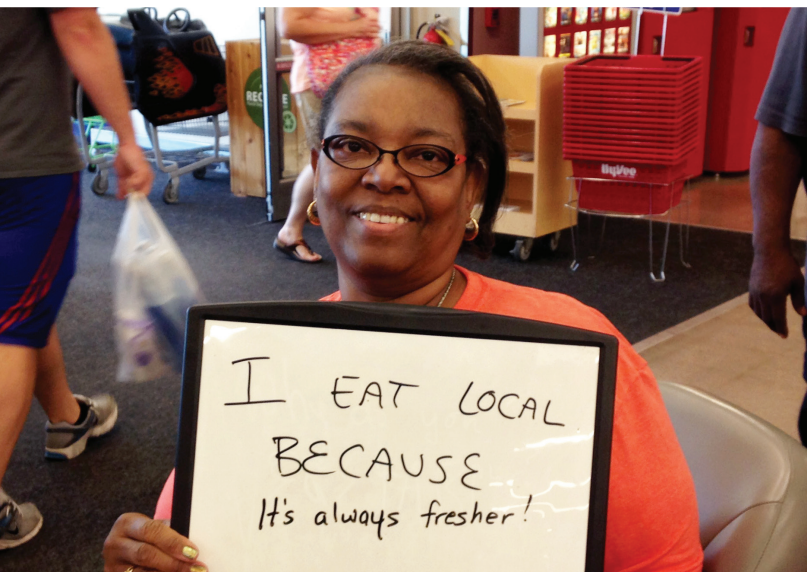
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COVER PHOTOS

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BACK COVER PHOTOS

A. Shafer Photography, (top left and bottom right), Helen Schnoes (bottom left), Earl Richardson, earlrichardson.com (top right)

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

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