

CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



Agenda Date:	October 15, 2018
Action Required:	Appropriation
Presenter:	Rebecca Schmidt, M.P.A., Population Health Manager, Thomas Jefferson Health District
Staff Contacts:	Denise Bonds, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Thomas Jefferson Health District Kaki Dimock, Acting Assistant City Manager
Title:	Food Equity Initiative Funding Support - \$65,000

Background:

On April 17, 2017, Dr. Denise Bonds, Director of the Thomas Jefferson Health District (T.J.H.D.) provided an overview of the work produced by the “Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships” (M.A.P.P.) committee for Planning District 10 of the T.J.H.D., (known as the M.A.P.P.2 Health Report.) Dr. Bonds also presented data that demonstrated the need to expand access to healthy, nutritious, affordable food into Charlottesville’s low wealth neighborhoods through programs like the “Healthy Corner Store Initiative” in Richmond, VA. Among the key findings highlighted in Dr. Bonds’ presentation and underscored by Councilor Galvin (who was City Council’s representative on the M.A.P.P. committee) were:

- The lowest expenditures of fruits and vegetables are in our lowest income census tracts (Q.C.T.s)¹ such as within the heart of the *Strategic Investment Area (SIA)*; Soda expenditures are highest in our lowest income census tracts (Q.C.T.s); and
- There is a higher rate of obesity among African-American 5th graders than their white classmates.

City Council directed the health department and City staff to “*research how the Healthy Corner Store Initiative could work in Charlottesville for the benefit of the City’s Q.C.T. residents. Work with the Redevelopment Manager to identify feasible sites and partners in the S.I.A. Report back to City Council with a recommended resolution for adoption and strategy for implementation.*”

Discussion:

The Thomas Jefferson Health District (T.J.H.D.) worked with City staff to research the healthy corner stores model. Through that research, the health department discovered a newly developed program for healthy retail, *Shop Smart, Eat Smart*, funded and staffed by the Virginia Cooperative Extension. T.J.H.D. is actively exploring a partnership to support the implementation of the program, targeted to S.N.A.P. vendors, which includes (1) building demand for healthy foods already available in partner stores, and (2) supporting supply changes to increase stocking of healthy foods.

The most successful city initiatives (Toronto, Baltimore, Minneapolis, etc.) invest in multiple strategies to improve equity in the whole food system. The health department recommends that the City incorporate

¹ QCT means the census tract has either a 25% or greater poverty rate or 50% or more of its households have income less than 60% of the area median gross income.

healthy retail into a broader, coordinated initiative to reduce disparities in food access at multiple points. This initiative will expand linkages among existing programs and will include community engagement, diversified funding and policy change. We also recommend that the City approach this work, as Councilor Galvin highlighted, with a focus on equity and dedicate City staff time and resources to support it.

The following points are critical to successful adoption and implementation of a systems approach to food equity in Charlottesville and reflect recommendations from the American Planning Association, feedback from local food justice advocates and national research.

- **Government Support & Integration:** The initiative must engage City staff from multiple departments to ensure coordination of food system policy and planning. Critically, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan should include specific references to food system equity, aligning the City with best practices nationwide.
- **Commitment to Equity:** Understanding the historical context in which food insecurity developed in Charlottesville is critical to making systems change that builds on individual healthy food choices.
- **Grassroots Community Engagement:** The initiative should engage community members through new and existing structures with opportunities for comment and input, especially from individuals who have experienced/are experiencing food insecurity.
- **Multi-sector Engagement:** While community-based non-profit organizations are critical partners, there are opportunities for this initiative to engage multiple sectors including developers, retail, restaurants and others. The Toronto Food System and Baltimore Food Policy Initiative graphics (Attachment 3) demonstrate the importance and the impact of this food system approach.
- **Partner with Existing Networks/Coalitions:** The initiative would need to include members of the Charlottesville Food Justice Network, M.A.P.P. 2Health Charlottesville-Albemarle Council and the Move2Health Coalition to ensure alignment with existing work.
- **Diversified Funding:** Because of the many agencies working in food access and food justice in Charlottesville, it is important that the City's commitment align with rather than shift funding from existing work. One of the core activities for the initiative's team would be pursuing additional funding.
- **Data:** Implementing a food system assessment is a key activity for this initiative.
- **Education:** It will be important to continue to educate community members, community agencies and other partners on food access including terminology, evidence-based practices, and critically, current work and progress made.

TJHD requests support for a Food Equity Initiative for the City of Charlottesville and \$65,000 in funding to support coordination of the initiative. The (T.J.H.D.) returned \$49,784 in end of year FY 2017 funds and is requesting that the City re-allocate these funds to complete the activities and meet the outcomes outlined in Attachment 2. The remaining \$15,216 would need to be allocated from FY 2019 operational budget.

The Food Equity Initiative Coordinator(s) will be housed at Charlottesville Food Justice Network, a program of City Schoolyard Garden, which will serve as fiscal agency for the initiative. Oversight will be shared by city staff, City Schoolyard Garden, and T.J.H.D. staff.

Year One goals for the initiative are:

- Compile & disseminate research including an analysis of the local food system
- Establish mechanisms for community voice and lived experience
- Plan for sustainability
- Provide expertise and recommendations to decision-makers on improving local practice and policy
- Identify & apply for opportunities to highlight the City's food equity work

The Food Equity Initiative believes strongly in a collaborative approach, using evidence-based practices, ensuring that the community drives the process, and supporting local food equity leaders.

This initiative is strongly aligned with recently completed community health assessments, the 2016 Community Health Improvement Plan, the vision of Move2Health, and the Charlottesville Food Justice Network's nine recommendations for policy and practice identified in C.F.J.N.'s white paper, entitled *Building a Healthy and Just Local Food System*.

Alignment with Council Vision Areas and Strategic Plan:

This proposal aligns with City Strategic Plan Goal 2: Healthy & safe city

Community Engagement:

Collectively, 105 community partners, 10 community coalitions and more than 2,885 residents came together to assess the community's health through the M.A.P.P.2Health process. The input of these stakeholders and community members led to the development of the Community Health Improvement Plan, including the four priority areas and locality-specific strategies. The implementation of a Healthy Corner Stores model for Charlottesville was one of the strategies selected by the Charlottesville-Albemarle Community Health Assessment Council under the *Healthy Eating and Active Living* priority area.

Additionally, through the Charlottesville Food Justice Network, more than 20 organizations have been collaborating to engage 1,325 community members in over a dozen forums to generate a vision for healthy and just food system (see Attachment 4). The C.F.J.N. framework is a localized adaptation of U.S.D.A. Whole Measures for Community Food Systems tool, which takes a participatory, values based approach to food system analysis and development.

Budgetary Impact:

The TJHD requests \$65,000 to support the launch of the Food Equity Initiative.

The support for the Food Equity Initiative would come from previously appropriated FY 2019 General Fund dollars. \$50,000 would be transferred from the Citywide Reserve account in the General Fund of which \$49,784 were returned to the City from the Thomas Jefferson Health District (T.J.H.D.) in end of year FY2017 funds.

The remaining \$15,000 to support the program would be transferred from previously appropriated FY 2019 funding in the Council Priority Initiatives account.

Recommendation:

Staff recommend approval of the Food Equity Initiative plan and allocation of \$65,000 in funding to support its implementation.

Alternatives:

- Council could fund the initiative using the Council's equity set aside
- Council could fund the initiative for a different amount or time period
- Council could choose not to fund this initiative

Attachments:

1. Data

In Charlottesville, 16.9% or 1 in 6 residents face food insecurity, meaning that they do not have consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life (Feeding America, 2017 (2015 data)). This is in comparison to Virginia's average of 11.2%. In half of Charlottesville's public elementary schools, more than 85% of students are eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals (Virginia Department of Education, 2016-2017). Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of unhealthy eating, and have a decreased or no ability to make their own food choices (P.S.R.C., 2012).

Food insecurity, race and income are closely linked. Nationally, 38.3 percent of households with annual incomes below the official poverty line are food insecure, compared with 5.6 percent of those with incomes at or above 185 percent of the poverty line (Alisha Coleman-Jensen, 2017). In addition, food insecurity is nearly double for African American families compared to the national average (Alisha Coleman-Jensen, 2017). In Charlottesville, 25.9% of individuals live below the poverty level and 17% of families make less than \$25,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016). In addition, in six (6) of Charlottesville's twelve (12) census tracts, more than 50% of families earn less than necessary to pay for the bare essentials to support a family (with a range of 18%-64%)².

Disparities in health outcomes due to diet-related diseases are another measure of inequity in a food system. Both the overconsumption of calories, added sugars, and saturated fats and the under consumption of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, have significant impacts on health conditions. In adults, food insecurity is associated with poorer mental health, diabetes and hypertension (Ziliak, 2015). In children, food insecurity is associated with anemia, cognitive problems, anxiety, and higher risk of being hospitalized and poorer general health (Ziliak, 2015). Currently, there is little community-level data available for Charlottesville. Data that is available shows a marked disparity in childhood obesity: 30% of white 5th graders versus 43% of African American 5th graders are classified as overweight or obese (Charlottesville City School System, 2014).

² Using ACS 2012-2016 5 year estimates of family income and United Way ALICE report Household Survival Budget for Charlottesville of \$55,656 for a family of two adults and two children.

The Charlottesville Food Equity Initiative

Existing Food System	Emerging Food System
Prioritizes mass production	Prioritizes health
Food is not seen as the business of cities	Food is seen as a strategic vehicle for meeting city goals
Founded on access to cheap fossil fuels	Environmental protection is a cornerstone of food production, processing and distribution
Market forces determine location of food stores	Neighborhoods are planned with food access in mind
Food pricing unconnected to nutritional benefit	Food pricing favors healthy choices
Food issues carved up into separate government departments and jurisdictions	Food solutions come from collaborative partnerships within and among governments and civil society

Table 1: City of Toronto Food Strategy, 2010

Description

The Charlottesville Food Equity Initiative will bring together public, private, and non-profit partners working in unique and complementary ways to build a healthy and just community food system for all Charlottesville residents. The Initiative will cultivate community driven processes, resident leadership and business engagement to improve access to and quality of nutritious and affordable foods and addressing barriers to food equity.

Goals

1. Increase food access and equity for Charlottesville community members facing food insecurity
2. Increase collaboration and impact of diverse stakeholders engaged in building community food equity
3. Increase strategies to address community health disparities across race and economics
4. Increase knowledge of food equity practices by food system organizations and the Charlottesville community at large
5. Increase community participation in food equity planning and implementation, especially for community members experiencing food insecurity
6. Provide opportunities for leadership and job training among young adults in food equity issues

Activities and Outcomes: July 2018 – September 2019

- A. **Compile and disseminate research** including an analysis of food system assessments that identifies gaps and opportunities for investment, current food access efforts, and communication strategies to engage stakeholders including community members, business owners and elected officials.

Outcome 1: By Aug. 2019, build on existing research to compile an analysis of the gaps and opportunities for investment, current food access efforts, and communication strategies to engage stakeholders including community members, business owners and elected officials.

Outcome 2: Launch an interactive Food Equity website and social media campaign to disseminate information and engage community members on action and policy efforts.

- B. **Establish mechanisms for community voice** including both formal and informal meetings with oversight by community stakeholders and community members on programs and broader food access issues.

Outcome 1: By Aug. 2019, host a series of community events engaging over 1,200 community members and stakeholders in food justice.

Outcome 2: Provide opportunities for over 500 community members and stakeholders in to engage in visioning and definition of Charlottesville food justice priorities.

- C. **Plan for sustainability** by pursuing additional funding for long-term investment at the city, agency and community member levels.

Outcome 1: By December 2018, secure a funding match of at least \$50,000 to support this initiative.

Outcome 2: By June 2019, present a diversified multi-year funding plan to City Council.

- D. **Contribute subject matter expertise** to discussions on transportation, zoning, and other planning and policy development to ensure that the City, the University of Virginia, community organizations and citizens are aware of the impact of policy on food equity.

Outcome 1: By October 2018, the Initiative will submit food equity edits for at least three chapters of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Outcome 2: By Aug. 2019, the Initiative, with input from food insecure communities, will publish and present a food policy agenda to City Council.

- E. **Identify and apply for opportunities to highlight the City's food equity work** statewide and nationally.

Outcome: By Aug. 2019, develop a plan for learning exchanges, such as presentations at national conferences that will extend Charlottesville's food equity reach to statewide, regional and national partners.

Additional Opportunities

- Allow exceptions for developments that install urban agriculture instead of parking spaces
- Allow increased height restrictions for rooftop gardens
- Limit advertising/coverage of windows with tobacco, alcohol or junk food advertisements
- Prioritize the maintenance of existing sidewalks and roads that link to grocery stores, food pantries and other food sources
- Utilize a percentage of the meal tax specifically for supporting healthier meals in school

RESOLUTION

**Food Equity Initiative Funding Support
\$65,000**

WHEREAS, the City of Charlottesville desires to support the coordination of a Food Equity Initiative for the City of Charlottesville in the amount of \$65,000; and

WHEREAS, the Thomas Jefferson Health District returned \$49,784 in end of year FY2017 funds to the City of Charlottesville Citywide Reserve,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, Virginia that the funding support for the Food Equity Initiative is hereby transferred in the following manner:

Transfer From:

\$50,000 *Fund: 105* *Cost Center: 1631001000* *G/L Account: 599999*

\$15,000 *Fund: 105* *Cost Center: 1011001000* *G/L Account: 599999*

Transfer To:

\$65,000 *Fund: 105* *Cost Center: 9733001000* *G/L Account: 599999*

This page intentionally left blank