

Mahoning Valley Food Charter

This Mahoning Valley Food Charter is a statement of our values concerning the economic, health and environmental impact of our local food system. Our food system represents a major component of our regional economy and when redirected it will be leveraged to promote economic growth and prosperity.

Every resident in Mahoning Valley should have access to an adequate supply of fresh, nutritious locally produced and processed food.

Every neighborhood should have reliable access to the foods needed for a healthy diet. When these foods are locally produced, they have additional benefits of:

- reducing the climate impacts of distance-shipped or highly processed foods,
- increasing urban green space and community gathering spaces in urban neighborhoods,
- fostering stronger connections between urban and rural communities, and;
- strengthening the local and regional economy.

This Charter is intended to facilitate collaborations and relationships that will support production and processing practices that are at once environmentally and economically sustainable.

Economic Impact of our Local Food System

According to a 2008 study conducted by the Ohio State University Extension, the residents in Northeast Ohio collectively spend an estimated \$9.2 billion annually on food, 3 % of that food is grown and/or processed in Ohio. However, very few of these food dollars support local farmers or local food businesses in Northeast Ohio. According to the same study, current market demand for fruits and vegetables consumed in the household alone is estimated to be valued at \$567 million. Moreover, current regional demand for meat consumed in the household is valued at just over \$1 billion. Thus, our food system represents a major component of our regional economy and can be leveraged to promote economic growth and prosperity.

Health Impact of our Local Food System

Food access is a growing problem for many urban neighborhoods in Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties. According to the Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaboratives 2008 Food Desert Survey, for many residents in the Mahoning Valley, good health is simply beyond their reach.

Today, Youngstown's unemployment rate is 13.9 percent, compared to the national rate of 9.4 percent. City households earn approximately half the income of their counterparts

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throughout the state of Ohio, and fully one-third of city residents live in poverty. As population within the core cities has declined, grocers and other stores providing fresh produce and nutritious foods have left the city, leaving the remaining residents with little or no access to the choices necessary to maintain a healthy diet.

Though five full-service supermarkets are located within the City of Youngstown, 70.7 percent of the total population (94.4 percent of the African-American population) is located outside a one-mile supermarket service area. In addition, of those households without access to an automobile, 78.8 percent are located outside the one-mile service area. With limited access to full-service supermarkets, a majority of Youngstown residents are reliant upon neighborhood corner stores. Frequently, corner stores stock a vast majority of unhealthy nutritional choices: snack foods high in fat and calories, sugary drinks, liquor, and tobacco.

Considering these limited options in tandem with the disproportionate availability of fast food choices to healthy food choices, it is no surprise that local obesity, diabetes, and asthma rates exceed the national average in our MSA.

Food security means that every neighborhood has reliable access to the foods needed for a healthy diet. To the extent that these foods are locally produced, they have additional benefits of:

- reducing the climate impacts of distance-shipped or highly processed foods,
- increasing urban green space and community gathering spaces in urban neighborhoods,
- fostering stronger connections between urban and rural communities, and;
- strengthening the local and regional economy.

To promote regional economic development and food security for our neighborhoods, the City of Warren, the City of Youngstown and Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties will work together to champion a local food system that secures the right of all residents to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable foods. Therefore, the City of Warren, the City of Youngstown and Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties will work to:

Encourage collaboration between government agencies, businesses, institutions, and non-profit organizations around the growth of a reliable and healthy local food system;

Advocate for efforts to increase food access in neighborhoods throughout the city and county through corner stores, small businesses, farmers markets, community supported agriculture, mobile markets, buying clubs, cooperatives, or other neighborhood-based distribution systems;

Integrate food systems with urban planning to insure housing, employment, and transportation patterns that support convenient and affordable access to food in urban neighborhoods;

Promote nutrition programs and services that motivate behavior changes, and help with the prevention of diet-related diseases;

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Adopt food purchasing practices for public institutions and government agencies that support local farmers and environmentally responsible businesses and invest resources in local capacity;

Encourage urban agriculture in the form of home gardens, community gardens, and urban farms that increase food self-reliance, green the environment, improve fitness, provide youth employment, and enhance community development;

Facilitate collaborations with rural communities to preserve agricultural land, increase market access, economic viability and infrastructure to support and sustain area farmers;

Foster a civic culture that inspires young people, adults, and elders to adopt local seasonal eating habits and to work together to support food programs and markets that benefit health, social diversity, and ecological stewardship;

Facilitate efforts to divert food waste, yard waste, and other organic wastes from solid waste streams to build soil fertility for local farms and gardens;

Promote education and services around food safety, food preservation, and food handling;

Support events that use food to highlight the multicultural traditions and histories of the Mahoning Valley's neighborhoods and communities.

Signatures

Columbiana Board of County Commissioners

Mahoning Board of County Commissioners

Trumbull Board of County Commissioners

City of Warren – Mayor’s office

Warren City Council

City of Youngstown – Mayor’s office

Youngstown City Council