



Healthy Local Food Systems

Recommendations of the Saint Paul Environmental Roundtable

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Overview

The City of Saint Paul is an acknowledged national and international leader in creating a vision for a municipal food policy. Saint Paul is among six cities, including Los Angeles and Toronto, known to have invested time and resources in planning for a sustainable food system¹. The results of that process, which culminated in the 1987 Saint Paul City Municipal Food Policy, is a visionary and foundational document that can direct community and City efforts to this day. The St. Paul Commission on Food and Nutrition was appointed to implement the policy, but came to an end in 1999

¹ C. Clare Hinrichs and Thomas A. Lyson. In press. Food Policy Councils as a Tool for Sustaining Regional Food Systems. In *Remaking the North American Food System* University of Nebraska Press.

without realizing the whole vision of the Food Policy. Since then there has been no organized municipal attention to food policy in the City, until now...

The Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy is a seminal policy document that provides a firm foundation for environmental protection, public policy, community health, and economic diversity. Another foundation of local foods efforts in Saint Paul is the vital and active network of community gardeners. This policy, however, is much larger than community gardening. It touches on many of the critical issues that challenge our food system today.

The original comprehensiveness of the Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy is a real tribute to the forward thinking vision of the community and the City Council. As part of our work on the Environmental Roundtable, we organized our "healthy food systems" discussion around the 1987 Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy.

The Need for a Local Food Policy

The City of Saint Paul regulates many basic needs, such as safety, water, transportation, and housing, but the city has initiated very few food system planning efforts. The City and Ramsey County have several policies that affect food quality and food safety, but very few that affect food production, distribution, and consumption. Understanding all local policies can help community food security advocates be more effective, whether they seek to influence local policy directly or to manage projects affected by those policies. A municipal food policy can insure that all residents of Saint Paul will have access to safe, affordable and nutritious food.

Here are some of the reasons why we need to revive the St. Paul Municipal Food Policy:

Obesity: As a nation, and certainly in St. Paul, Minnesota, we face a looming obesity crisis. Medical experts agree that obesity shortens the lifespan, increases health care costs and, with particular reference to children, has led to a sharp rise in childhood onset of diabetes. Obesity is approaching smoking as the top preventable cause of death in this country.

National Security: There is a likely prospect of major food-related crises in the next 20 years. Additionally, as developing countries exert greater influence in the global food market there will be increased competition for food resources, just at a time when developed countries experience a decline in farmland and in the number of farmers.

Economic Development: The St. Paul Municipal Food Policy envisioned support for the creation of local businesses that facilitate the production, processing and distribution of food. A food policy can positively influence the development of small-scale, neighborhood-based food production, processing and marketing businesses and can work at the grassroots level to include food related businesses in small area development plans.

Environmental benefit: A food policy for the City of Saint Paul can encourage citizens to grow food in their own yards or collectively on public land as catalyst for beautifying neighborhoods and public open space. By diversifying the plant stock in the City, gardens significantly improve habitat for birds, pollinators and other insects. In addition, gardens are more efficient in absorbing rainfall than turf providing better management of rainwater.

Finally, increasing local food production and consumption decreases reliance on polluting transportation systems that daily stock the City's restaurants and grocery stores. The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture calculated the average miles that food travelled from point of production to consumer—1,400 miles. Local production of fruits and vegetables, which consist largely of water, are an important component to reducing the amount of petro-chemicals used in the food system.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Recommendation #1: Implement 1987 Food Policy

We recommend that the City of Saint Paul commit to implementing the previously approved 1987 Municipal Food Policy. We propose that Sustainable Saint Paul be charged to convene a diverse group of stakeholders to update the food policy in order to assist the City, in coordination with interested nonprofit and community groups, to evaluate the policy's merits and overcome the barriers to its implementation. *The 1987 Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy is attached to these recommendations.*

Sustainable Saint Paul and the local foods stakeholders group should conduct a food assessment of Saint Paul to determine baseline information, areas of growth and provide an evaluation tools to develop a comprehensive plan.

This study should create a baseline of food issues, such as hunger, nutrition, fast food consumption, organic food consumption, food related illness, culturally specific food consumption, economic development, community and backyard gardening, locally grown food, farmers' markets, race, transportation and environmental degradation.

Recommendation #2: Encourage Locally Grown Food

Through the food policy, the City should encourage the production of locally grown food not only for the health and nutritional benefits, but also because it will help the city meet its CO2 reduction goals, by reducing the distance our food travels from point of production to consumers.

Recommendation #3: Land Use Plans Incorporate Local Foods

- The City ensures the availability of Community Garden Space and works to make more community garden space available
- Identify community gardening space in all 17 planning Districts.
- Affordable housing developments are required to include space for community gardens and existing affordable housing units encouraged to allow community gardens.
- The City tree planting program should include offerings of fruit trees, particularly for school properties

Recommendation #4: Encourage Community Supported Agriculture

We recommend that the City of St. Paul encourage the development of cooperative Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

- Facilitate CSAs for City employees. Such an arrangement could be an economical way by which the City enlivens its work environment by having weekly deliveries of healthy, locally grown, organic food delivered to its employees at their place of work. This would also strengthen the local foods system by significantly increasing the number of CSA shares sold and thus the amount of local, organic food produced. It could also enhance the economics of CSA by having multiple shares delivered to a reduced number of sites.

Recommendation #5: Develop Saint Paul Public Schools Wellness

We recommend that the City of St. Paul and the Ramsey County Board encourage and support the development of the St. Paul Public Schools Wellness policies.

- While the St. Paul Mayor and City Council have little control over what happens in the schools, they can provide city staff and equipment to facilitate the creation and maintenance of gardens, a low interest revolving loan fund to implement projects that get local, healthy foods into the school system.
- Sustainable St. Paul could recommend and perhaps financially support the use of the UMN Extension's Wellness Policy Resources for Schools as a tool to achieve greater nutrition and local foods in the St. Paul School District.

Recommendation #6: Encourage Farmers Markets

We recommended that the City, where possible, encourage farmers markets. Buying fresh food from local farmers markets supports family farms and circulates money within the community. Organic production should be encouraged, if possible, since crops are grown with little or no artificial pesticides or fertilizers.

- City properties, such as recreation centers and public housing facilities are available for farmers markets

Recommendation #7: Purchase Local Food for City Events

We recommend that the City purchase local foods for their events, vending and food services. City staff will request local foods from food vendors and distributors. Many large Twin Cities food distributors are now offering local foods for their accounts, the City need only ask for local products and they will be provided in lieu of foods transported over great distances.

- City staff compile a list of food distributors, restaurants, caterers, and vendors who can supply local foods to City events and venues. This list will be distributed widely and city employees encouraged to use these vendors.

- Festivals and events include healthy, local foods. Event permits, such as for the Taste of Minnesota, would require that healthy, local foods are provided along with the usual fare.
- City requests that food vendors and distributors procure locally grown items when available. The City should set a goal of providing 5% local foods in their City-sponsored venues.

Recommendation #8: Encourage a Regional Food System

City of Saint Paul should evaluate and disseminate their efforts in encouraging a regional sustainable and local food system. As a leader in sustainability and local foods policy, the City of Saint Paul will document which policies were successful and what barriers were encountered. This will inform municipalities around the nation and internationally on how to effectively implement municipal food policies.

Acknowledgements

These recommendations would not have been possible without the help of Helene Murray, Director, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. She put in many hours with us working on the food policy, attended all of the meetings, and helped with editing. She really went above and beyond.

1987 Municipal Food Policy

SAINT PAUL FOOD & NUTRITION COMMISSION

MUNICIPAL FOOD POLICY

November 19, 1987

Room 365 City Hall
Saint Paul, Minnesota
(612) 298-4323

SAINT PAUL MUNICIPAL FOOD POLICY

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CITY OF SAINT PAUL

FOOD AND NUTRITION COMMISSION

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PREAMBLE

People, regardless of where they live, have certain basic needs—the need for shelter, for food, for health and for a sense of security. In the democratic community, these values are expressed as rights or entitlements accorded its citizens and deemed to be in the best interests of the total community.

Values are made real in the life of the community through the development of policies, the enactment of implementing laws and the adoption of practices which reflect those values. (Systems for fire and police protection are the most familiar of these arrangements.)

Most major cities have not taken responsibility for the development of policies addressing the basic need for food of their citizenry. The post World War II changes in the system which brings food to our table insulated the consciousness of urban leaders and citizens alike. The ongoing availability of safe, nutritious and affordable food was assumed.

This is no longer the case. The emergence of persistent hunger as an urban issue, expanding awareness of the connections between diet and disease, between agricultural production practices and the contamination of food products found on the grocer's shelves and the retreat of the Federal government from its role in the food policy-making process, are all factors contributing to a growing concern among urban dwellers for the security and fairness of their food system.

The Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy is an attempt by government leaders and citizen interests to provide a framework within which the City can take action to address the range of food policy and program issues identified during the life of the Food and Nutrition Commission. This policy is, in the final analysis,

- a statement of values,
- a declaration of responsibility,
- a call for action.

The primary value statement is that food, as a basic need for survival of the human community, is a right and a responsibility of the citizens of this City; the City declares that it will assume the responsibility to provide the leadership and direction required to give life to this value, and it proposes to establish the cooperative framework within which the City, as a government entity and as a community of people can take action to achieve the policy objectives set forth in this document.

SAINT PAUL MUNICIPAL FOOD POLICY

GOALS

- 1) Assure that all Saint Paul citizens have access to safe, affordable and nutritious food.

- 2) Protect and strengthen the region's capacity to supply safe, nutritious and affordable food to Saint Paul citizens.

- 3) Assure that the Saint Paul Municipal Food Policy is implemented upon its adoption by the City Council and that it is periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate.

STATEMENTS OF POLICY

GOAL 1:

Assure that all Saint Paul citizens have access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food.

I. ISSUE: GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS TO FOOD

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to assure that all of its citizens, regardless of where they live in the City, their income, physical disability, or ownership of private transportation, have to food outlets offering competitively priced, nutritious foods.

II. ISSUE: ECONOMIC ACCESS & FOOD AFFORDABILITY

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to assure that all of its citizens have their basic nutritional needs met without persistent dependence on the emergency food system.

III. ISSUE: FOOD SAFETY

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to eliminate the exposure of its citizens to hazardous substances and to substantially reduce its citizens' exposure to potentially hazardous substances employed in the production, processing and preservation of food.

IV. NUTRITION & HEALTH

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to promote and support the dietary recommendations made in "Healthy By Choice, the Minnesota Plan for Nutrition and Health" to raise awareness, increase knowledge, and improve overall food choices made by its residents.

V. ISSUE: COOPERATION

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to work cooperatively with its citizens, voluntary associations, regional farmers, the private food business sector, county and regional governments and government units concerned with the local resource base to realize the objectives of the City's food policy.

GOAL 2:

Protect and strengthen the region's capacity to supply safe, nutritious and affordable food to St. Paul citizens.

I. ISSUE: RESOURCES FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to pursue and support development policies that protect and enhance the capacity of St. Paul citizens to produce a portion of their own food supply, and of regional farmers to produce food for consumption in the City.

II. ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTAL & CITIZEN PROTECTION IN THE PRODUCTION OF LOCAL FOODS

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to assure that the environment is not degraded, nor its citizens exposed to environmental hazards in the production or processing of local foods.

III. ISSUE: MARKETING OF LOCALLY GROWN FOODS

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to pursue and support policies that maximize the percent of locally-grown foods in the City's food supply.

IV. ISSUE: EDUCATION ON THE FOOD SYSTEM

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to assure that its citizens have access to information and educational programs about the system of production, processing and marketing that supplies food to the City.

V. ISSUE: NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to include small-scale, neighborhood-based food production, processing and marketing businesses in its development plans.

VI. ISSUE: COMPOSTING/RECYCLING

It is the policy of the City of Saint Paul to cooperate with its citizens and with regional farmers to maximize re-use of yard and food waste generated in the City, and to minimize the generation of non-recyclable materials by the City's food system.

OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1

I. ISSUE: GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS TO FOOD

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the accessibility of competitively priced full service grocery stores to low income and disabled St. Paul citizens who do not have such stores in their neighborhoods.
- B. Increase the opportunities for lower income and disabled St. Paul citizens without access to private transportation to purchase groceries without leaving their homes.

II. ISSUE: ECONOMIC ACCESS & FOOD AFFORDABILITY

OBJECTIVES

- A. Create a competitive climate among food retailers regarding their pricing of ‘basic’ food items.
- B. Increase low income and limited mobility St. Paul citizens’ access to direct or wholesale buying.
- C. Reduce the number of St. Paul citizens routinely requiring emergency food assistance.
- D. Create and support economic opportunities for low income City residents, enabling them to afford to pay for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing.

III. ISSUE: FOOD SAFETY

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the information available to consumers at point of sale regarding known and potentially harmful practices used in the production, processing and preservation of foods sold in the City.
- B. Reduce the availability of foods sold throughout the City that have been exposed to known or potentially hazardous substances and processes.
- C. Increase the availability of foods sold throughout the City that have not been exposed to known or potentially hazardous substances or processes.
- D. Increase consumer awareness of known and potentially harmful practices used in the production, processing, preservation and handling of foods sold in the City.

IV. ISSUE: NUTRITION & HEALTH

OBJECTIVES

- A. Improve the nutritional status of St. Paul citizens. Indicators of poor nutritional status include anemia, low birth weight and short stature among infants and children. By 1995, the following goals should be met: Reduce anemia among pregnant WIC (Women, Infants and Children Program) mothers by 40 percent; decrease low birth weights; and reduce short stature among infants and children entering nutrition program services from 13.8 percent to five percent (the normal percent found in the population at large).
- B. Reduce the incidence and prevalence of disease related to diet among St. Paul citizens.

V. ISSUE: COOPERATION

OBJECTIVE

- A. Provide incentives for individuals, organizations and institutions to take actions that contribute to realizing the goals of the City's food policy.

GOAL 2

I. ISSUE: RESOURCES FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

OBJECTIVES

- A. Provide neighborhood residents access to open space, water and light for purposes of raising food.
- B. Encourage City residents to raise a portion of their own food supply.
- C. Eliminate unnecessary legal barriers to City residents' raising plants and animals for food.
- D. To enhance individuals' ability to provide their own food supply, increase the availability of appropriate equipment and knowledge regarding processing and storage of home-grown foods to citizens throughout the City.
- E. Work with other appropriate public bodies to assure the continued availability of Metro area farmland for potential production of food consumed in the City.

II. ISSUE: ENVIRONMENTAL & CITIZEN PROTECTION IN THE PRODUCTION OF LOCAL FOODS

OBJECTIVES

- A. Reduce soil loss from agricultural production methods to *T* (the rate at which soil is naturally replaced) in the Metropolitan Area by the year 2000.
- B. Eliminate agricultural and lawn chemical pollution of surface and ground water in the City and in the Metropolitan Area.
- C. Increase the research and information available to Metro Area farmers and food processors on production and processing techniques that minimize use of synthetic chemicals.
- D. Increase the research and information available to St. Paul citizens on how to maintain healthy yards and gardens without use of synthetic chemicals.
- E. Protect St. Paul citizens from exposure to synthetic lawn spray chemicals.
- F. Eliminate the exposure of St. Paul citizens to toxic levels of lead in home and community gardening soil.

G. Protect St. Paul citizens from Dioxin and other toxic residues that can filter into the City's soils.

III. ISSUE: MARKETING OF LOCALLY GROWN FOODS

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the number and variety of outlets for locally-grown food in the City.
- B. Increase the number of regional and state farmers selling locally grown food within the City.

IV. ISSUE: EDUCATION ON THE FOOD SYSTEM

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the elementary/secondary students' exposure to information about the structure and process of the food and agriculture system through school curriculum and work/study opportunities.
- B. Increase adults' understanding of the food system.

V. ISSUE: NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

OBJECTIVES

- A. Increase the number of neighborhood-based small businesses related to the production, processing and/or marketing of nutritious, safe, affordable food in the neighborhood and the City.

VI. ISSUE: COMPOSTING/RECYCLING

OBJECTIVES

- A. Continue City support for, and seek opportunities to expand the composting of yard waste and other materials generated in the City that would make appropriate farm inputs.
- B. Reduce the use of non-recyclable food packaging materials in the City and increase the percent of recyclable food packaging that is actually recycled.