The new food agenda:

municipal food policy and planning for the 21st century

by

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But why, then, does the city exist?
What line separates the inside from the outside,
the rumble of wheels from the howl of wolves?

-- Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

To my parents, my first teachers

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Abstract

For most of the 20th century, cities restricted agricultural activities through ordinances and aggressively pursued "higher and better uses" of industry, commerce, and housing. Yet, today, cities across the United States are challenging the exclusion of agriculture and related food systems and rethinking how it can be a vital dimension of the landscape and local economy. Citizens, community leaders, and city officials are engaging in dynamic dialogues about how to integrate food system activities into the urban fabric. But local governments do not take on new work and new issues lightly, particularly in times of austerity. How is food finding its way in?

In this thesis, I investigate why Benton Harbor, Michigan, Flint, Michigan, and Cleveland, Ohio, entered into food system planning and policymaking. Based on analysis of in-depth interviews, document review, and direct observation, I discuss the roles and motivations of advocates who came together to put food on the municipal policy agenda, and consider the political, economic and social contexts that influenced their advocacy strategies.

Consistent with theories of the policy process, I argue that local governments are compelled to add food system issues to their agenda when effective advocacy coalitions demonstrate widespread popular support for the proposed food policy and strategically link desired policy actions to issues important to decision-makers, such as unemployment, vacant land, and social equity. Several dimensions of the socio-political context diminish opportunities for policy change including limited government capacity, high administrative

turnover, and disagreement over whether allowing food production would help or hinder

economic development goals. This study identifies two opportunities for improving policy

process theory to apply to the local context. First, I propose a construct of the "local mood"

to capture the collective and ever-changing sense of city identity, which influences how

local decision-makers and citizens view a new policy issue such as urban agriculture.

Second, these cases suggest that the municipal policy development process is more iterative

and collaborative than the national process, on which most theories are based, due in part

to the closer proximity of citizen-advocates to policymakers.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In *The City*, Max Weber wrote, "economically defined, the city is a settlement the inhabitants of which live primarily off trade and commerce rather than agriculture" (1966, 66). For most of the 20th century, this was the pervasive logic of urban planning and economic development. Cities restricted agricultural activities through ordinances and aggressively pursued "higher and better uses" of the urban land: industry, commerce, and housing. Yet, today, cities across the United States are challenging the notion that the city is a place where agriculture is *not* an economic driver. Citizens, community leaders, and city officials are engaged in dynamic dialogue about how to (re)integrate food system activities into the urban fabric.

<u>Food and the urban policy agenda</u>

The histories of agriculture and cities are intimately intertwined. For most of human civilization, cities large and small were directly shaped by their *foodways* – the physical and social paths that food production, trade, and culture weave through human environments. Our first great cities were designed in part to defend and control the food supply (Mumford 1961). City growth - by population and area – was limited by food production, transport, storage and waste removal capacity. While most ancient cities were quite small, places like Rome were able to grow to unprecedented size in part because of unique access to a much larger world of food by way of the sea. Many roads in old London were named for the food that was transported, processed, or sold along them – at a time when most food consumed

by city-dwellers was indeed transported, processed, and sold in public view on city streets (Steel 2008). Agriculture and cities coevolved; in the 11,000-year history of agriculture and cities, it is only in the last 100 years or so that we have attempted to separate the two.

Despite the renaissance of neighborhood farmers markets at the turn of the 21st century (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011), the organization of most of our food system, right down to the street names, has changed significantly. Centuries of innovation, technology, and industry have altered the ways we interact with our food system and the outward role that cities play in it. Our foodways have gone underground – or at least out of sight for most of us in the cities of the Global North.

The social and spatial distancing of our food system happened slowly over the last two centuries during a period of unbridled technological innovation and increased specialization of labor. Railroads and related infrastructure dramatically changed the way, the speed, and the distance food could travel (Cronon 1991). The railroad and other motor vehicles emancipated cities from a dependence on their contiguous hinterlands as the primary sources of food, which were supplemented by stable goods that could withstand slow shipping. Other innovations like pressure canning, refrigeration, and increased mechanization made commodity dry goods, processed and preserved products, and meat less expensive and more easily distributed over greater distances. Later developments in agricultural technology and chemistry served to increase the (short-term) yields of farms around the world.

These advances in technology allowed cities to push agricultural land uses and activities farther away than ever before. No longer did meat need to be butchered close to population centers. No longer did perishable, fragile produce need to be grown near cities. No longer did the region's summer harvest need to be preserved for winter consumption. Over the course of the 20th century, most cities increasingly restricted agricultural land

uses, outlawing the keeping of small farm animals, meat processing, front yard vegetable gardens, and edible crops in parks. They cleared out smelly and noisy farming activities and made way for the "higher and better uses" that the raging American economy demanded: housing and highways, factories and financial districts.

As a result of these changes, many people enjoy more variety and consistency in their food supply and have time to devote to activities other than growing, procuring, and preparing food. At the same time, these innovations have disconnected people from that which sustains them. And, while many people appreciate the separation from most aspects of the food system, they may not regard all of the implications of that separation as desirable. Today, the growing good food movement represents an emerging sense that perhaps we have gone too far. Perhaps we have pushed the food system farther away from our cities and our lives than is healthy for us, for our communities, or for our environment.

The separation – spatial and social – between people and the sources of their food is reflected in, and is a reflection of, the institutional organization of food policymaking. Historically, nearly all policy concerning the food system in the United States has been made at the national and international levels – the levels of governance farthest removed from the people. Long considered a "rural issue" on one hand, and a topic with many interstate commerce dimensions on the other, regulation of the food system has been the purview of the national government and has rarely been a part of the modern urban agenda. Most local governments have been content to leave the governance of their food system to national policies and an increasingly global marketplace.

Despite this political disconnection, all cities are deeply embedded in the food system – as sites of processing, retail, and consumption of food, if not also as places where food is produced (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999). Food system related activities comprise

a significant land use and are a major source of employment within urban areas. As food moves around the country, local and regional transportation networks interact with the food system daily and affect residents' access to food (Pothukuchi and Wallace 2009). Though it often goes unnoticed, food transverses our cities constantly.

It would behoove cities to be more aware of the status and implications of the food system and how it affects other urban systems. The food system is linked – directly and indirectly – to critical issues facing U.S. cities and regions, including public health, employment, and sustaining the American way of life. Nourishing food is essential for good health. Limited access to fresh, healthy and affordable food has been associated with both hunger and obesity (Morland, Wing and Roux 2002; Morland, Wing, et al 2002). As a result, local governments are faced with increasing demands on public health and social services associated with providing food assistance and meeting the needs of people with diet-related diseases.

A crisis in the food system or the infrastructure upon which it depends would impact cities dramatically. Like other infrastructure systems, city residents and policymakers tend not to notice the food system when it is working, or at least is working well enough for them. But when it breaks or fails, cities are significantly, even gravely affected. For instance, the U.S. food system is highly dependent on fossil fuels for production and transportation. A transportation stoppage of more than a few days would leave many Americans with very limited access to food given that grocery stores keep only two to three days worth of groceries in stock. As tropical storms and other natural disasters remind us, access to food is also highly dependent on consistent electricity for food preservation as well as preparation. A widespread power outage of just a few days can put extreme pressure on cities with respect to both food access and waste management.

But most potential threats posed by the industrial food system are slowly developing crises. On the horizon, the face of American agriculture is aging. The average farmer is of retirement age or older and does not have a succession plans for his farm. With the high barriers to entry into farming, such as land costs and training, and the high-risk character of the industry, it is unclear who the next generation of farmers in the U.S. will be. At the same time, we continue to lose prime farmland to (sub)urban growth. Since the majority of our produce and dairy is produced in what the USDA calls "urban influenced" counties, this metropolitan growth poses a threat to the ability to produce food (American Farmland Trust 2010; U.S. Department of Agriculture 2001).

Other infrastructure threats include: widespread crop failure as a result of draught and disease; irreversible soil degradation from intensive farming and chemical application; and the water and air pollution that results from "conventional" farming methods and waste management[1]. Today, we address these challenges by importing food from overseas, and by exporting food waste with the rest of our trash. Yet, in the face of climate volatility and increasing cost of fuel, this spatial fix may not be as available in coming decades.

In the U.S., government involvement in social and economic systems is commonly justified in the case of market failures, including the provision of public goods that would be underprovided without such intervention. Food, more precisely the food system, assumes many of the characteristics of a public good. A discrete item of food – a slice of pizza, for instance – is a definitively private good because it is both excludable and rivalrous. If I eat it, you cannot. Yet, a food *system* that provides safe, nutritious, and affordable food to all people is a nonexcludable and nonrivalrous good. All people benefit from a strong, resilient, and robust food system and any one person's enjoyment of that does not preclude others

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[1] Rather than return leftover nutrients in unused food to the soil, food waste comprises an estimated 15 percent of municipal waste streams. When diverted from the waste stream, food scraps become a resource when transformed into rich soil through composting. When deposited in landfills, however, the anaerobic decomposition of food adds to air pollution.

from benefitting. In fact, the better our food, the better off we all are. A strong food system is essential for a healthy society in terms of the economy and quality of life.

While many problems in the food system will require national policy change and intergovernmental collaboration, local governments are in a unique position to affect aspects of the global food system and to buffer the impacts of food system crises on individual communities. Compared with state and national counterparts, local governments have the potential to address concerns, crises, or limitations in the larger system more swiftly and directly (Berry 2003). Although limited by funding and some legal restrictions, local governments have led in policy arenas traditionally left to the national level. For instance, in recent years U.S. local governments have taken action to address climate change and greenhouse gas emissions. In part as a response to the inaction of the national government, over 1,000 mayors have signed on to support the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement stating that they will work toward Kyoto Protocol targets locally and to encourage more state and federal legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (U.S. Conference of Mayors 2008).

Issues of food access, sustainable development, and urban resilience may seem pressing during a period of economic shift and in the face of ever-mounting evidence of climate change, yet governments tend to be slow to take up new issues or to enter into uncharted political territory, particularly when there is little precedent to do so and limited government resources available. The policy arena is characterized by long periods of relative stasis "punctuated" by brief bursts of change (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). The political/economic context simultaneously demands policy change and inhibits it.

Given this context, the emergence of local-level food planning presented a captivating case of local policy innovation and change. My observation that some local governments were considering policy and planning action related to food, despite the

expected inertia of the political and economic context, sparked this study. Particularly

compelling were efforts in a region of the country populated with former industrial cities

struggling to reinvent themselves and their economies in a period of deindustrialization and

economic restructuring. Food, though it affects every citizen, does not constitute a policy

agenda issue for the vast majority local governments. How do food issues come to the urban

decision agenda? Who makes the case that their city should act on food system issues? What

case do they make and why?

The overarching research question of this study is: What makes local communities

enter into the arena of food system policy and planning? Embedded in that question are

several more to guide my inquiry and my efforts to explore and explain the emergence of

local-level food policy.

- Who are the key individuals and institutions driving or opposing the process?

- Why did they advocate for or against proposed planning efforts or policy changes?

- What strategies and tactics of advocacy or agenda setting did actors employ?

- To what issues or conflicts were advocates and local governments responding?

- What areas of debate or conflict arose in the process?

- How, if at all, did these debates shape the advocacy and agenda setting processes?

The first three questions focus on identifying and explaining the actions of the actors

involved in the process, including both individuals and institutions. The second set of

questions target the political and context factors, the social problems and the political

landscape to which the actors responded.

In this thesis, I begin to answer these questions, and through my inquiry and

analysis develop an agenda for further research. I illuminate the process behind new food-

system related local policy and planning with particular attention to the leading

participants and most influential aspects of the political landscape in which they acted. I develop propositions regarding the composition of effective participant-groups, and the importance of developing a communications strategy that positions food as part of a solution to other local policy issues. As cities across the U.S. and around the world face the challenge of reorganizing their economies and infrastructure for a changing global economy and environment, research on the process of policy change at the local level will provide a critical resource for scholars and practitioners alike.

Thesis overview

In the next chapter I develop the theoretical framework for this study by situating emerging local food policy in the context of a complex food system, and of a dynamic policy process of which local land use planning is a part. I outline the key scholarship and theory that informs the current project including food systems studies, the agro-food movement as a social movement, community food systems planning, and agenda setting and the policy process. In particular, I discuss the role of policy entrepreneurs in local policymaking and the Multiple Streams theory (Kingdon 1984)[2], which argues that in addition to participants, three process streams – problems, politics and policies – influence the agenda setting aspect of the policy process. Although usually applied at the state and national policymaking levels, the theory's emphasis on how new ideas enter into public and political dialogue is helpful for understanding how food issues are added to the urban agenda.

In chapter three I discuss my research questions further and describe the research design and methods including case selection, data collection, and data analysis. To develop an understanding of food as a new and developing municipal policy arena, this study has both exploratory and explanatory aims. Through a multiple case study drawing on in-depth

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[2] John Kingdon's book, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, has been released in numerous editions since it's debut in 1984. Throughout this paper, I cite from three different editions due to changing library availability: 1984, 1990, and 1995.

interviews with diverse agents, document review, and direct observation, I explicate the municipal food policy proposal and development process and explain how different constellations of actors tailored their advocacy to their particular socio-political contexts to varying effects.

In the next three chapters (four through six), I present the three cases I studied – Benton Harbor, Michigan, Flint, Michigan, and Cleveland, Ohio – through in-depth narrative and descriptive analysis. Each case chapter begins with a background on the city and an account of the food planning or policy development process. Each case account moves through four broad and overlapping phases of the new policy development process: pre-proposal context and trigger events; agenda setting and initial policy or plan development; debate, revision and votes; and aftermath. I conclude each chapter with a discussion of the coalitions of participants who came together to advocate for and against municipal food policy and analysis of the landscape of problems and politics in which they acted.

In each case, a group of advocates coalesced to urge local officials to take action on one or more food issues, most commonly related to urban food production. Participants included elected and appointed officials, nonprofit leaders, community development advocates, businesspeople, and university extension agents. These actors were motivated by a wide range of desires: to build self-reliance; to provide for and support economic opportunity; to improve community health; and to connect people with each other and with their food. How the actors and coalitions framed food as a local policy issue reflected these motivations. The most effective advocates linked their desired food policy action to other issues of importance to decision makers, such as unemployment and social equity. Nonetheless, the broader political and economic context restricted the impact of the local food policy advocacy efforts. Limited government capacity and finances, high administrative turnover, and confusion over whether more food production would help or hinder

economic development goals caused friction between food policy change efforts and the status quo.

In the final chapter, I return to the research questions that motivated this study. I summarize my findings with respect to each question using the participants-process stream theory as a framework to structure cross-case analysis. Several key findings emerged regarding the cities' foray into the uncharted territory of local-level food system planning and policymaking.

- To be effective, local food advocacy coalitions should be comprised of a diverse and dense group of participants. They must be diverse in order to represent the wide range of interests in food policy and the range of constituents affected by the issue. They must be large enough to mobilize substantial grassroots support and robust enough to survive advocacy campaigns that can last multiple years.

- Three types of coalition participants are particularly critical to achieving agenda success, including: (1) at least one public official, or political champion, who can provide politically astute advice to the coalition and can work directly and effectively with other local officials to build support and address concerns; (2) a central convener with a broad and rich network of connections and the ability to mobilize and coordinate them; and (3) visible, vocal resident participants who illustrate to decision makers the political salience and legitimacy of the issue.

- Local policy advocacy groups need to develop a deliberate communication strategy that connects the desired food policy actions to other issues of large social significance to citizens and policymakers ("problems") and avoids politically toxic terms and phrases. Because local policymakers are already concerned with more problems than they can realistically or fiscally address as a city, advocates need to show how their proposed policy changes will alleviate or

mitigate other local problems and do so in a way that results in a net benefit.

Local food policy provides a unique opportunity because it can be framed as a

means of addressing multiple related social and political issues, including

unemployment and public health, simultaneously.

- Food policy development efforts should include a deliberate process to collect
and incorporate public concerns into proposed plans and policy changes.

Incorporating public input is a key to agenda and policy success at the local level

because policymakers are concerned about fairly representing their

constituents and aim to avoid negative retaliation. Policymakers need to feel

confident that the policy change will benefit those requesting the change

without unduly affecting other residents.

I then consider how this study contributes to our understanding of how planning

agendas change. The Multiple Streams theory of agenda setting provides a useful

framework for understanding how local planning and policy agendas change because the

key constructs regarding participants and "process streams" are evident at the local level.

However, I suggest two variations on the framework for application to the local policy and

planning contexts, which are ripe for further study. First, I argue that a "local mood," which

often revolves around city identity, is an influential element of the political stream that is

parallel to, but separate from, Kingdon's notion of the "national mood." Second, the policy

stream described in the Multiple Streams framework is only a loose fit for local level agenda

setting and policy development. The local policy development process in these cases was

iterative and collaborative. While advocates learned from other cities' ordinances, a policy

stream full of potential policy alternatives competing for attention was not evident.

Throughout the final chapter, I identify opportunities for further research in

municipal food policy and planning as well as in planning agenda change more broadly. This

study can serve as a starting point for longitudinal studies focusing on the role of food

policy advocacy coalitions over time, and for a larger-scale survey of municipal-level food

policy agenda setting process nationwide. Further, food is only one area of local policy

adaptation emerging in the last several years. Comparative study across issue areas will

enhance our theories of local policy process and our understanding of how local policy and

planning agendas change in the face of shifting environmental, economic and social

contexts.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

<u>Introduction</u>

There is a growing understanding of the ecological and social consequences of our global food system and how it affects local communities. Dominant farming practices strip the soil of nutrients, deplete biodiversity, contribute to vast soil loss through erosion and depend heavily on synthetic chemicals to provide the essential nutrients crops need to grow. The agriculture sector – including growing, processing and transportation of food – accounts for significant proportions of water and soil pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. While we produce more food on less land than ever before, ten percent of Americans do not have regular and reliable access to affordable and nourishing food.

Knowledge and awareness of these issues has spread over the last few decades and innumerable non-governmental organizations comprise a quickly growing movement to change our food system to one that is more socially just and environmentally responsible. Recently, however, a new trend is emerging: towns, cities and counties are beginning to create policies and plans to directly address food system issues, including food access and food security, economic development, and environmental wellbeing.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate emerging local food policy in the context of a complex food system, and dynamic policy process of which the planning function is a part and to build the theoretical framework for inquiry. In this literature review, I outline the key

scholarship and theory that informs this research endeavor. The review has two primary

sections: food systems, the agro-food movement, and planning, and agenda setting and the

policy process. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis of the literature and theory that

frame my study.

<u>Food systems, the agro-food movement and planning</u>

While cities and planners are only recently grappling with food system issues and

how they intersect with other urban and regional systems and human needs, scholars and

activists in other fields have been studying these topics for decades. The interdisciplinary

agro-food studies literature offers conceptual frameworks, historical perspectives, and

socio-economic analyses that inform and help situate the study of emerging local food

planning and policy. Here, I highlight the threads of this vast literature that most directly

informed my thinking and analysis of emerging local-level food policy.

The U.S. food system

Although we rarely think about it actively, all people interact with and co-create the

food system every day, at least as consumers, if not also as producers, retailers, or other

actors. The term "food system" refers to the complex "chain of activities connecting food

production, processing, distribution and access, consumption, and waste management, as

well as all the associated supporting and regulatory institutions and activities" (American

Planning Association 2007, 2). Though the components of the food system are too

numerous to list in a few paragraphs let alone an entire volume, it is helpful to briefly define

the five central components of the system. Depicted schematically in Figure 2.1, it is

important to note that these elements are not always separated in space and time, nor is the

system given to follow a distinctively linear or circular path.
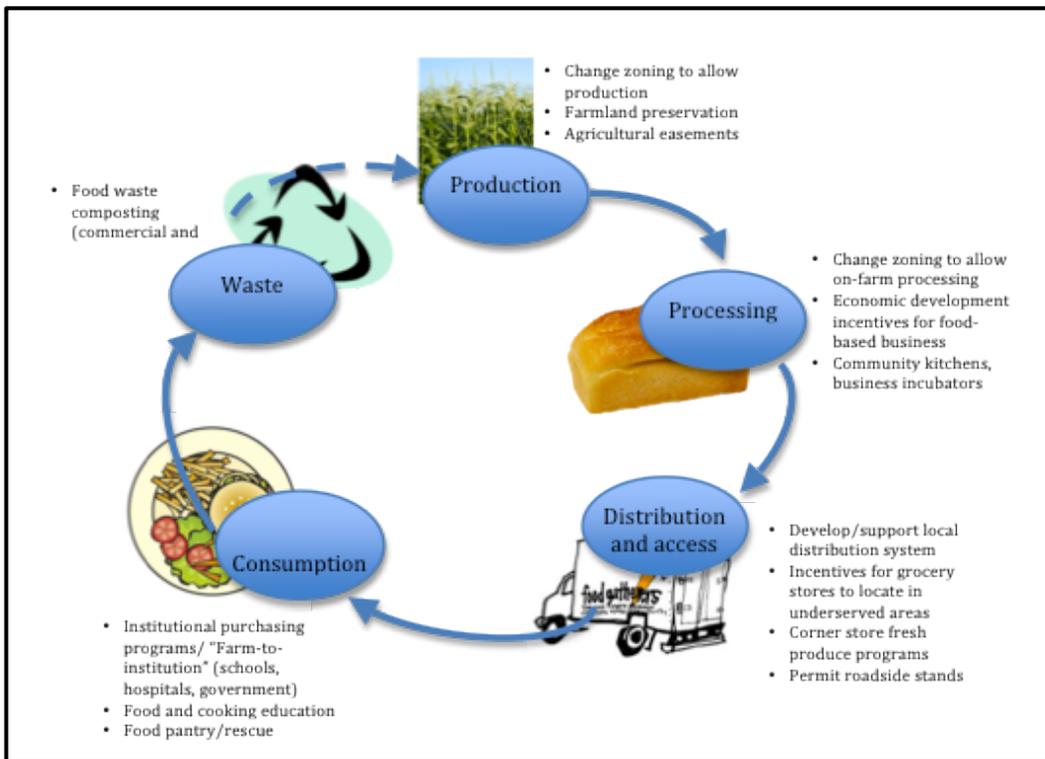
Figure 2.1. Food system schematic with examples of opportunities for local government involvement. The ovals represent the major stages of the food system and the dark arrows depict a common path from farm to table to waste management, though many food products follow a shorter path.

Production includes growing crops and the raising of animals for food. This work is done by people who identify as farmers, growers, and producers. Processing includes, for instance, cleaning and packaging of produce that is sold whole, converting corn cobs into grains, milling wheat berries into flour, and preparing tomatoes and peppers into salsa. Most of the output of farms is processed in some way before it moves to consumers. Distributors serve food retailers from large supermarkets to specialty grocery stores and corner liquor outlets, which in turn provide consumer access to food. Most of our food is moved and stored with the help of distributors who allow us to have Georgia watermelons at Michigan Memorial Day picnics and Florida oranges in New England Christmas stockings. Despite the growing popularity of farmers markets across the country, where producers sell directly to consumers, most people purchase the bulk of their food at supermarkets.

We often conceive of consumers as the end of the path of food from farm to table. Almost all of our uneaten food and packaging is thrown in the garbage and sent to landfills. For most of human history, and in a more sustainable future, the nutrients in food waste would be returned to the soil. Now one hundred percent biodegradable food waste is estimated to account for 13 percent of garbage sent to landfills where it decomposes anaerobically contributing to greenhouse gas pollution rather than returning nutrients to the soil and reducing the need for chemical fertilizers (Environmental Protection Agency 2006). Urban and regional planning, in particular, plays a role in the food waste aspect of the food system. Although many urban communities prohibit or limit backyard food composting, in an attempt to control vermin populations, an increasing number of communities have started composting programs that accept some food scraps. In some cases, diverting compostable materials from landfills reduces waste disposal costs.

Food system actors are moderated, regulated, and assisted by a complicated web of institutions and policies. In the U.S., farm subsides for commodity crops and food assistance for low-income people significantly influence production, processing, retail, and consumption. Much of this funding is allocated through the "Farm Bill," which is reauthorized approximately every five years. The 2008 Farm Bill, officially titled "The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008," included $189 billion for anti-hunger and food assistance programs (65 percent of the total public funding) and about $42 billion for commodity assistance including subsidies (about 15 percent). Other line items include: $24 billion for conservation, $22 billion for crop insurance and $4 billion for disaster relief (Johnson et al. 2008). The Farm Bill is only one piece of legislation that influences the U.S. food system. The Child Nutrition Act includes funding for additional food assistance programs and school food programs. While the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are the most recognized federal players in the food system,

a 2010 report from the Institution for Agriculture and Trade Policy detailed the roles that

nine other federal departments and several agencies play (Gosselin 2010). For example, the

Department of Defense manages fruit and vegetable distribution for the USDA school food

program[3]. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has some influence over

agricultural pollution; however, since most farms are considered non-point sources, the

EPA's influence is limited. The Department of Commerce is home to the National Oceanic

and Atmospheric Association, which overseas fishing in federal waters. The Federal Trade

Commission and Federal Communications Commission have joint oversight over food

advertising. Even at a surface level, U.S. food politics can be dizzying.

The productive U.S. food system

Our current system is the result of centuries of technological innovation,

commodification, corporate strategy, and government policy. Today, the U.S. produces vast

quantities of food for a growing and primarily urban-suburban population. This complex

system has many strengths and many weaknesses with respect to environmental health,

human wellbeing, and social equity. Below, I describe several characteristics of the U.S. food

system, beginning with its notable positive qualities.

The U.S. food system provides consistent, convenient and inexpensive food for most

people. The vast majority of Americans do not worry about where their next meal will come

from, and most of us have multiple markets and restaurants that are always stocked with

ample food that we can afford to buy. The share of family income spent on food has fallen

consistently over the course of the 20th century. In 1929, American families spent 22.7

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3 The Defense Logistics Agency of the Department of Defense manages the program, called the DoD
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. For more information, see: USDA Food and Nutrition Service,
www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/default.htm

percent of their disposable income on food, which was primarily prepared at home. In 2009, we spent 11.8 percent of our income on food, more than half of which was spent on food prepared outside of the home (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2010). With food relatively cheaper, Americans are able to spend their income elsewhere.

In the U.S., most food processing that can be considered a nuisance is separated from population centers. Until the early 20th century, nearly all meat was processed very near urban settlements, such as the storied Union Stock Yards in Chicago. Since meat spoils quickly without refrigeration, animals were brought to cities alive and slaughtered as near to the consumer as possible. Though this system provided relatively fresh meat to those who could afford it, it also resulted in contaminated waterways and other nuisances often imposed disproportionately on the poor who had to live near and work at the facilities. The poor (miserable) living conditions in the Back of the Yards neighborhood of Chicago were famously described in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle.*[4] Innovations of the first half of the 20th century -- the refrigerator railcar and later trucking, improved sanitation, and zoning laws -- allowed cities to push unpleasant food system uses like meat processing away from population centers and into the countryside. Although much processing, like baking and canning, still happens in urban industrial districts, the nuisances and by-products of our food system are out of sight and out of mind for most Americans.

The U.S. food system is highly efficient with respect to land and labor. Increasing yield has been a primary emphasis in agricultural research for the past several decades. Researchers around the globe have bred seed varieties and developed methods, fertilizers, and pesticides to increase the amount of food produced per acre. This work is motivated in part by a need to feed a growing world population and thus has focused on storable, staple

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4 Today, the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council proudly promotes the two community gardens it supports, reconnecting residents with a more pleasant and human-scaled aspect of the food system. (http://bync.org/?cat=96, Accessed 17 March 2011.)

grain crops. As a result, our current agricultural system produces more food on less land than ever before, allowing us to use former farmland for housing and industry. For instance, "U.S. farmers were producing 30 bushels of corn per acre in 1920, whereas 1999 yields averaged 134 bushels per acre, an increase of almost 350 percent" (Horrigan, Lawrence and Walker 2002). (I discuss the reliance on other inputs necessary for this intensive agriculture below.)

Modern agricultural technology and machinery enables us to produce more food with fewer farmers. In 1900, 40 percent of the U.S. population was employed in agriculture. Today, less than two percent of Americans are farmers (Dimitri, Effland and Conklin 2005). This dramatic decline is due in part to advanced mechanization that has freed many people from the physically demanding work that has historically relied on enslaved and indentured labor. However, thousands of farm workers continue to endure harsh working conditions and low pay to harvest much of our high-value and fragile produce.

Food and farming comprises an important sector of the U.S. economy. Despite the small population of farmers, the food and agriculture sector as a whole comprises a major land use and significant employment sector nationally. About half of the total land area in the U.S. is agricultural working land, including 440,000,000 acres of cropland and pasture, much of which is near urban areas. The food and fiber sector accounts for 13 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product and employs 17 percent of the population (Lipton 1998). The U.S. exports slightly more food (by value) than it imports, but the value of imports has risen steadily in recent years. The US sold $100 billion of food overseas in 2007, and grains (wheat and corn) were the largest category of exports. Vegetable, fruit and nut, grain, meat, and dairy imports all roughly doubled (by value) between 1998 and 2007 to a total food import value of nearly $80 billion in 2007 (Brooks, Regmi and Jerardo 2009).

The vulnerable U.S. food system

The determined pursuit of a system that provides cheap, reliable food to a primarily non-farm population has proceeded with little regard for externalized costs or long-term implications for human and environmental health. A growing body of scholarship on the ecological, social, and economic implications of our modern food system has contributed to increased popular attention to the issue in recent years – and increased debate. Many scholars and analysts maintain that our current food system is not environmentally sustainable or socially just and may not be economically viable in the face of volatile oil prices and increasing consolidation of ownership (e.g., Allen 2004; Heller and Keoleian 2003; Lyson 2005; Montgomery 2007; Shiva 2000). Below, I elaborate on five weaknesses of the U.S. food system that call into question the robustness of the strengths discussed above.

The U.S. food system defies nature. Resilient natural systems depend on diversity of plant and animal species. Ecosystem biological diversity is a non-replaceable natural resource and a critical part of the earth's life support system (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1998). The current food system is heavily based on monoculture that undermines natural ability to withstand external shocks such as draught, flooding, disease, or infestation. Despite the seemingly endless choices at the supermarket, we have lost significant crop and farm animal diversity in the U.S. and worldwide over the last century. Although "both high agricultural productivity and human health depend on the activity of a diverse natural biota composed of an estimated 10 million species of plants and animals" (Pimentel et al 1992, 354), about 75 percent of world food production consists of a dozen crops (Diamond 1999). "Most applied fields of landscape management, including agriculture, tend to deal with only few species" (Paoletti 1999, 2). The USDA reports that corn production alone occupies over

25 percent of U.S. cropland (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2002). These conditions exacerbate the potential scope and impacts of a crop disease outbreak or contamination.

As a result of attempts to defy natural diversity, dominant agricultural practices consume soil – the medium on which the entire food system is based – at least 13 times more quickly than it is regenerated. Iowa, for example, has lost an estimated two feet of rich topsoil in the last 100 years, a resource that took thousands of years for our earth to produce (Pollan 2006, 33; Montgomery 2007).

The U.S. food system requires and depends on immense energy inputs, mostly in the form of fossil fuels. In their assessment of the environmental sustainability of the U.S. food system using life cycle analysis, Heller and Keoleian (2003) found that we expend about 7.3 units of fossil energy for every one unit of food energy produced. Every phase of the food system today requires significant energy inputs and generates pollution. Although recent "buy local" campaigns have emphasized the distance food travels as environmentally wasteful, Heller and Keoleian found that household storage and preparation is the most energy consumptive aspect of the food system, followed by agricultural production and processing. Transportation accounts for about 14 percent of total energy consumed by the food system (Center for Sustainable Systems 2010).

Agriculture fuel use, farming methods and chemical application result in significant air, water and soil pollution. US agriculture production alone accounted for almost eight percent of total US greenhouse gas emissions in 1997, not including electricity usage or natural gas to run irrigation pumps (Heller and Keoleian, 1022). The International Panel on Climate Change reports that agriculture accounts for about 14 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide (Rogner et al. 2007, 104). Common land tillage practices and pesticide use contribute to massive erosion and pollution of our continent's waterways, which threatens fluvial ecosystems hundreds of miles from the point sources (Turner and Rabalais

2003). Agriculture is the leading source of river and stream impairment and a major contributor to groundwater contamination and wetland degradation (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2009). Nitrogen-rich agricultural runoff into the Mississippi River, for example, culminates in a dead zone the area of Massachusetts in the Gulf of Mexico.

With respect to pollution, there is nothing inherent about the scale or localness of a food system that makes it more sustainable (Born and Purcell 2006). Though more localized systems and shorter supply chains often offer more opportunities for feedback regarding agricultural practices or social justice, locally-sourced food can be grown under the same energy-intensive, soil-degrading regimes as any other food. In their analysis of the life-cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of the food system, Weber and Matthews (2008) found that a shift in diet to eating less "red meat" is the most effective way to decreasing food system energy consumption and emissions. (Below, I discuss the many meanings of "local" further.)

In addition to being highly dependent on fossil fuels at every stage, the food system trends toward greater homogenization and decreasing diversity of firm types, production methods, and agricultural variety (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002; Howard 2009). Although, as many politicians eagerly note, the majority of farms are small and family-owned, a mere 8 percent of farms account for two thirds (68 percent) of agricultural production (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003). As a result of mergers in the 1980s and 1990s, the top five grocery corporations accounted for 42 percent of market share in 2000 (Heller and Keoleian 2003).

Increasing consolidation and homogenization in the food system also means that a growing share of decision-making power is held by a shrinking number of corporations (Howard 2009; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002; Hendrickson, et al. 2001; Koc and Dahlberg 1999). This situation may mean less real choice for consumers in the supermarket

and less choice for farmers who are beholden to these corporations for seeds and other agricultural inputs.

Finally, the U.S. food system is unjust and unhealthy for many Americans. The current food system is effective at producing a lot of food on a shrinking amount of land and providing affordable food to a large proportion of the population. It has little regard, however, for food quality, environmental wellbeing, or social justice. Ten percent of the U.S. population experiences "food insecurity" on an annual basis. This means that 13 million households (about 30 million people) do not have regular and reliable access to affordable, nourishing, and culturally appropriate food (Nord 2007). Food security is a socio-economic condition distinguished from hunger, which is considered a physiological condition. The USDA switched from reporting "hunger" statistics to reporting "food security" in 2006[5].

Low-income areas tend to have fewer grocery stores and fewer healthy food choices at available outlets than their higher income counterparts (Shenot and Salomon 2006). The effects of this limited availability are exacerbated by limited access to transportation (Flournoy and Treuhaft 2005). In recent years, many organizations have targeted advocacy efforts around urban "food deserts," neighborhoods with limited access to fresh food. While concentrated in urban areas, many rural families experience food insecurity due to the long distances they must travel to a grocery store.

Beyond satisfying basic food needs, better access to healthy food is critical for addressing increasing rates of obesity and diet-related diseases (Shenot and Salomon 2006), which impose significant costs on society (Finkelstein et al. 2009). A recent study estimated direct obesity-related medical costs to be $147 billion in 2008, nearly double estimates from a decade earlier (Finkelstein et al. 2009). Some of these costs fall on local

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5 For a full listing of food security terms and definitions, see the USDA Economic Research Service webpage on the topic: http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodSecurity/labels.htm (Accessed 12/31/10).

governments. Municipal governments have a key role to play in addressing obesity and other diet-related diseases because they shape the built environment, provide opportunities for safe recreation, direct the location of food retail establishments, and control the water supply. As a report on the local government role in preventing childhood obesity noted, "although health is strongly influenced by state, regional, national, and international trends and actions, many strategies for addressing childhood obesity must be carried out at the local level to make a difference" (Parker et al. eds. 2009, 15).

Volumes can and have been written on the vast complexity of our global food system and its ecological, economic and ethical limitations. Here I have defined central system components and summarized several of the pressing issues that may pique the attention of scholars and practitioners interested in local government policy and planning for sustainable and resilient cities and regions. Many of these issues will be further addressed through the lenses of those working to address them in the cases studied.

Emerging alternatives: the agro-food movement

Over the last few decades, increasing awareness of the implications of modern agriculture has fueled the emergence of many oppositional movements: organic, non-GMO (genetically-modified organisms), fair trade, food sovereignty, peasants' rights, local food, animal rights, and Slow Food. While interrelated and not mutually exclusive, each of these movements has its own logic and leadership, though, as Diani and Bison (2004) write, "no single organized actor, no matter how powerful, can claim to represent a movement as a whole" (283). Scholars debate the extent to which they all fall under a single alternative food system movement. Recently, the aptly named "Food Movements Unite" campaign has emerged in an effort to "build a movement powerful enough to transform our food system" (www.foodmovementsunite.org). To further consider this cluster of interest groups as a social movement, I must first briefly visit the key dimensions of social movements.

Social movements

The literature on social movements is vast and draws from diverse disciplines. Scholars consistently cite, and also to debate, Charles Tilly's (1978) classic definition of a social movement: "a sustained series of interactions between power-holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demand for change in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support." (281) Diani and Bison (2001) offer a slightly different definition; for them social movement describes "networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, or associations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (282).

As a subfield of social theory, the intellectual history of modern social movement theory dates back at least to Park and Burgess' collective behavior theory (1921), which influenced a train of successors. Something of a revival in social movement theory emerged in the early 1970s and several alternative theories have been developed since. For instance, resource mobilization theory (e.g., McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tilly 1978) maintains that social movement organizations, like other large organizations, tend toward "bureaucratization, professionalization and conglomeration and that these organizations often adjust their goals in order to better fit their resource environments and survive" (Campbell 2005, 41). Political process theory (e.g. McAdam 1999) focuses on the interactions among social movement actors and the state and emphasizes the role of political opportunities in mobilization.

Several scholars argue that "in the era of globalization," social movements have changed in character and strategy, demanding a new theory (Hess 2007; Scott 1990). New

social movement theory focuses on movements developed in "post-industrial" or "advanced capitalist" societies. Scholars argue that these new movements have moved away from direct, disruptive political action like protests and strikes. Instead, they focus on cultural and lifestyle change, consumer activity ("vote with your dollar") and the development of new institutions. These emphases on individual behavior can imply less of an engagement with policy directly, or at least initially.

Social movements usually depend in part on organizations to provide leadership and momentum. According to David Hess, social movement organizations are a type of civil-society institution with three features: 1) they include a broad range of organizational structures and temporal duration; 2) they have a goal of bringing about fundamental social change; and 3) they engage repertoires of action that include the use of extra-institutional strategies such as protest (Hess 2007, 5-6).

Diani and Bison (2004) distinguish social movement processes from coalitional and organizational processes. A social movement process entails "the building and reproducing of dense, informal networks between a multiplicity of actors, sharing a collective identity, and engaged in social and/or political conflict." In contrast, a coalitional process involves alliances to achieve specific goals that are not necessarily backed by "identity links," (24) while an organizational process is "collective action [that] takes place mostly in reference to specific organizations, rather than broader, looser networks" (281). While specific definitions may be debated, the important point is that though they may be motivated by different goals and emphases, organizations concerned with social change work together in a variety of ways.

In response to narrow definitions of social movements, Hess (2007) uses the phrase alternative pathways to capture a broader range of social movement-like activity. "Alternative pathways have emerged in the interstices of a world in which people see their

communities, democratic institutions, jobs, material culture, and personal relationships

being uprooted by distant economic and political institutions that seem unresponsive to

their needs" (Hess, 15). Though these pathways try to provide alternatives, they are also

caught up in the mainstream, the world of corporate globalization.

Of particular interest to this project is how and to what extent social movements

affect policy change. More specifically, how do social movements influence local-level

agenda setting and policy outcomes? While the literature on social movement outcomes has

grown in recent years (Bosi and Uba 2009), consideration of the impact of social movement

action on local-level policy and land-use planning is limited. Social movement scholars and

students of the policy process continue to demand further empirical research on

"outcomes" of social movements in terms of policy change and other impacts.

Agro-food movement as a social movement

Many scholars argue that the agro-food movement is a social movement, and often

characterize it further as a new social movement (Allen 2004; Gottlieb 2001; Hassanein

2003; Henderson 2000). Henderson argues that "sustainable agriculture is swelling into a

significant social movement with a national network and an effective policy wing" (2000,

77). Hassanein (2003) defines the agro-food movement as "the social activity of sustainable

agriculturalists, food security activists, and others who are working to bring about changes

at a variety of different levels of the agro-food system" (80). Consistent with the definition

of social movement organizations, Hassanein describes agro-food movement institutions as

diverse in organizational forms and strategies. While this diversity allows the movement to

take action in a number of different areas and to involve a wide range of participants, it can

also be seen as a limitation. The looseness of the network of actors (Gottlieb 2001) and the

lack of a shared underlying strategy (Buttel 1997) may undermine its effectiveness with

respect to policy or other social change. While some institutions within the agro-food

movement engage with and try to change policy, many focus primarily on running programs

like school and community gardens, social marketing campaigns or agro-tourism, to

increase awareness, provide education and change consumer habits.

Patricia Allen's *Together at the Table* (2004) attempts to make sense of the complex

array of food movements through a discourse analysis. Allen identifies two major strands of

the alternative agro-food movement, which, with complementary emphases, work to

reshape existing institutions and establish new ones in order to create a more just and

environmentally responsible food system. The sustainable agriculture movement focuses on

the production aspects of the food system in terms of environmental health and the viability

of family farms. The community food security movement focuses on the distribution and

consumption components of the food system, often with a social justice critique, and is

concerned with access to nutritionally adequate and culturally appropriate food for all

people (Allen 2004). Allen notes that as a whole the alternative food system movement has

attracted a broad range of participants in part because "as discourse symbols, both

sustainability and food security are enormously powerful" (6).

<u>Food systems in the planning literature</u>

Rural sociologists, agricultural economists, and others have studied our food

systems and how they interact with other social, economic, and political systems for

decades (e.g. Allen 2004; Bellows and Hamm 2002; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002;

Hinrichs 2003; Lyson 2004; Wright and Middendorf 2008). Students of urban planning have

only more recently begun to engage food system issues. Foundational works on food

systems and urban planning in the United States introduced planning practitioners and

scholars to the food system, stressed the relevance of the food system to urban and regional

planning, and identified ways that planners can help meet community food security needs

and improve local food system viability (Dahlberg et al. 1997; Pothukuchi and Kaufmann 1999; 2000).

Subsequent food system planning scholarship presented examples of "emerging conflicts in the food system" manifesting at the local level (Campbell 2004), and identified food system planning in practice in "leader" cities furthering the case for research and practice. Others began to develop resources and tools for practicing planners (Abel and Thompson 2001; Seidenburg and Pothukuchi 2002). Janet Hammer researched innovative courses in planning programs that focused on or engaged food systems issues in the curriculum (2004). She found that only nine of 68 accredited planning programs had courses addressing food systems at that time.

In 2006 the American Planning Association, the leading professional association of planners, published a white paper on food systems and planning. The organization subsequently adopted a "Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning," and published a *Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food System Planning* (Raja et al. 2007). These documents provided a new level of legitimacy for the burgeoning field. The thorough policy guide, co-authored by planning scholars, practitioners, and community food security advocates, made a compelling case for why a profession defined by its comprehensibility has been remiss to ignore one of the basic human needs. It informed a wider array of planners and municipalities and made clear many connections between food and other systems and infrastructure familiar to planners (American Planning Association 2006, 2007). Nourishing food - like clean water, clean air, and sufficient housing - is vital to human life. The food system accounts for a significant portion of land uses in both urban and rural communities and these uses have implications for economic development and employment, transportation systems, environmental health, and public health in every

community (3). Figure 2.1 identifies opportunities for local government and planning involvement in various aspects of the food system.

Most recently, the American Planning Association and state chapters of the professional organization have published special issues of their magazines and newsletters featuring food system planning and providing more examples and tools for practicing planners (e.g. American Planning Association 2009; Michigan Association of Planning 2009). The spate of professional publications regarding food system planning is a response to an increased interest among communities and planners in food system issues (Raja et al. 2008).

Because the field is still young, little empirical research on local food system planning has been published, and we have yet to develop theoretical frameworks for analyzing its emergence, institutional structure, or impact. We are still building our library of examples of food system planning, and other forms of local policymaking, in practice. We know little about the process through which food issues are brought to local policy agendas and have no analysis of factors of success or failure in making new food system-related policy at the local level.

This study begins to fill these gaps in our understanding of urban and regional planning in the U.S. In doing so, it aims to stoke an analytical discourse about the socio-political processes forcing local policy and planning innovation regarding the food system. That is, local policy and planning that addresses food production, processing, distribution and access, retail, consumption, and waste management. Not only will this discourse be useful to our understanding of the process and impact of new food system planning efforts, it will help us to understand how other new planning and local policy issues come to the attention of local citizens, planners, and policymakers.

A note on contested terms: local, localism, localization

In the agro-food movement, food systems planning, the food industry, and in the public consciousness, 'local' has become *the* food system buzzword. Local, as a modifier to food, agriculture, and economies, has gained broader popular attention than its predecessors in the alternative food movement, sustainable agriculture, or community food security, had previously. But the meaning of 'local' has fast become muddled, and the different uses of local, localism, and localization are challenging to sort out and at times conflicting. Localizing aspects of the food system among other elements of our socio-economy is likely part of the solution to the ecological, economic, and social shortcomings of the status quo and it is important here to outline how these terms are defined and used in the literature.

"Local" most generally refers to a place, "a geographic scale that is larger than a small city or a neighborhood and smaller than most American states" (Hess 2009, 11). 'Local' often has economic and political dimensions, as well. Hess cites Blakely and Bradshaw (2002), "regional and local are used interchangeably to refer to a geographical area comprised of a group of local government authorities that generally share a common economic base and are close enough together to allow residents to commute between them for employment, recreation, or retail shopping" (xvi). In the planning literature, regional is used to describe a cluster of proximate local governments. Regions can cross state borders and are sometimes associated with natural geographic features like river valleys or watersheds.

In the alternative food system movement and related movements, local is a socially constructed and contested term; it has no universal meaning and is often backed by certain ideologies or politics (Bellows and Hamm 2001; Harvey 1996; Hinrichs 2000, 2003). Some communities or individuals embrace the arbitrary 100-mile radius popularized by books

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and blogs while others use similarly arbitrary political boundaries to define local. Many of these ideas of 'local' are linked to economic boosterism for one's state or region and to a desire to support the local economy. While not necessarily a bad thing, this emphasis has no intrinsic regard for social justice or environmental responsibility.

"Localism," too suffers from a wide variety of applications in academic and activist literatures. In the political science and legal literatures, localism and new localism refers to a focus on local governance as the basis of democracy. This work is heavily based in Great Britain and emerged out of changes in British policy in the 1980s (Pratchet 2004). The legal profession uses localism to describe a parochial, local-autonomy focus and dates back at least to the Cooley Doctrine of 1871 (Briffault 1990). While many praise local autonomy and control over policy, localism is often lambasted in the literature as parochial, isolationist, and defensive (Young 1990; Hinrichs 2003; Platt 2004).

In his recent volume, *Localist Movements in a Global Economy*, David Hess (2009) defines localism differently, distinguishes it from localization, and offers detailed definitions and distinctions of both terms. Hess defines localism as "the movement in support of government policies and economic practices oriented toward enhancing local democracy and local ownership of the economy in a historical context of globalization" (7). 'Localism' is thus a movement, which Hess sees as one type of 'localization.' He defines four other forms of localization, one of which is very similar to the localism in the policy studies literature, as described above. For Hess, the ideal or "pure" economic localism has four defining features: locally sourced inputs, production by locally owned businesses, sales through locally owned organizations, and consumption within the geographical local where goods are sourced, produced and sold. Many institutions that Hess considers localist, however, do not fully realize all four components. Hess' notion of localism, like Michael Shuman's (1998), is more

about maximizing community self-reliance and decreasing dependence on distant locales for resources or waste dumping, than about promoting parochial, isolationist communities.

The term 'localization' has been used increasingly in social science literatures, and is usually used, as by Hess, in the intuitive sense of the process of something (governance, a food system, energy production) becoming more local in character (Bellows and Hamm 2001; Gibbs and Jonas 2000; Gunningham 2009). A few scholars and activists, however, embrace the concept of localization more purposefully as a contrasting logic to globalization. In his book *Localization: A Global Manifesto*, the activist Colin Hines (2000) defines localization as "a process which reverses the trend of globalization by discriminating in favour of the local" (27).

Academics are eager to dismiss an overly simplistic binary of globalization and localization, however, resulting in somewhat more vague attempts to define the concept (Hinrichs 2003; Princen 2009). "Although the process of localization is often seen as neat antithesis to globalization, this can be an overdrawn and problematic dichotomy" (Hinrichs 2003, 33). While Hinrichs contests Hines' definition, she restrains from offering a more nuanced alternative. For Princen (2009), localization refers to the process that "points toward localities, yet is not strictly about localities" (9). In his elaboration, Princen touches on many principles that recur in the literature: "localization entails increased attention to the tangible, the interpersonal, the face-to-face, and to place-based community. It entails a more direct connection to the natural world, especially that which enhances well-being, greenery and clean rivers" (9). Hinrichs and Princen agree that localization is a process that it is not "the local" and that it is not simply the opposite of globalization. It does not merely push back against globalization, but is another vector altogether that occupies the same field but tends in a different direction (Princen).

Operationally, localization may manifest as a process of community organizing, planning, policymaking, and capacity building aimed at preparing local communities and economies for the transition to a future less reliant on foreign inputs, fossil fuels, and consumerism. In the case of the food system this can happen on a "grassroots" level through education and awareness building promoting change in individual consumer behavior. It may also entail larger-scale policy approaches such as import substitution to redirect food spending to support more local food producers, processors and distributors (Bellows and Hamm 2001), removing regulatory or zoning barriers to food-based businesses and enabling the development of vibrant local markets. How communities come to engage food system localization at this local level is the topic of my research.

Though there may be many reasons to support and strengthen a local economy, we must take care not to uncritically attribute qualities like "good" or "sustainable" to any particular scale (Allen 2004; Bellows and Hamm 2001; Born and Purcell 2006; DuPuis and Goodman 2005; Hinrichs 2003). While transportation of food consumes energy and emits greenhouse gases, food production is the most energy intensive and polluting component of the system overall (Heller and Keoleian 2003). A recent study found that because more energy and emissions are associated with certain food production methods, changes in diet (eating less meat, selecting sustainably produced food) would have a greater impact on a household's "carbon footprint" than sourcing a typical US meat-based diet locally (Weber and Matthews 2008). Further, though localizing may be part of the path toward breaking up the concentration of power within the food system, local does not necessarily mean more socially equitable (Allen 2004). In most cases, a fully local food system would not meet all of the nutritional needs of all of the citizens.

Localized food systems can, under certain conditions that we have yet to clearly identify and understand, be more environmentally responsible and socially just than the

status quo. Environmental and social realities may require that we do all of the above, that is eat less energy-intensive foods that are produced locally in a socially just manner.

Local	Place
Localism	Practice
Localization	Process

Table 2.1 Summary of semantic distinctions among local, localism and localization.

<u>Agenda setting</u>

One goal of many social movements is to influence policy change. To do so, advocates must get the attention of decision makers, convince them that their issue requires policy action, and identify potential (desired) courses of action. How do social movement actors, or any advocates for, or against, change influence the policy process? What makes policymakers "listen" to certain movements, actors, or institutions? And, of particular interest to this study, how do advocates convince local decision makers to take action on an area of policy that is new to them?

These are the questions taken up by scholars of the policy process and of agenda-setting more specifically. Thus, to give conceptual structure to my study of the emergence of municipal food policy, I looked to theories of the policy process. This strand of the policy studies and political science aims to simplify the inherently complex process of democratic lawmaking.[6] Policy processes are a function of numerous actors, both in and outside of government, acting on personal and partisan beliefs within the constraints of legal institutions, budgets, public opinions, political tides and world events. In response to the myriad empirical challenges to the once-dominant but overly simplistic "stages heuristic" theory (Lasswell 1956; Jones 1970), several alternative, more nuanced theories of the

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[6] Theories I consider here assume an American federalist system, although some have been expanded or adapted in recent years to apply to other systems of government. (e.g. Institutional rational choice, advocacy coalition framework)

policy process have been developed in the last few decades (Sabatier 2007). These theories include:

Multiple streams theory (Kingdon 1984) maintains that three process streams -- problems, politics, and policy -- that usually flow independently from each other, occasionally converge at "critical junctures" opening up policy windows that allow for agenda and policy change. This theory focuses on the agenda setting and the early policy development process of identifying alternatives.

Institutional rational choice (IRC) or institutional analysis and development (IAD) theories (Ostrom 1990; 1994; 2007) posit that institutional rules circumscribe and alter the self-interested, rational behavior of actors. These theories have been applied extensively, particularly in the realm of common resource management policy.

Punctuated equilibrium theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) aims to explain why policymaking in a large, federalist democratic system is characterized by long periods of relative stability and incremental change (stasis) "punctuated" occasionally by major change (crisis). The theory maintains that the policy process is dominated by policy monopolies, which are sporadically toppled by a new policy regime that redefines the policy issues, ushers policy change, and eventually settles into monopoly status.

Policy innovation and diffusion theory (Berry and Berry 1990; 2007), consistent with punctuated equilibrium theory, holds that most policy change is incremental, but most policy change derives from "non-incremental innovation." Policy innovation can result from either or both internal determinants and diffusion, where one governmental unit learns from and emulates another's policy innovation.

New policy adoption is a function of motivation, resources, obstacles, other policies and external factors.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework, developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier 1988; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), focuses on the belief systems of policy actors and the intervention of advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems to change certain types of beliefs and affect policy change. This theoretical framework is designed to explain policy change over long periods of time, a decade or more.

 To structure my analysis of the emergence of new municipal food policy, an appropriate theory would have a few characteristics. Ideally, the theory would: a) have a strong focus on the agenda setting aspect of the policy process, the emphasis of this study; b) be applicable to relatively short policy time frames (2-5 years); c) be comprised of variables and relationships that could be applied to the local level; and d) be suitable for a "small-N" case study design. No existing major theory matched my ideal criteria. At least two of the theories listed above focus on agenda setting: Multiple Streams and Punctuated Equilibrium. While timeframe is not explicitly defined in some theories, three are unambiguously designed to make sense of the process over a decade or more (Advocacy Coalition, Punctuated Equilibrium, and Policy Diffusion). Most notably, theories of the policy process are largely concerned with national level policymaking and the function of and influences on the United States Congress, in particular. While some theories were designed to explain state and local government policy process (IRC, Policy Diffusion), this national-level bias may be one of the reasons why scholars of planning do not frequently engage policy process theory even though planning and other forms of local policymaking are a critical aspect of the democratic, federalist policy process.

Policy process theory	Local-level application	Short time-frame	Agenda setting focus
Multiple Streams	-	0	+
Institutional Rational Choice	+	0	-
Punctuated Equilibrium	-	-	+
Advocacy Coalition Framework	+	-	0
Policy Innovation and Diffusion	+	-	0

Table 2.2. Summary of the relevance of the leading policy process theories to the current study.

The "+" indicates the theory satisfied the criteria; "-" does not satisfy the criteria; and "0" indicates neutral or unclear.

Thus, with no perfect match, I relaxed my criteria. Given my research question about how the new issue of food gets placed on municipal government decision agenda, I chose to select a policy process theory that was well-developed with respect to agenda setting. This pointed to either Multiple Streams theory or Punctuated Equilibrium. Turning next to the timeframe criteria, Multiple Streams made the most sense because it does not explicitly require a long period of observation. The Multiple Streams theory, like all policy process theories, was developed based on empirical study of national, and to a lesser extent state, policymaking. Based on my preliminary observation of the local-level food policy process, however, I decided that Kingdon's framework would sufficiently apply to local level policymaking. As such, applying the multiple streams framework became an opportunity to test and extend or adapt the theory to the local context.

Agenda setting and the Multiple Streams theory
Overview

As a critical stage of the policymaking process, many scholars of policy process have studied agenda setting in an attempt to develop explanatory theories about how, why, and under what conditions policy agendas change (Cobb and Elder 1983; Kingdon 1984; 1990; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Birkland 1997; 2005; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). The

overlapping literature on policy innovation focuses specifically on what makes governments create policy that is new to them (Berry and Berry 2007).

The political agenda is the "list of subjects or problems to which government officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention at any given time" (Kingdon 1990, 3). More specifically, the governmental agenda is the list of subjects that are getting attention and the decision agenda is the list of subjects that are up for decision at a given time (Kingdon 1990; Birkland 2005). Agenda setting refers to the process that "narrows the set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention" (Kingdon 1990, 3). Birkland (1997) defines it as "the process by which issues gain greater mass and elite attention" (5).

Politicians and other decision makers cannot attend to all issues of potential importance to their constituents. To get a politician or a political assembly to pay attention to a certain topic is often a complex process of influence involving many actors, sometimes-competing sets of information, and rhetorical strategy. This process is important to scholars of policymaking in a democracy because it determines, at least in part, the scope of issues that come to be considered in the political arena, and that, in turn, shape the future of the polity.

While the questions taken up in these literatures are highly relevant to urban and regional planning, relatively few planning scholars have engaged agenda setting, directly or indirectly (Schmidt 2008). Related work on local government decision-making and power addresses agenda setting more indirectly by emphasizing the people, such as the business elite, who influence local policymaking (Molotch and Logan 1987). Much of the research on agenda setting is anchored in the field of communication studies and focuses on how the media set the national public policy agenda (e.g., McCombs and Shaw 1972; McCombs 2004; Scheufele 2000; Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). While this work is less related to a local

policy agenda project, one of the key strategies citizen advocates use to shape the political agenda is to use the media to raise public attention to issues and communicate information (Berry 1999).

Theories and key concepts of agenda setting

The study of agenda setting is about why, given that they work in a context of limited resources, policymakers focus their attention on certain issues over others and how competing or alternative interests come to be considered. There are many reasons and competing explanations that focus on various attributes of the policymaking setting, including institutional and political structure (Kingdon 1990), focusing events (Kingdon 1990; Birkland 1997), and the attributes of the issue itself (Cobb and Elder 1983; Green-Pederson and Wilkerson 2006). Most scholars conclude that multiple factors influence the agenda setting process and, because of the diversity of actors and influences, no complete and agreed-upon explanatory models exist (Berry 1999). However incomplete, the existing models are instructive and serve to inform research on the topic.

Consistent with prevailing theories of the policy process at the time, foundational work on agenda setting and issue attention in political science tended toward identifying the several stages in the issue-attention process or cycle (e.g., Downs 1972; Peters and Hogwood 1985; Schon 1971). Based on their study of five cases, Milward and Laird (1990) constructed a more iterative model that incorporates several key factors of agenda success, including: issue framing and action strategy; coupling ideas and interests; a "policy community" that has a set of parties interested in the issue; policy entrepreneurs and 'sponsors;' policy windows; focusing events; and issue characteristics. This list continues to be a thorough summation of key dimensions to consider when studying the agenda setting phase of the policymaking process. I discuss below how several later authors have

elaborated on these concepts and offered nuance to our understanding of these factors

(Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Kingdon (1990) defined several key concepts related to agenda setting and offered

one of the most citied theories of the process. Kingdon argued that agenda setting is driven

by participants and processes. Participants influence the process by sharing information,

ideas and ideologies. Three types of processes that can influence agenda change are: 1) a

crisis or prominent event; 2) the gradual accumulation of knowledge and perspectives; and

3) political processes themselves, such as changes in political mood and public opinion, and

elections (20).

Kingdon developed a theory of "process streams" to explain the policymaking

process, often called Multiple Streams theory. He argued that each of three "process

streams" - problem recognition, policy proposals and political events – can serve to

encourage or limit agenda change. Moreover, streams converge at certain "critical

junctures", which can open up "policy windows." The greatest policy changes "grow out of

the coupling of problems, policy proposals and politics" (20) when policy entrepreneurs

seize opportunities opened up by policy windows to create change.

Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1993) wrote, "when a general principle of

policy action is in place, policymaking tends to assume an incremental character. When new

policy principles are under consideration, the policymaking process tends to be volatile, and

Kingdon's model is most relevant" (5). Building on Kingdon's work, Baumgartner and Jones

developed the "punctuated equilibrium" theory of the policy process and agenda setting

based on the role of policy monopolies. They aimed to explain why policy monopolies form,

decay and fail to form in certain situations. Every interest aims to have a "monopoly on

political understandings concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement

that reinforces that understanding" (7). Building on the notion of punctuated equilibrium (a

term borrowed from Eldridge and Gould 1972), Baumgartner and Jones argued that the "agenda setting process implies that no single equilibrium could be possible in politics… the stability is punctuated with periods of volatile change" (4). For this reason, a theory of agenda setting and agenda change must be able to account for long periods of relative agenda stability (stasis) and intermittent bursts of change (crisis). The authors contrast this model to the basic incrementalist theory, which they argue is unable to account for periodic non-incremental shifts.

In his review of some of the earlier literature on the topic, Charles Levine (1985) found that "the ideas are often more important than the push and pull of interest groups in affecting the substance of public policy" (256). Some policy issues get more attention than others because issues themselves have "agenda setting attributes" (Cobb and Elder 1983; Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson 2006). For example, Green-Pedersen and Wilkerson found that "health is the sort of issue that is especially attractive to politicians with regard to vote seeking. It is a valence issue. No politician wants to oppose health or access to health care" (1041), though they may oppose specific policies. Food, as a basic human need (and, to some, a human right) that deeply affects human and environmental health as well as economic wellbeing of communities, might have agenda setting attributes.

Participants: Policy entrepreneurs and citizen advocates

The people who help to define or redefine the issues, develop knowledge, and act upon opportunities matter, as well. Kingdon (1990) and others (Schneider and Teske 1992; Jones 1994) identify the importance of policy entrepreneurs, people who are "willing to invest their resources in pushing their pet proposals or problems, [and] are responsible not only for prompting important people to pay attention but also for coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics" (Kingdon, 21). By

bringing new ideas, new dimensions of evaluation and new awareness to issues, policy

entrepreneurs are often a key actor in the agenda setting process (Jones 1994).

The citizen participation literature in the field of urban planning argues heavily for

the increased and more authentic involvement of non-officials in the planning process (e.g.,

Booher and Innes 2002; Healey 1998; Healey 2006). There are similar trends in the

literatures on public administration (King et al. 1998), public policy (Fischer 2003), and

environmental management and regulation where stakeholder involvement is critical to

informing and lending legitimacy to complex and value-laden socio-environmental

decisions (Stave 2002). Although many argue that the traditional means of involving

citizens in planning or other policy decisions is ineffective, if not trite, patronizing or

counterproductive (Innes and Booher 2004; Beierle 1998), these scholars' proposed

solutions focus almost entirely on the policy development and delivery stages of the

planning or policymaking process (e.g., Healey 1998) and rarely, if at all, on agenda setting.

Citizen participation scholars might take a page from policy advocacy literature and

practice, which highlights many ways citizens and non-governmental organizations can

shape the policy and planning agenda and thus influence the subsequent course of decision-

making about which policies to develop and implement. It may be the case that citizen

involvement at this very early stage in the local policymaking process leads to increased and

more authentic participation throughout the process. Among the key tactics that advocacy

groups use to influence the policy agenda are: research and communication to inform the

public and decision makers (Rubin 2000); issue definition, redefinition and framing (Pralle

2006; Rees 1998; Rein and Schon 1993); and mobilizing the media to raise attention to

issues (Rubin 2000; Wallack et al. 1999). Other tactics include forming alliances and

changing venues for decision-making (Pralle 2006).

Local government politics and decision-making

There is a marked gap in the policy process literature with respect to local government policy and planning. The theories discussed above are based primarily on national or state-level policy processes, and those that make explicit attempts to accommodate more local levels of decision-making assume high levels of specialization among policymakers and long timeframes. Much of the scholarship on local government politics and decision-making addresses the agenda setting process indirectly. Two theories of local politics predominate the literature: the "public choice model" and elite models such as the urban growth machine.

The public choice model (Lewis 1996; Tiebout 1956) interprets local municipalities as sets of goods and services among which households and businesses distribute themselves according to their preferences for taxes and services. Based on the theory, local governments' decisions are guided by how decision makers perceive they can attract desirable households and businesses. Schmidt (2008) observes that most explanations of policy decisions that use this model focus on community characteristics, socioeconomic factors and growth pressures and ignore individual agency. Beyond this limitation, there are myriad assumptions embedded in this model which limit its applicability significantly; it assumes all households and residents are median voters with median incomes and the ability and desire to move to meet their service demands (Schmidt 2008). Despite its limitations, the theory often appears to align with many actions of local governments.

Urban growth machine theory (Molotch 1976) implies that business elite or others with political power and access set the policy agendas, especially in larger urban areas. Consistent with growth machine theory, several studies have shown that economic interests tend to dominate the policy agenda process (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Mayer 1994; Clarke and Gaile 1997; Schmidt 2008). In the "entrepreneurial city" of the post-Fordist era,

we see increased mobilization of local politics in support of economic development and subordination of social policies to the economic and the labor market (Mayer 1994). Mayer also notes that the sphere of local politics has expanded to include a broad range of private and semi-public actors who form new partnerships and collaborations with governmental institutions. These trends undermine the traditional distinctions among policy arenas (social, education, environment, etc.) as these areas are increasingly integrated with economic development (319). Based on this work, we expect to find emerging food system issues framed as economic development opportunities in the local political arena.

The emerging arena of local-level food planning and policy provides a case through which to study the process of local agenda setting, and to test and refine existing theories of how and why certain issues become the work of our governing institutions. This complex and multi-dimensional process is at the center of how democracies adapt to changing conditions, economic, environmental, and socio-political.

Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for the present study. The purpose of this study is identify why cities enter into the arena of food policy and planning, a policy area that has not, in recent decades, been a part of the local government agenda. First, this inquiry is guided by a rich literature on the organization and implications of our dominant food system. Food system scholars study how food moves from farm to table and the social, economic and political forces that influence and shape this chain of relationships. My review above focused on the sub-section of this large literature that is most closely related to urban and regional planning. This work helps to situate my study within the larger social-political context of the food system. The three cases studied here emerged in part as a result of the growing public awareness of the weaknesses of the food

system and the rhetoric and debate in the three cities echoed many of the themes set out by scholars.

Second, little research on the socio-political process behind planning agenda change and planning-related policy change exists within the disciplines of planning, political science, policy studies, or public administration. However, the fields of political science and policy studies offer concepts and theoretical frameworks that can help explain the local-level policy change around food. Agenda setting theories aim to explain what policy issues come to be considered by decision makers and why. While these theories have limited explanatory power due to the large number of interacting factors that influence this process, the constructs they identify provide a framework for my inquiry into the process of putting food system issues on the local policy agenda. In particular, I chose to use the Multiple Streams theory to guide my inquiry and analysis because its assumptions and emphasis on agenda setting and policy development aligned best with my research questions and the fact that urban food policy is in its infancy as a policy subsystem. Applying this theory to municipal policymaking opens the opportunity to identify ways to increase the robustness of these theories across levels of government. Through the case of food, we can further our theoretical understanding of local policy agenda change as an aspect of urban adaptation.

As we wade further into the 21st century, cities old and new are struggling to adapt to a changing economy and environment. To guide this process, policymakers and planning practitioners are looking for examples and research. Scholars are in a unique and important position to both further our understanding of democratic governance, and to provide thoughtful analysis to help practitioners make sense of their role in a changing world. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods I employed to answer my research questions, and to provide some of the case studies and analysis needed to inform this work.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

<u>"Problem definition" and research goals</u>

Food is not a "traditional" area of local government planning like transportation, economic development or public health and safety. Yet, local governments are beginning to take action and to create or change policies to address food system issues. Examples of such action include changing the zoning code to allow for previously banned food production or processing in residential zones, integrating local food system components into a master plan or creating a food system plan for a community. The emergence of a new policy arena begs study – What does food system planning look like in practice? Why is it happening now? What motivates local governments to enter into a new policy arena and what challenges to do they face when doing so? The small, but growing food system planning literature has not taken up these questions. More generally, we lack established theories that explain how and why new issues like food get on the local planning agenda. From the broader agenda setting literature in political science, we know that many interconnected social, economic and political factors shape the process of influencing local government to consider and act on any new issue.

The purposes of this research are at least twofold. The first purpose is to tell stories - to enrich the nascent food system planning literature with empirical case studies of community and regional food planning-in-action. This research provides rich, "thick" description of cases augmented by comparative analysis that serve to deepen our

understanding of how food issues are introduced to local planning and policymaking. The second purpose is to develop hypotheses about the process of agenda setting for new urban and regional issues, using agenda setting theory as a framework. Specifically, I aim to identify factors and approaches that enable and constrain the introduction of new policy issues, like food access and production, to the local government agenda. As cities work to adapt to changing environments – ecological, economic and social – planners and policymakers as well as scholars alike should be concerned with how local policy change helps and hinders this adaptation. This theoretical generalizing will begin to fill knowledge gaps and pave the way for future research including larger scale projects to test and refine the working theories that emerge from this work.

These research goals, in the context of little existing work on the topics, lend themselves to a naturalistic, qualitative case study design. Case studies are well suited to investigating complex, emerging issues influenced by many interrelated variables and for which there is limited existing research. "Case studies are the preferred strategy when 'why' and 'how' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (Yin 1994, 1). I chose a multiple case approach to examine the process in different cities of different size and government capacity and to allow for comparisons among a variety of communities to identify common trends and seemingly idiosyncratic characteristics.

This chapter details the research design and methods employed in this dissertation. I first briefly review the research questions and the propositions – or working hypotheses – I aimed to test and refine through the study. Next, building on the literature reviewed in chapter 2, I summarize the conceptual framework I used to situate and focus the study. I then elaborate on the multiple case study design and methods of data collection and data

analysis. Finally, I discuss several assumptions that undergird this study and acknowledge the study's limitations and the opportunities for further research that result from them.

<u>Research questions and propositions</u>

The question that initially motivated this study was: Why do local governments enter into the arena of food system policy and take action on food system issues? Or, with respect to a single case, what makes a local government enter into food system policy making and planning?

Embedded in this large question are several sub-questions, both exploratory and explanatory, about the actors involved in the agenda setting process and the strategies and tactics they employ, as well as the social and political processes within which they act and to which those actions are a response. As I explored the literature and developed my conceptual framework more fully, several sub-questions emerged to guide the inquiry.

- Who are the key individuals and institutions driving or opposing the policy change effort?
- Why did they advocate for or against proposed planning process or policy changes? What were the actors' motivations for getting involved in this issue?
- What strategies and tactics of advocacy or agenda setting did those actors employ?

This set of sub-questions focuses on the actors – individuals and institutions - who shape the process of introducing food issues as potential areas of local government action, and these actors' motivations for acting. Anticipated key actors and institutions included: local activists, planning staff, planning commission members, local business people, and elected officials among others. I expected individual motivations to range from personal experiences with urban gardening or farming, to perceptions about the types of activity that are and are not appropriate in urban environments, to more general notions about social equity and justice. Institutions may be motivated by political pressure to create jobs,

address environmental concerns or mediate community tensions. Thus, participants'

motivations may have been related to what Kingdon (1990) labeled the "problem stream" of

the local political milieu.

A second set of questions point to the more explanatory goal of this project, to

understand why local governments are taking up the issue of food today and the conflicts

that arise during these stages.

- Why are local governments considering and taking action on food issues today?

- To what issues or conflicts were advocates and local governments responding?

- What areas of debate or conflict arose in the process?

- How, if at all, did these debates shape the advocacy and agenda setting processes?

These questions make more connections to Kingdon's Multiple Streams framework.

In particular, the first "why now?" question connects the personal motivations question

above with other political and contextual factors, the problem and politics process streams

for Kingdon. Influential process factors could include, for example, economic climate, the

accumulation of knowledge about the issue, shifts in the local political culture, institutional

resources or capacity, and citizen advocacy. Though much of the planning literature

contends that economic factors tend to prevail in local policy decisions, any or all of these

types of factors could serve to encourage or discourage agenda change. Potential areas of

debate or conflict revolve around the perennial questions: What is a city? And whose city is

it? At issue could be personal conflicts of opinion about what types of activities and land

uses are appropriate in the city; political conflicts about who has the right to make decisions

about land use in a city or a particular neighborhood; and socio-cultural conflicts based on

historical ownership and control of land in the city and historical relationships with food

and farming. This study aimed to uncover which of these issues, or other unanticipated

ones, characterized the campaign for and debate about local food policy in the cities studied.

Propositions, wrote Yin (1994) usefully "direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study" (21). Propositions are causal claims that should be both generalizable and applicable to an individual case (Argyris 1997). The relationships of interest in this study pointed to four propositions, or working hypotheses that I initially planned to "test" and revise through the study.

1. Local governments consider policy and planning action on food issues because non-governmental actors, like citizen advocacy groups demand that they do so. Local governments will not act on food issues without constituent support.

2. Local governing bodies like planning commissions and city councils will resist significant changes to existing policy because they are unfamiliar with food as a local policy issue or because they do not believe it is a significant enough issue for the city to take on. Local governing bodies prefer to maintain the status quo and to make only incremental change. This proposition follows from the policy process literature that emphasizes the "stasis" character of government.

3. In order to gain traction with local officials/decision makers on this unfamiliar issue, advocates emphasize the local economic benefits of their proposed food policy changes. Among other issues familiar to local policymakers, much of the planning literature argues that economic concerns trump others, particularly in a period of state and local budget crisis (Mayer 1994).

4. On a theoretical level, I propose that policy process theories apply to local-level agenda setting processes because local politics involve many of the same sets of actors who are similarly motivated by their belief systems, partisan affiliations and reelection goals, as well as a commitment to represent their constituents, and who act within and respond to "problem and politics streams." Because of

this parallel actor-process configuration, policy process theory can help scholars

of planning and local policy to understand how new issues come to the attention

of local governments.

I revisit, critique, and refine these propositions in chapter 7.

<u>Study design: Series of three case studies</u>

Study area

The goal of this study was to illuminate why cities enter into the arena of food

planning and policymaking. The existing literature on the local role in food system issues

focuses mainly on relative "outlier" communities that are unique in their commitment to

environmentally-oriented planning and policymaking and/or were pioneers in food system

planning (e.g., Berkeley, CA, Toronto, ON, Hartford, CT). I was thus interested in adding to

our knowledge the experience of more ordinary cities, those that were not among the "usual

suspects" for urban planning innovation, and were not the earliest adopters, but that have

been innovative nonetheless.

For this reason, I chose the Great Lakes Region, and Michigan and Ohio in particular,

as the site of my study. Because of my proximity I had better access to key informants with

knowledge of cities in these states. Further, like many states, Michigan and Ohio have

notable resources within the food system: rich agricultural heritage and diversity; strong

Extension programs and food system research activity; and many members of the agro-food

system movement. Yet, they also face challenges in terms of the state economy, limited state

and local government resources, and limited access to food in many urban and rural areas.

As such, I assume lessons learned from Michigan and Ohio will be applicable to other states

and communities.

Though they may not be the most glamorous or sweeping examples of the response

to environmental and social issues, local governments small and large have a critical role to

play in shaping healthy, resilient communities in the global age (Amin and Thrift 1995). It is essential that we learn how a wide range of communities are taking on complex global issues that face society today including climate change, increasing costs of fossil fuels, and food system viability and resilience.

Case selection

I chose a multiple case study design in order to learn about the emergence of local food planning and policy, and the agenda setting process in particular, in a variety of urban contexts. This project was designed as a series of holistic single cases because little existing research was available to guide a formal comparative replication logic for case selection (Yin 1994, 46). I aimed to select three municipalities that had considered food-related planning or policymaking in recent years. Though conducted as individual case studies, this design does not preclude theoretical generalization across cases. I elaborate on case selection method below.

To identify potential cases I conducted ten interviews with key informants including individuals involved in local food policy change efforts and leaders of local, state and regional food-system related groups and planning organizations. I asked each interviewee what, if any, local food policy efforts they were involved with and whether they had heard about or looked to as an example other efforts in their own or neighboring Great Lakes states. I also searched the Internet and electronic news for mention of such efforts.

This preliminary research generated a list of nine potential cases, including one township, five cities, one county, one city-county partnership where most of the policy action was in the city, and one six-county region that includes many cities and townships. The potential cases ranged in population from about 5,000 to about 1 million (2008 American Community Survey estimates). Two of the prospective cases were facing growth or development pressure, while at least three had seen dramatic declines in population in

the last few decades. Initial research into the potential cases revealed a wide range of

approaches to local-level food policy, key actors and amount of commitment from local

government unit(s).

The goal of case selection in qualitative case study research methodology is to

purposefully select one or a set of information-rich cases (Yin 1984; Patton 2000). After

considering several approaches to case selection, I identified three criteria, or filters, to

narrow my case list. First, I chose to study cases that were in the midst of the policy change

process and where the outcome of the process was not yet known. This focus would allow

me to directly observe some aspects of the process. This criterion excluded cases that had

already passed discrete policies and were not, to my knowledge, considering any others as

of Fall 2009.

Second, I chose to keep the government type constant: to study cities. Different

levels of local government have different sets of legal rights and responsibilities authorized

by the state. Among types of local government, cities have the most autonomy, including the

power to tax (in Michigan). Thus, a focus on cities allowed for more cross-case comparison.

Five of the nine potential cases were cities ranging significantly in size, socio-economic

characteristics, and location. This approach did not exclude regional analysis, however.

Because food systems are inherently regional, a full, holistic study of the city unit requires

investigation into the city's relationship with neighboring jurisdictions as related to food

issues and an investigation into whether, if at all, any neighboring municipalities had any

role in or influence on the policy process. Thus, while the city was the central unit of

analysis for this study, the research proceeded from the viewpoint that cities exist within a

larger regional context and that context must be explored in order to fully understand

planning and policy decisions.

The first two criteria narrowed the list of potential cases to five cities that ranged in population, socio-demographic composition and historical context. These were Benton Harbor, Flint, Grand Rapids, Cleveland and Detroit. In order to learn from and compare the experiences of a range of cities, I chose to maximize variation in city size (by population). Cities in Michigan and Ohio range from a few hundred to almost 1 million residents; most of the cities have fewer than 50,000 residents. Cities of different sizes employ a wide range of resources and institutions in the policymaking process. Given my sample of prospective cities, I chose to study one small (fewer than 25,000), one medium (25,000-300,000) and one large city (greater than 300,000). At this point, Detroit was eliminated as a potential case due to the very unique institutional organization of planning in the city and, perhaps resulting, stagnant progress on the proposed urban agriculture ordinance. Released as a draft in Fall 2009, no action was taken on the proposed urban agriculture ordinance by the spring of 2010 and participants did not anticipate much action in the coming months.

CASES	Population	Summary
Benton Harbor	11,000	City hired consultant to develop a community food system plan in 2009.
Flint	117,000	A group of advocates proposed city ordinance and zoning code changes to allow for more food production in city; most activity in 2009.
Cleveland, OH	478,000	Several policy changes proposed from 2006 to 2010; some passed, some in progress during study.

Table 3.1 Summary of case cities by population and policy or planning action.

Seeking variation in city size served as a proxy for selecting a range of urban contexts, each with its own history, social conditions and economic contexts. Keeping the region constant, however, meant there were many similarities among the cities including climate (highly relevant to food systems) and experience of the economic tides associated with heavy industry and manufacturing.

Table 3.2 below shows the population of the case cities and their counties for Census years 1950 through 2010. Cleveland grew quickly in the early 20th century, but

started losing population in the 1950s. Flint began losing population in the 1960s. It is interesting to note that the counties in which the cities are located have also lost population, though at a slower rate, and the beginning of the regional decline was delayed by about two decades in each case. This can be partially explained by suburbanization in the post-World War II era when many families of means moved out of cities into the surrounding towns. Eventually, however, the surrounding area began to suffer as the cities continued to lose jobs and population. These trends support the theory that regional stability and economic health continues is linked to the urban economy. Because of this connection, each of these regions stands to benefit from stabilizing their central city.

	Benton Harbor	Berrien County	Flint	Genesee County	Cleveland	Cuyahoga County
1950	*n/a*	115,702	163,143	270,963	**914,808**	1,389,532
1960	19,136	149,865	**196,940**	374,313	876,050	1,647,895
1970	16,481	163,875	193,380	444,341	751,046	**1,721,300**
1980	14,707	**171,276**	159,611	**450,449**	748,140	1,498,400
1990	12,818	161,378	140,761	430,459	505,616	1,412,140
2000	11,182	162,453	124,943	436,141	478,403	1,393,978
2010	10,038	156,813	102,434	425,790	396,815	1,280,122

Table 3.2 Population of case cities and their counties. Emboldened numbers indicate peak Census years.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau data accessed via www.census.gov; www.socialexplorer.com; www.michigan.gov.

Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis is sometimes difficult to define in qualitative, real-world case study research because many interconnected components of a process are studied to gain a full understanding. The primary unit of analysis for this project is the process of proposing the policy/planning change or set of changes in a particular city. The cases are referred to by the name of the city, though city officials are only some of the relevant actors. The study participants were agents of various organizations and individuals who acted within the city

in a capacity related to or aware of the policy or planning endeavor. Participants thus included city officials including planners, council members, non-profit leaders, local business owners, and individual citizens. The timeframe ranged from about one year to about five years and was determined by participants as they defined when the food policy/planning process began.

<u>Data collection and analysis</u>

Overview

I used multiple sources of evidence to inform each case study and to allow for cross-case comparison. The primary sources of data were interviews, document review, and direct observation. Interviews and document review were guided by a semi-structured protocol to increase validity and reliability, but flexibility was integrated into the design to allow participants and data to introduce unanticipated constructs.

Interviews

The primary mode of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews with multiple actors representing different actor groups in each case studied. I conducted 39 in-depth interviews, each lasting between 30 minutes and two hours. Detailed notes were taken at each interview. Eighteen interviews were audio recorded resulting in nearly 12 hours of material. Recorded interviews were transcribed using NVivo9, a qualitative data analysis program. In some cases, and if interviewees gave advance permission, interviews were followed up with email communication to clarify comments or notes.

The objectives of the interviews were to learn from a wide variety of actors involved with the case about how food issues were brought to the local government venue, who the key actors were, why they became engaged and what factors participants felt enabled and limited the policy development or change process including conflicts. The semi-structured

interview format allowed me to ask each participant a set of standard questions pertaining to my research questions, but also allowed flexibility and discussion beyond prepared questions in order to gain unanticipated insights. The interview protocol evolved slightly over the data collection period and was altered for each case to address the particulars of each city's experience.

I identified potential interviewees in two ways. First, I compiled a list of names based on preliminary research on the site through informal conversations, public documents and available media. Second, I used the snowball sampling technique of asking each interviewee to indicate with whom else I should talk. For each case, I interviewed city planners involved in the process, planning commission and/or city council members as well as other local policymakers, and citizen advocates on all sides of the policy debate. I attempted to talk to some individuals who were not directly involved in order to gather some more external perspectives.

Document review

To validate interview data and provide additional information about relevant public events, individuals, and organizations involved in the process and political context, I collected a wide range of documents as data. Through website review, news searches, and interviews I identified relevant documents including meeting minutes, city council and planning commission public records, ordinances, presentations and informational materials, and news media coverage. I began with Internet searches for public documents on municipal websites and local news media searches. In each interview, I asked participants to identify and share relevant documents to review. I collected any materials provided during public and other meetings I was able to attend. Document collection and review continued through the analysis and writing process in order to resolve or inform conflicting or incomplete information.

Observation

Whenever possible, I attended events and activities related to the proposed policy change. I was able to attend planning commission meeting and multiple community outreach and planning sessions, and to visit food system projects in each of the cities studied. Observation was open-ended. I took detailed notes of the environment, the people, and the conversations I engaged in and overheard. I aimed to minimize the influence of my research questions on what I noticed and noted. In the analysis I was particularly looking for information regarding my research questions about key actors, motivations, enabling and limiting factors and areas of conflict.

Data collection in each case concluded when new interviews and documents no longer provided new pertinent information. As noted, I conducted 39 formal interviews across the three cases, including at least 10 per case. The number of interviewees per case varied in approximate proportion to the number of participants central to the agenda setting process. I collected more than 60 documents, including multiple planning documents (meeting notes, plans) and code language and newspaper articles for each case. (Tables of interviewees and the sectors they represent and of documents reviewed are included in Appendix.)

Data Analysis

In case study research, data analysis is an ongoing and iterative process. Initial analysis begins as soon as data are collected and develops throughout the data collection stage as new information gives rise to new insights and hypotheses (Merriam 165). Throughout the data collection phase I made notes of this informal analysis and tested some of my thoughts on participants in interviews. As I collected information about each case, I developed case chronologies and narratives to organize and corroborate information.

Categorization and comparison is the core of qualitative data analysis. Though developed in the context of "grounded theory" (Corbin and Strauss 1990; 2008), the constant-comparative method offered a useful framework for structuring my data analysis (Dye et al. 2000; Boeije 2002). Using NVivo9 and hard and soft copies of the transcripts and documents, I first coded each interview for themes relevant to my theoretical framework, but also for emergent themes (open coding). I summarized the core information provided in each interview transcript or notes and compared themes within each case. Next, I compared interviews within each case connecting codes (axial coding) and triangulating the data: that is, I identified consistencies and inconsistencies among participants' perceptions of events and actions. Consistent accounts corroborated that version of the story or interpretation, while conflicting accounts shed doubt or opened new questions. Next, I compared across cases, identifying shared themes and inconsistencies.

After initial coding and comparison, I reviewed the interview transcripts and notes again to identify quotations that summarized each interviewee's central points. I refined the codes for these quotations to improve internal consistency. These data were compiled into a separate table for more efficient further analysis. Both the unrefined and refined interview data were compiled into full-text searchable PDF documents, which I found easier and quicker to search than NVivo.

I took electronic notes on all documents collected and developed a structured review protocol for newspaper articles. I coded news articles for themes and framing approaches relevant to the study such as economic development, food access, and health. In articles that directly covered aspects of the food policy advocacy process, I subjectively assessed whether the article was one of support or criticism for the advocacy efforts. This data served to validate the interview data (See Appendix for listing of news articles).

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<u>Assumptions</u>

This research was undergirded by a number of assumptions about the participants and actors, the data they provided and the contexts in which they acted. Although each local context is unique in many ways, this research proceeded on the assumption that these cases are not wholly unique and that some findings about the process of setting the local food policy agenda can be applied to other places. I assume, where not otherwise discredited, that participants were as truthful and honest in their accounts as possible. Internal validation of data through triangulation of multiple sources supports the plausibility of this assumption. I assumed that participants were boundedly rational (Simon 1982). I assume that governments have limited resources, including time and money, and thus cannot take on all issues or address all "problems" of constituent or personal concern. As a result, policy change proponents had to compete for the attention of policymakers.

<u>Limitations and future opportunities</u>

The case study method has many inherent limitations. Most notably, this research has limited generalizability. I cannot assert that the findings of the three cases studied to a particular population or universe of cases (e.g. all U.S. municipalities considering food policy action). The case study method does allow for analytical and theoretical generalizing (Seale 1999; Smaling 2003). Less generalizable, however, does not mean less applicable. I expect practitioners and scholars alike to find that some of the experiences described in these cases apply to many other contexts.

Given the intent and parameters of this study, I did not include or examine any "negative cases". Although I did not select cases on the basis of agenda "success," by choosing cases where I was unaware of the outcomes of the attempted policy change or planning action, I did not include cases with absolutely no planning or policy action because they were less information rich with respect to my this study's research questions. After

developing new hypotheses as a result of this study, it may make sense in a future study to examine cases where some important participant and process factors I identify through this research exist, but where no agenda setting attempt has been made, and to examine why not.

My case selection was limited to the information I was able to gather from 10 informants, many Internet searches, and listserv posts. There may well be other information rich cases of new food policy in Michigan and Ohio that I was not aware of at the time of case selection. Since the beginning of this study, more municipalities nationwide and in the Great Lakes region have begun to consider food policy action. There is much more to learn. I discuss opportunities for future study further in chapter 7.

Chapter 4

Benton Harbor, Michigan
Reconnecting people, opportunities, and food

<u>Introduction</u>

In early 2009, Benton Harbor, Michigan, a small lakeside city at the edge of financial solvency, allocated several thousand dollars of its general fund to hire a consultant to develop a community food system plan. A handful of city leaders identified the potential of such a plan to help address some of the pressing health, economic, and equity challenges facing the town. Over the next six months, the consultant identified goals and opportunities for strengthening a network of community gardeners, improving residents' access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and reestablishing Benton Harbor as a regional food system hub.

This case study, and the next two, consists of two parts: a story and a critical review. The Benton Harbor story begins with a description of the context out of which this small city came to embark on a modest food system plan that was unprecedented for a city of such size and stature. Interest in food system-based economic development had been brewing for a few years, but the city manager, with the help of a local food businessman and activist, moved the issue to the local planning agenda. The next phase of the story describes the creation and presentation of the plan, "Building a Healthy Local Food System in Benton Harbor." The consultant focused his work on engaging community residents in the planning process and the effort stirred up noticeable interest in the community. But, this interest did not grow into active resident support. The story concludes by considering the uncertain

future of the plan given the financial and leadership distress plaguing the city and the lack of a coalition of local advocates working to keep food on the local agenda. Despite these challenges, some steps have been taken towards plan goals.

The discussion section analyzes the roles of the city manager, consultant, and other participants and considers the various social and political factors that both ushered the food system plan and challenged advocates' abilities to keep the issue on the local agenda. In Benton Harbor, extreme unemployment and public health, of which limited access to healthful food is considered a notable factor, were among the pressing social problems that advocates hoped the food plan would help address. The lack of steps toward implementing the food systems plan were largely due to financial insolvency, emergency state takeover, and the ensuing changes in administration constituted a political context hostile to non-essential planning activities.

"Coming Home" to the Great Fruit Belt: Context and trigger events

Benton Harbor: "Port of Opportunities"

The small city of Benton Harbor sits on the western edge of Michigan where the St. Joseph River flows into Lake Michigan. The city is in the heart of "one of the greatest fruit belts in the world," where a diverse array of tree fruits and vegetable crops thrive in at least 30 microclimates along the Michigan coast. This unique natural geography played a key role in Benton Harbor's 150-year history. The stately homes located along the town's arterial streets hearken back to a time when the town thrived. As a bustling lake port, tons of fruit were loaded onto ships destined for Chicago markets and beyond. In addition to trade and small-scale manufacturing, Benton Harbor became a tourist destination by the turn of the 20th century.

	Timeframe	Events and activities	Participants
"*Coming Home* to the Great Fruit Belt" *Phase I - Context and trigger events*	2007-2009	Local organizations explore food processing opportunities; incubator development	Southwest MI Regional Planning Comm.; Cornerstone Alliance; B.H. Fruit Market
	2009	Film about building local economies shown	City Manager (Marsh)
"Community Food System Plan" *Phase II - Agenda setting and initial policy/plan development*	June 2009	City Manager and consultant pitch idea to City Commission; consultant hired by city	City Manager; Consultant (Bedford); City Commission
	July-August 2009	Consultant interviews stakeholders, residents, gardeners; research on food environment	Residents; community leaders; nonprofits
	August 2009	Consultant presents plan to City Commission (and public)	City Commission; residents
	November 2009	Public Food Summit held at local high school	Residents (including seniors and youth)
Phase III - Debate, revision, and vote(s)		*N/A*	
"Uncertain Future" *Phase IV - Aftermath*	June 2010	Health department established EBT at one farmers market in 2010. No city action. Next steps unclear in part due to emergency financial management of the city.	County health department

Table 4.1 Benton Harbor case summary and timeline of key events.

Though its many agricultural assets remain, Benton Harbor has seen hard times over the last few decades, particularly compared to the now more affluent town and summer tourist haven of St. Joseph located across the river. Since the 1960s, many manufacturing plants have closed leaving residents with limited employment opportunities. Former homes, office buildings, and factories throughout Benton Harbor stand empty. In 1986, Benton Harbor became the first town declared by the State of Michigan as an "enterprise zone"[7].

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[7] In 1986 the Michigan Legislature passed the Enterprise Zone Act (224 of 1985) to "promote economic growth within economically distressed local governmental units" through the creation of enterprise zones and an enterprise zone authority. Michigan was one of 38 states to pass similar legislation between 1981 and 1991 (Peters and Fisher 2002, 21).

In 2010, about 10,000 people lived in Benton Harbor. The population is 90 percent

Black or African-American and 7 percent White. The median income is less than half the

national median and about 20 percent of families live below the poverty level (U.S. Census

2010). In July 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated the unemployment rate in the

Benton Harbor region at 14 percent. Many residents opine, however, that unemployment in

the city of Benton Harbor proper is much higher, between 20 and 30 percent. A 2003

benchmarking study reported a rate of 25 percent in 2002 (W.E. Upjohn Institute 2003, 13).

(The Bureau of Labor Statistics does not provide data for very small cities.)

Despite the lack of jobs and distressing trends, many residents, community leaders,

and entrepreneurs see these potential liabilities as opportunities for the future. They view

the small city in terms of its many assets: the lake, the river, and the historic downtown.

They call attention to several recent changes in the city that suggest a more prosperous

future. After years of layoffs, the Whirlpool Corporation, the household appliance

manufacturer long headquartered in Benton Harbor, recently announced plans to build a

new office campus near downtown (Business Review of West Michigan 2010). Enthusiastic

about the news, one interviewee remarked on the economic impact he thought this would

have,

> It's happening. There's going to be 1,100 people working at the end of Main Street. They gotta eat somewhere. They gotta shop somewhere. They gotta get their dry cleaning done somewhere. It's going to be on Main Street in Benton Harbor.

A major new golf course and resort, the development of which has dominated local

news headlines and community debates for years, will host the 2012 Senior PGA

Tournament. Recent streetscape improvements, new businesses, and arts organizations re-

enlivened a small downtown that has languished in recent decades. In addition to these

traditional forms of economic development, a growing cadre of community members and

leaders see the food system as a source of opportunity for Benton Harbor.

Planning in Benton Harbor

Benton Harbor's Department of Community and Economic Development (also called Community Development) is responsible for community and land use planning in the city. The purview of the small department is far reaching. Importantly, the department manages the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. A planning consulting firm based in Chicago, Houseal Lavigne Associates, facilitated a master plan update process conducted in 2009 and 2010. Benton Harbor has a ten-person Planning Commission, which includes two city staff representatives, one City Commission representative, the mayor, and six city residents.

Local leaders see opportunities in food

Though overshadowed for much of the 20th century by manufacturing, food has always played a role in the Benton Harbor economy. The city is home to the "worlds largest cash-to-grower wholesale produce market," the Benton Harbor Fruit Market (Benton Harbor Fruit Market 2010). First established in downtown Benton Harbor in 1860, the market now occupies 25 acres northwest of downtown. At the height of the market season, July through September, hundreds of farmers sell truckloads of produce directly to distributors who bring it to grocery stores and restaurants throughout the Great Lakes region and beyond.

In the early years of the 21st century, several Benton Harbor leaders and activists started to think about how the town might reconnect with its food system heritage. The potential of the food system as an agent of community revitalization and economic development was the subject of many conversations in Benton Harbor. Given the region's wealth of agricultural resources and the area's history as a food system hub, local entrepreneurs, nonprofit leaders, planners, and community members have explored several

different approaches to building a more robust system on this solid foundation. Two groups formed in succession to explore these opportunities.

The first group: In 2008, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) convened a small group of Benton Harbor area business people and community leaders to inform the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)[8]. The group included city manager, Richard Marsh, Benton Harbor Fruit Market manager, Lee LaVanway, and Michigan State University Extension agent Joanne Davidhizar. The group met informally a few times and a couple of members engaged in initial conversations about urban gardening in Benton Harbor. As a result of these meetings, a few members drafted plans to develop at least one available plot in the city. They also discussed forming a food policy committee to consider opportunities for urban agriculture in Benton Harbor. Despite shared interest in the topic, the group did not get enough traction to continue to meet. "It didn't really take off," the convener noted. None of the participants interviewed could articulate exactly why, but one interviewee suggested that their work was trumped by the formation of a second group. "Due to ego, really, only one such group could exist," he stated.

The second group: Shortly after the initial set of meetings, LaVanway introduced Marsh, the city manager, to a film about community-based economies made by Michigan-based filmmaker and food system activist, Chris Bedford. Intrigued, the city manager showed the film, *Coming Home: E.F. Schumacher and the Reinvention of the Local Economy*, at several community meetings (Bedford 2010). Interested in "reinventing" the local economy in Benton Harbor, the city manager convened a similar group of local leaders involved with food, agriculture, planning, and development in Benton Harbor. The group included the same members - LaVanway, Davidhizar, and SWMPC director John Egelhaaf - plus representatives of the Cornerstone Alliance, the local economic development agency,

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[8] The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Agency (EDA) requires that applicants for certain funding programs develop CEDS.

and a local architect. They met as a Benton Harbor Food Council three times in early 2009

(Cantrell 2009).

Among the participants of the second group were representatives of two

organizations, the Cornerstone Alliance and the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission,

that had commissioned two separate viability assessment studies for food business

incubators in recent years. One study found a moderate interest among area entrepreneurs

in an incubator, particularly if it included a certified commercial kitchen. A commercial

kitchen is required for large-scale production of "value-added" products like salsas, jams,

and baked goods. Although there was little response from business people in the city of

Benton Harbor, the study found a few clusters of food entrepreneurs in southwest Michigan

who would benefit from an incubator. The study concluded that, "a kitchen incubator and

supporting program can provide the services and space for current and new agriculturally

based businesses to succeed. Value-added processing and business support provided

through an incubator can help struggling businesses regain prosperity, in addition to

creating a healthy environment for economic growth through new businesses" (Molnar et

al. 2009, 66).

A second study focused on small businesses more generally. It found the greater

Benton Harbor region lacking in sufficient "entrepreneurial activity" and some key assets

that make incubators successful, such as a resource need and a local college or university

with which to build partnerships (Cornerstone Alliance 2009). A Cornerstone

representative explained,

> Our lack of a college was another thing that entered into the incubator study, saying
> it was impossible because what you want with an incubator, you gotta have a tie,
> something to keep them there that they can't afford whether is a commercial
> kitchen, clean room, whatever it might be. ... We don't have the intellectual property
> generators like a university, Pfizer or something like that to really drive an
> incubator.

Despite the inconsistent reports, many community leaders maintained an interest in an incubator as an opportunity to help launch small food and agriculture businesses, and an incubator was a topic of discussion at the food council meetings. Throughout 2010, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission continued to pursue the incubator trail, reenergized by a new potential investor. As envisioned, this facility would focus on a broad range of food-related ventures and would provide diverse resources for small-scale entrepreneurs, potentially including a retail venue and restaurant.

The Community Food System Plan: Agenda setting and plan development

Wanted: local gardeners – research and plan development

In early 2009, Marsh invited the *Coming Home* filmmaker, Christopher Bedford, to meet with the city commission (Benton Harbor's city council) to discuss the opportunities of building a community-based food system for the city. Bedford presented to the commission four times about the need for and potential benefits of a community food plan. One reason for the multiple presentations, Bedford felt, was that he had to build the trust of the Commission in him to do the job. Eventually, they decided to hire him as a consultant to develop a plan for how the city might mobilize its rich agricultural heritage and resources to develop a "new economy" around food. One tactic that helped him "sell" the idea to the commission, Bedford recalled in an interview, was that he set up a meeting with representatives in Chicago to discuss potential connections between Benton Harbor and Chicago, a major consumer of West Michigan produce and a primary tourist base. The potential economic opportunities appealed to the Commission. The city hired the consultant in July 2009 to develop a plan in about four months. The Community Food System Plan was completed and presented to the public in late August and again in November of that year.

Bedford did not have any formal training as an urban planner, but drew heavily on his community organizing background throughout the fact-finding and plan development

stages. Bedford was passionate about connecting people with food and with each other. "This is really not just about food, this is about really connecting to things that people can trust, have control over, things that have measurable improvements in their lives," he stated. Connecting and reconnecting became a theme of the plan.

Plan development began with research, interviews, public data collection, and a public meeting. The consultant interviewed each of the city commissioners – another act which he felt built trust with the city leaders – and several community, business and non-profit leaders in Benton Harbor including the Fruit Market manager, a local youth organization director, the director of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, and local business owners.

Throughout the planning process and in the final product, the consultant emphasized the role of community residents and elders in realizing a stronger community food system. He was firmly dedicated to community-based process and to identifying and honoring existing resources and leaders in the city with respect to food. That commitment came to center around urban gardening. He spent months canvassing the city seeking out gardens and experienced gardeners. Some of these gardeners were featured in the presentation of the plan and celebrated at a Local Food Summit as "local gardening heroes." The plan's recommendations follow from this foundation but extend well beyond local food production to address other aspects of the food system and its potential to stimulate the Benton Harbor economy.

Passionate presentations

After a few months of interviewing residents and leaders and compiling some data on the city and its food system, Bedford assembled his findings into a brief "plan" that took the form of a call-to-action. The plan was presented to the City Commission in late August

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2009 and at a public "food summit" in November of that year. The special meeting of the

Commission drew an estimated 300 community members to learn about the plan and ask

questions. The very high turnout signaled interest in and support for the endeavor. Bedford

made an effort to connect with as many people and their priorities in his presentation. One

interviewee reflected on the City Commission meeting:

> I think it went pretty well, I mean everyone in the room seemed pretty on board
> with it and I think he was definitely hitting on a lot of the key points to make it
> applicable. He mentioned health outcomes and mentioned lots of community and
> youth development through urban garden projects, but he also focused on the
> economic, which more of the city leaders were definitely thinking.

Her comments emphasize the multiple ways the plan was framed to garner the attention

and support of the diverse stakeholders. The presentation emphasized the many

community and economic development opportunities the food system presented for Benton

Harbor.

The plan, titled "Building a Healthy Local Food System in Benton Harbor," and

sometimes referred to as the community food system plan, envisioned "a healthy, local food

system operated by and benefiting Benton Harbor residents." The presentation of the plan

began with the assertion that "everyone has a right to healthy food grown locally." It

identified four primary goals: provide a healthy diet for all residents; develop community

food self-sufficiency; create a just local food distribution system; and promote local food

entrepreneurship and processing.

The introduction painted a bleak picture of the current food system in Benton

Harbor. Benton Harbor residents spend an estimated $35 million on food each year, less

than one percent of which is on locally produced food. Sixty percent of Benton Harbor

households do not own a car, which is necessary to easily access the few full-service grocery

stores on the far edges of town. The 13 convenience stores or "party stores" scattered

throughout the small city offer little or no fresh food. According to the Berrien County

Health Department, 34.4 percent of residents are obese, 18.6 percent are diabetic, and 42.6 percent have hypertension. Bedford did not mince words: "The current food system is killing the people of Benton Harbor through chronic disease related directly to diet."

The plan proposed four strategies, called "steps" in the presentation, to address these trends and achieve the goals outlined above.

Step 1: Create an urban garden network. This was the emphasis of the plan; the most time and slides were allocated to it. The presentation included photographs of ten Benton Harbor "gardening heroes." The plan recommended building on the expertise of these existing gardeners, drawing from the Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener program, and partnering with the Michigan Works summer internship program to build a network of urban gardens that grow food for neighbors and for market. One presentation slide mapped the 20 extant gardens in the city and indicated, with green patches, 50 vacant lots that could be used as new gardens.

Step 2: Create a just food distribution system so that all people have access to good food. Specific objectives included establishing more farmers markets that accept electronic benefits transfers (EBT), requiring mini-marts to stock fresh food as a requirement of doing business, and starting a mobile food truck like Peaches and Greens in Detroit.

Step 3: Establish a kitchen and enology (winemaking) incubator to support the development of new food-based businesses in the area. The presentation referred to the positive incubator study mentioned above (Molnar et al 2009), and showed a successful incubator in Hart, Michigan, the Starting Block, as an example.

Step 4: Develop an agricultural processing renaissance zone in Benton Harbor to preserve the wealth of food grown in Southwest Michigan for year-round consumption. "Real food security means access to locally grown food year-round," Bedford stated. Objectives included building hoop houses to extend the growing season, and help Benton

Harbor food businesses build and strengthen ties with Chicago markets.

The presentation concluded with five immediate actions that the City Commission and community residents should take to begin to implement the plan. These were: 1) establish a Benton Harbor food policy council; 2) improve access to healthy local food by allowing the use EBT at the farmers' market; 3) convene a meeting of all parties to establish a kitchen and enology incubator; 4) convene a regional food system meeting with Chicago; and 5) show this presentation to friends and neighbors.

The plan emphasized the importance of building human capital and empowering Benton Harbor residents to take a role in becoming a more self-sufficient community. It drew on the city's rich history as a hub of agricultural trade, and as an early 20th century town that was full of small food businesses. Bedford cited data from 1920 that there were 41 grocery stores and 10 bakeries in the city at that time. "A walkable city," he noted. The plan appealed to the need to create economic opportunities for Benton Harbor residents. By making these connections and offering some seemingly feasible action steps, people who saw the presentation were excited about the possibilities for Benton Harbor.

Uncertain Future: Aftermath and next steps[9]

Spreading the word on Channel 98

The "plan" was not released in a printed form, but as a 20-minute DVD presentation with slides and narration. It was a plan insofar as it identified goals, strategies, and many actions for local food system development based on research and community data collection. But, it did not take on the traditional printed or electronic plan format to make it readily accessible as a resource. It is difficult to "use" a plan that is in the form of a presentation, however full of ideas it may be. As a result, and although it was shared widely

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[9] This case study did not have a policy debate, revision, and vote phase.

and titled as a "plan," there was some confusion over whether that presentation was a plan

or not.

> [The consultant] did a good job. He did a lot of research, gave us some history about our own community that we didn't know. But, as far as the plan goes, I don't think there was ever a plan came out of it. But, it kept us excited about it enough with some new ideas as to what we might do, so, we just started forward.

Some interviewees were disappointed with the lack of a "hard copy" version of the plan as

something to look at and refer to. A county government employee who had been somewhat

involved in the process noted,

> I have not heard of there being any type of written plan. I hoped that there would be and I thought that he said that there would be one. But depending on whose hands it gets into kind of dictates whether or not its going to get out and who it will get out to. So, I haven't seen or heard of one; doesn't necessarily mean it doesn't exist. I would love to read it if you ever find a copy.

> The DVD of the presentation, animated Power Point slides with voice-over, was run

on the city's cable access channel for months afterward. A city commissioner noted in mid-

2010,

> We played that DVD over and over on channel 98, on our cable. Matter of fact, it's still playing! It plays over and over. And I hear so many people commenting like they just heard it, 'oh, I heard that on there, are we going to do this? Are we doing to do that?' And I say, 'yes we are. What part are you going to play in it?'

The commissioner felt that many Benton Harbor residents were enthusiastic about the

potential of the plan. She was committed to growing community support for and

involvement in the community food system, despite the lack of financial resources. The

consultant volunteered to make it available, for free, to any Benton Harbor resident who

wanted it.

A new master plan and a fresh start for the farmers' market

Although no official city action was taken on the plan by the time of this writing,

some of the ideas were incorporated into the city's new master plan and the Berrien County

Health Department successfully added EBT capacity to the small farmers market it helps to run in Benton Harbor. During public input sessions on the Master Plan, many community members voiced a desire for more urban gardens as green spaces and parts of residential neighborhoods. At one public meeting, a community member specifically asked the planning consultants whether they had looked at Bedford's Community Food System plan and if they were incorporating its recommendations into the Master Plan. The presenters replied in the affirmative to both questions. To incorporate this interest, they noted, the plan identified urban gardens as potential "neighborhood greens," spaces that serve as natural "focal points" in the city's neighborhoods (Benton Harbor Master Plan 2011, 26). This strategy was included in the Land Use and Development, Residential Framework, and Natural Resources, Parks and Environmental Features aspects of the plan, suggesting the multiple ways and places community gardens can fit into the changing urban fabric of Benton Harbor.

Discussion

In Benton Harbor, a group of advocates coalesced to initiate the development of a community food system plan and the city hired a consultant to carry out the effort. Although the product was not in a form that many people recognized as a plan, it outlined a set of food-system based community building and economic development goals for the struggling city. The consultant and the advocates were motivated by and responded to the socio-political context of Benton Harbor, Michigan, in 2009. The plan responded to the employment crisis and the needs of low-income families by emphasizing the economic opportunities in community food system development at the individual, neighborhood, and regional scales. The plan also embraced a broader goal of community building around food and social justice, and suggested building a network of community gardeners and improving fresh food access in neighborhoods without grocery stores. The impact of the plan was

severely constrained by the political context of high administrative turnover in the face of public financial woes that meant that even consistent elected officials were not in a position to develop and propose new policy. Without a robust, diverse, and effective coalition of community support to continue to push for local government or other community action, no concerted effort to act upon the plan's goals emerged.

In this section, I discuss the central participants and the roles they played in the initiation and development of the community food system plan. I also identify the individuals and organizations that were not involved and consider how their absence affected the impact of the plan. I then further analyze the landscape of local policy problems and politics within which the participants acted and consider how that context affected the process and outcomes of the community food system planning effort.

Participants

Actors who use their power, influence, passion, and expertise to persuade decision makers to take action drive the agenda setting and policy innovation process. These policy entrepreneurs or public entrepreneurs can come from within government or outside of it and work in different ways to use their resources to act on political opportunities (Schneider and Teske 1992; Teske and Schneider 1994). Several individuals came together in Benton Harbor to urge the city to conduct the community food system plan. They brought access to government, expertise, and networks, but lacked political influence and failed to coalesce into a robust coalition.

City manager, Richard Marsh spearheaded the Benton Harbor Community Food System plan. Marsh acted in his capacity as a government official and mobilized his influence on city decision making to encourage the city to take up the issue of community food system planning. While several other individuals had been engaged in conversations about local and regional food policy and development opportunities like kitchen incubators,

no government action was taken until Marsh became involved. After learning about the potential of community-based food systems to bolster the local economy and improve quality of life, he pushed for city support of a food system plan. Marsh acted as what Teske and Schneider (1994) call a bureaucratic entrepreneur, an appointed government employee who pushes for policy innovation. "Entrepreneurial managers get their ideas mainly from professional organizations, newspapers, and other communities, but the force that pushes them actually to introduce the ideas is most often their own leadership, buttressed by demands from politicians or citizens" (Teske and Schneider 1994, 336). Consistent with Teske and Schneider's findings, Marsh learned about food-based community economic development in other communities and convened a group of advisor-advocates. This group informed the development of a community food system plan proposal and lent legitimacy to the project by involving experts in the field and influential community members.

The most central of these advisors was the Benton Harbor Fruit Market manager, Lee LaVanway, whose actions sparked Marsh's interest and whose connections helped make the planning process a reality. Of his role, one interviewee remarked, the "common thread here is the market manager." LaVanway helped convene the group of advocates, mobilizing his network of connections in the local and regional food system to become involved in the planning process. He introduced Marsh to the film, *Coming Home,* about the power of community-focused economic development, and to the director of that film, Chris Bedford. Bedford was a long-time friend of LaVanway; both had been involved in the "good food" movement for many years. Building on his involvement in the regional food system as a farmer and Western Michigan fruit booster, LaVanway mobilized some of his connections to bolster support for the plan and for hiring Bedford as the plan consultant.

The Benton Harbor City Commission paid the consultant out of the city's general fund, making it the only wholly and directly publicly funded case studied here. This financial

investment on the part of Benton Harbor is particularly curious because the city was struggling to balance its budget at the time. When Bedford was hired, Marsh was reviewing the city's finances. Marsh uncovered myriad problems with the city's accounting systems and tax management. He brought a set of concerns about financial management to the City Commission; they were not happy with the findings. The Commission relieved Marsh of his duties by not renewing his contract. Marsh reported the financial mismanagement to the State of Michigan, which prompted a review in August 2009. The state imposed an emergency financial manager in April 2010 (State of Michigan 2010). Because of these issues, the city manager became only tangentially involved with the food system plan after initiating it.

Juanita Henry, a Benton Harbor commissioner, subsequently emerged as a strong supporter of the food system planning effort. She became the liaison between the City Commission and the consultant and the plan. Bedford referred to her as the primary political champion and her personal commitment to the issue helped keep the attention of the City Commission. "My grandparents gardened and my parents gardened and I do and I guess my children will, too, cause they've grown up on, we've all grown up on fresh vegetables and fruit because we're in the Fruit Belt," Henry said. In addition to being motivated by her family agricultural background and her own experience as an avid gardener and burgeoning urban agriculture entrepreneur, Henry tied her role in food system planning advocacy to her role as the only woman on the City Commission. She noted,

> I was the key point person for [Bedford] and he seemed to lean towards the men gardeners more…. And I was like, 'wait a minute,' I'm the only woman commissioner and I'm the person you're supposed to keep in contact with.' So we first got that settled that I was going to make sure that he knew all the players and some were women.

Henry was part of a group of women who had started selling their garden produce at small, informal farm stands in their neighborhoods. She later remarked,

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like I said, I am the only female and [the other commissioners] have other issues that they feel is much more important… I just kinda focus on the humanly things and that's just where I am. The brick and mortar, I figure they'll take care of.

In her view, the rest of the commissioners were focused on other aspects of city politics, such as the budget and a large development project. Her comments alluded to a belief that concern about our basic human needs ("the humanly things"), including food, often fell to women. This notion follows a long history of small-scale food production, procurement and preparation as women's work. Other than Marsh and Henry, the Benton Harbor community development and planning staff member supported the effort when possible, but was not heavily involved given myriad other responsibilities.

The involvement of city officials in Benton Harbor did not ensure success or impact of the plan, however. The initial leader and bureaucratic entrepreneur, city manager Richard Marsh, left his post in the middle of the planning process. The other political champion had little ability to propose new policy or even research it because of the extremely constrained financial situation under the succession of managers that followed Marsh. But even outside of the extenuating political situation in Benton Harbor, some interviewees felt that working with city officials more often impeded the process of change, rather than aiding or expediting it. "Things move slowly when trying to work with the city officials," one participant remarked when discussing her attempt to find a new site for a Benton Harbor farmers market.

A small group of community members was passively engaged in the planning process, particularly those who were featured in the plan presentation as "local garden heroes." The consultant spent many hours canvassing Benton Harbor's neighborhoods in search of gardeners and gathering input from residents along the way. However, no group of residents came together to champion the plan actively, and the movement received little active support from residents.

The lack of action was a sign that community members lacked interest in local food policy. Residents were invited to learn more about the plan and given an opportunity to comment at public meetings of the city commission and at a local food summit in November 2009. The high public turnout at both of these public events suggested substantial interest from residents, which helped keep policymakers engaged. One interviewee recalled,

> When we were at the city commission meeting where [the consultant] presented his plan back in August or September, there were definitely people there that were pretty excited and saying we need to do this. And I was also at a school meeting that had maybe 80-100 high school students there trying to rally them to get behind, I am not really sure what, but to get behind growing food in Benton Harbor and keep everything local and spend that money here.

Although the food movement was still young in the small city of Benton Harbor, interest was growing. Several local organizations and community groups started new community gardens or gardening programs in Benton Harbor in 2009 and 2010.

Plan leaders and champions were unable to convene all relevant parties in Benton Harbor, and this hindered the impact of the plan. Although the city manager, with the help of the consultant, eventually won the support of the City Commission, no commissioners or any elected officials were part of the initial planning group. Organizations influential in community planning and development were not involved or not deeply involved. The Planning Commission did not participate. Cornerstone Alliance, the local economic development agency, which holds significant sway in community development and planning, declined to be involved after the first few meetings. A representative explained that the effort was not sufficiently focused on economic development,

> It's not economic development… nobody was listening to the economic demand aspects. Economic impact and demand. Those are the two things. On a personal level, you gotta focus on demand or nobody's going to be successful. From Cornerstone's standpoint, I had to focus on economic development.

He did not believe there was yet sufficient demand for local food in the community. He continued,

> If [local farmers] have more of a market, they will sell locally, but we have not created that, and that's the recurring theme in my philosophy, is if you create demand, the entrepreneurs will follow. Too many people are trying to create the supply without having anywhere to sell it.

Cornerstone Alliance was heavily focused on larger-scale, more traditional economic development efforts including the Harbor Shores golf resort and the new Whirlpool corporate campus to be located in Benton Harbor.

Yet, the organization also provides small business support, including financial services and training, and had supported food-based businesses in the past. The economic potential of the region with respect to food-based businesses – farms, wineries, and restaurants – was of great interest to the organization. As a popular tourist destination for the large Chicago-area, Cornerstone enthusiastically recognized the potential for more agritourism in the Benton Harbor region. A Cornerstone interviewee recalled that a 2010 newsletter trumpeted the recent growth of wineries in the region.

While a potential connection was apparent, the food system planning conveners in Benton Harbor were unable to harness the influential force of Cornerstone in support of their efforts. The reason given was that the topic was not a good fit, but the subtext of interviews suggests that the "fit" issue was about personalities and approach to the issue rather than topic. The consultant's community-based, neighborhood-scale approach did not fit with what he perceived to be Cornerstone's top-down, corporate partnership approach.

Neither the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) nor the Berrien County Planning Department was deeply involved in the effort. The consultant interviewed SWMPC leaders on two occasions and the executive director of that organization had participated in some of the early conversations about food system opportunities. He recalled first getting excited about food system efforts when he heard about what other Michigan cities were doing at a statewide conference a few years earlier. He felt there were

"substantial" connections between a better food system and improved quality of life in communities and that the movement was strongly citizen-driven. SWMPC continued to be engaged in the potential development of a food business incubator in the area. Berrien County planners were only vaguely aware of the food system plan when asked about it, though one planner agreed that the region offered many opportunities for food-based development.

Several interviewees acknowledged the lack of collaboration among the influential players in the Benton Harbor community as a limitation. But most remained optimistic and agreed that awareness about local food and the opportunities it presented for the region was growing. Of the many small municipalities in the area that often act independently, one interviewee noted, "they do pull together remarkably well at times." A Berrien County employee noted, "I think right now we are just the sum of our parts. But, we're working on it. And having a little bit more of this awareness amongst the people involved that it is about more than just having a community event." She felt that the planning process, the consultant's work and presentation, raised awareness about food-related issues and opportunities in the area. In particular, she suggested, people were thinking beyond isolated events to consider more sustained efforts. The fact that residents brought up food and gardening in the master planning meetings was further evidence of raised awareness of the movement in the city.

Despite this optimism, the plan had little effect on local policy. With respect to participants, two missing sets of agents likely contributed to this inaction. First, the low or non-involvement of the agencies in the region who regularly carry out planning activities, implement plans, and influence policy action meant there was little connection to established channels of planning and local policy. Second, and likely more significant, no robust, active group of citizens emerged to push their elected and appointed officials to act

on the goals set out in the plan. While the city manager acted instrumentally as a bureaucratic entrepreneur to initiate the plan, and one commissioner became a champion, this leadership was not sufficient without the backing of a strong and coordinated citizen push for action. Beyond the lack of participant cohesion, elements of the larger political landscape inhibited policy action. I discuss these factors in the next section.

<u>Processes</u>

Benton Harbor participants' approach and actions reflected and responded to the broader social and political context of the city and region during a period of nation-wide economic distress. Kingdon (1990) identified three central aspects of this socio-political context, which he called process streams: problems, politics and policies. To affect policy change, effective advocates show how their desired policy action – in this case a community food system plan – would help address the prevailing problems while working within the political constraints. The most immediate problems in Benton Harbor were the unemployment crisis and resulting poverty, and community health, in particular health issues connected to diet.

Problems

Unemployment

An extremely high level of unemployment was the most urgent social and political problem in Benton Harbor. Residents saw unemployment as a problem not only for adults seeking work, but also for youth development and building work skills in an environment with little work available. The manufacturing base of jobs had dwindled consistently for decades. In a state that is no stranger to job loss and unemployment, the levels in Benton Harbor were staggering. A Benton Harbor elected official stated,

You know, 29.7 percent unemployment in any community is just unheard of. They cried about 13 percent in the whole United States, but, we're really suffering in this community and any way that we can find ways to survive, and that is one of the ways that our residents have found that they can survive.

Nearly one in three Benton Harbor job seekers were out of work at the time of this study. For some, she suggested, growing food, and perhaps selling some to neighbors, was a way to survive. Small-scale community and backyard food production could be a way for local residents to supplement their income either by selling their produce or decreasing their family food costs.

A Berrien County official in Benton Harbor admitted,

I don't really understand how this is going to create that many more jobs. It will help the people that are all ready in that industry, and some new people... I just don't see how this can really create that many jobs to really help this community in that respect. It is not going to solve the unemployment problem for sure.

At the same time, she saw a lot of potential for youth development and for combating the cyclical patterns of disempowerment among local youth that result from the unemployment situation in their city,

There is also the sense that there are no jobs here, 'I don't need to stay in school because it is not going to get me any further.' I think if you had a group of kids that were involved with urban gardening, just the self-edification of sticking with something for a long period of time, seeing the fruits of your labor and that something good comes with and then being able to share it with your community, I think there is a lot of value in just developing the youth.

While many residents, particularly older people, had been doing this for years or generations, few younger people knew how to grow food. Youth gardening programs had sprung up in Benton Harbor in recent years, including one run by local teens in a "Youth and Government" group at the high school. After learning about community gardening, in part through the food system plan, the community services organization First Chance, Inc. was eager to add gardening to its array of afterschool youth development activities.

Community health equity

The second pressing issue facing Benton Harbor was public health and health equity. One of the primary emphases of the plan was improving access to healthy, affordable food for all Benton Harbor residents. The grocery stores in Benton Harbor are now located at the edge of town near the Interstate and accessible to most residents only by car or the very limited Dial-A-Ride public transit service. Benton Harbor Commissioner Henry lamented the lack of fresh food in the corner stores located throughout the town. She felt that if these neighborhood stores had quality food, residents would buy it. "If they could send little Johnny to the store to get a loaf of bread and a bell pepper, they would do that," she said of elderly residents who rarely get out to the grocery store. Instead, they eat the limited, calorie-rich but nutrient-deficient food that is available in the neighborhood.

Numerous studies and mapping projects have documented the common problem of limited geographic access to food in low-income areas (Powel et al. 2007; U.S. Department of Agriculture 2011; Zenk et al. 2005). Geographic proximity and mobility are two of many factors that influence food consumption habits and some studies have shown that other socio-cultural factors play a more significant role (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011; Pearson et al. 2005). However, several interviewees in Benton Harbor felt that access to healthy food was a challenge for their neighbors and improving the availability of fresh food in the neighborhoods became a focus of the plan.

Commissioner Henry noted that she wanted to learn more about other cities' programs and policies designed to bring more fresh food into corner stores. Given the financial situation of the city, however, she would have to do that research on her own time and could not employ the resources of the legal department for assistance.

The connections between healthy food access and health are what brought the county health department into the community food system plan effort. The health

department was involved with other initiatives to address obesity and diet-related diseases in the region including We Can! Healthy Berrien, a program designed to "decrease the burden of obesity and overweight and its associated chronic diseases in Berrien County" (Berrien County Health Department 2009). One health department official in particular served as the point of contact between the consultant and the health department because of her personal interest in the connections between healthy food access and health.

Framing the issue

During the study period local food system planning advocates in Benton Harbor were just beginning to build momentum among community residents. Finding an effective frame that connected to pressing problems was as important to building public support as it was for attracting policymakers' attention. The presentations of the plan were the first opportunity for many residents to learn about the efforts. As noted, Bedford invoked multiple frames at those meetings including health and equity, self-reliance, and local economic development.

A public health official in Benton Harbor discussed the limitations of the public health frame in her community,

> Sometimes we get so stuck in ... what's trendy right now, 'let's fight obesity and eat fruits and vegetables,' and its more complex and there are more angles and even though I know it is all for health, my angle is health, and I know that health is going to benefit, if the community just sees the dollar signs that well if I am going to spend money on food anyway it might as well go to my neighbor, well, let's take that angle.

This participant's pragmatic discussion of framing suggests that advocates may need to look beyond their particular expertise or passion to identify a frame that resonates with the community.

Changing and contentious politics

Two-thousand and nine into 2010 was a period of tumultuous transition for the Benton Harbor city government. Political struggles concerning city finances and corruption overtook local efforts to address the city's unemployment and public health issues. Meanwhile, local politicians and residents were engaged in a constant battle with developers regarding the Harbor Shores golf course and resort and related projects. This political context impeded the ability of advocates to gain the consistent attention of decision makers regarding community food system plan and potential related policy action. In particular, the high administrative turnover and the highly personal nature of politics and other relationships connected to the food system plan shaped the agenda setting process.

Administrative turnover

Benton Harbor was in the midst of turnover in local leadership during the time of the study. The city manager that catalyzed the community food planning process was no longer in office. The Benton Harbor City Commission did not renew his contract after he had uncovered evidence of mismanagement of the city's finances. The state took financial control of the city in April. The uncertainty had an impact on the food system planning efforts because it amplified community distrust of local government. Many participants questioned whether the city would do anything with the plan. Some were wary of trusting anything the city was involved with. One city commissioner remained a champion of the efforts, but admitted that her impact would be limited by the lack of city resources available given the financial situation. She could only use her own time to look into potential policy interventions and could not call on the legal department for help. Given the legal and financial state of the city, no additional city funds or personnel would be available to support food system planning or policy activities.

From professional to personal

With no policy change at stake and a very small consultant fee, there was no public debate about the community food system plan. (This is in stark contrast to the Flint and Cleveland cases that follow.) But, the process was not without conflict. Several interviewees expressed personal differences of opinion about the consultant and the project. While many residents were pleased that the city invested in the plan, one local resident felt it was a waste of the city's money, particularly in a time of dire financial distress. A handful of interviewees noted that they had "personal differences" with the consultant and his approach. They felt that he was pushing his agenda or priorities onto the city and not necessarily representing the needs of all residents fairly. While one of the consultant's interviewees sensed a "certain electricity in the room," during their conversation another felt the consultant was "borderline offensive, but we tried to give information and work with him." Although negative personal feelings about the consultant were not pervasive, they did cause some "rifts" among individuals and organizations despite many shared goals and interests.

A few interviewees noted that residents are often wary of people employed by the city. There was a lot of distrust and disagreement among residents and the local government surrounding the large golf course and housing development and related projects. Along with the emergency financial takeover, the Harbor Shores project pervaded public discourse about government and development in the city. In this context of wariness and distrust, the overall public support for the community food system plan was notable and energizing to those involved with the project.

An elusive policy stream

The third of Kingdon's process streams is "policies." Congruent with the other streams – problems and politics – Kingdon argues that potential policy alternatives are, metaphorically, floating about in the political arena. Decision-makers learn about and debate various potential policy actions and, presumably, chose the ones that best fit their set of problems and political context. A sense of competing policy alternatives was not evident in community food system planning process in Benton Harbor. The consultant and several of the advocates were aware of that other cities had developed policies regarding community gardening and healthy food access. As noted, Commissioner Henry expressed an interest in learning more about these potential policy strategies. But the plan did not propose any specific policy initiatives, let alone a slate of potential alternatives for the city to debate. Nor was an alternative to the community food plan itself publicly proposed.

There was no public debate about the plan while the plan was being developed. The process was one of fact-finding and "discovery," with the intent to develop a vision and goals for a community-based food system. Without any direct proposals to change city laws, there was little opportunity for elected officials or the public to learn about and debate alternative local food policy actions.

Conclusion

The Benton Harbor Community Food System Plan was about reconnecting Benton Harbor through food in many ways: reconnecting residents to each other, to their land, and to affordable "good" food, and reconnecting the city to a large and populous region hungry for fresh Michigan produce. The plan, however, may have been an idea ahead of its time in Benton Harbor, or an idea that became a victim of the very socio-political context that created its need. While many residents supported the project and expressed interests in

backyard and community gardening and promoting local food production through youth programs, others were wary of the project because it was sponsored by the city and conducted by an "outsider." While the consultant, residents, and community leaders saw opportunities for small-scale, food-based economic development in Benton Harbor, the local economic development agency did not consider the planning effort as relevant to its work and the city had little capacity to support the efforts.

Ultimately, as the plan was completed and presented to the public, the city manager was dismissed and the state soon imposed an emergency financial manager on the town. Without funds, dedicated staff time, or a printed copy of the plan for reference, only a few steps have been taken toward realizing its vision. Yet, many individuals remain dedicated to the effort, and the planning process brought more people into the conversation about how to build a vibrant local food economy in Benton Harbor.

Chapter 5

Flint, Michigan

Vision, communication, and perception: Twists on the road to a new food agenda

<u>Introduction</u>

In 2009, Flint emerged as a leader among Great Lakes cities by considering how city codes were preventing agricultural activities within the city limits. This process led to a vibrant public dialogue that highlighted competing ideas of what a city is and what types of land uses and activities are appropriate within a city. The debate included powerful non-governmental players as well as vocal groups of community members. After a year, few of the issues were resolved but there was nearly unanimous agreement that food system issues would remain on the local planning agenda.

The first part of this chapter tells the story of Flint's foray into local food policymaking. It begins by describing the context: amidst a shrinking population and ever-expanding acreage of vacant land in the city, a vibrant community gardening movement was growing and it had the dedicated support of an influential local foundation. One resident's hapless permit request to erect a hoop-house on her garden was the catalyst the small movement needed to bring the issue into the public planning arena. The next part of the story describes the agenda setting and policy development process, which was driven by planning consultants who conducted research, facilitated meetings and input sessions, and developed reports to inform the effort. The next section focuses on the debate that ensued. The conflict turned on confusion over language, competing conceptions of appropriate

urban activities, and differences of opinion regarding the level of public support. The final part of the story considers the aftermath. As in Benton Harbor, the next steps were unclear after the City Council dismissed the recommended policy changes, but many people were hopeful that a proposed new master plan would take up the issue and clear up some of the confusion.

The second part of the Flint chapter discusses the roles of the participants involved in the process and identifies the influential socio-political factors that shaped their advocacy approach and the outcomes. The growing quantity of vacant land in Flint was a dominant theme of policy and community conversations in the city, as was the associated unemployment and population loss. But talking about the proposed food policy as a way to use and manage vacant land and create jobs was not enough to win public and political support. The advocates were left flat-footed in the face of confusion over semantics and the contradictory fears that urban agriculture would either spell the end of the city or would be used by opportunistic speculators to hold land until it became profitable to develop.

Growing food in a shrinking city: Context and trigger events

The "Vehicle City"

The City of Flint spans the Flint River, in the Saginaw watershed in central Michigan. It is about an hour's drive from Michigan's state capital Lansing, Detroit, and the "tri-city area" of Bay City, Saginaw, and Midland. Flint sits at the base of the "thumb" region of Michigan – a large, rural peninsula where sugar beet, bean, cucumber, and wheat fields run almost up to the shore of Lake Huron (Michigan Department of Agriculture 2009).

The story of Flint goes hand in hand with the story of General Motors and the automobile industry. Flint became the "Vehicle City" in the early 20th century when William Durant founded General Motors, an expansion of his Buick Company. Flint grew into a

bustling mid-size city of nearly 200,000 by 1960. Optimistic planners of the early 1960s projected the city would grow to a quarter million. But, Flint began to lose automobile manufacturing jobs to the suburbs and overseas starting in the 1970s and, with the jobs, workers began to move out of the city. Despite the closing of most of the urban plants, GM still has a strong presence in Flint. An abandoned Chevrolet plant sits vacant blocks from Flint's downtown, a strange and breathtaking ruin that straddles almost a mile of the Flint River. A large proportion of Flint residents once worked in the auto industry and the cultural identity of the city is deeply and proudly linked to its manufacturing heritage.

	Timeframe	Events and activities	Participants
"Growing food in a shrinking city" *Phase I - Context and trigger events*	2007	Resident faces zoning and permit challenges for erecting a hoop house on vacant land.	Residents; Ruth Mott Foundation; Genesee County Land Bank
"An urban agriculture agenda" *Phase II - Agenda setting and initial policy/plan development*	2009	RMF hires planning consultants to work with Flint Planning Commission.	Ruth Mott Foundation; Genesee County Land Bank; Planning consultant (ENP & Associates)
	May - June 2009	Consultants meet with planning commissioners to discuss issues; comes to center on hoop house permits, urban livestock and growing food for sale	Planning consultants; Planning Commission
"Fight over the future of Flint" *Phase III - Debate, revision, and votes*	June - July 2009	2 public input sessions draw 160 people; report produced	Residents; Planning consultants
	Sept. 2009	First "Edible Flint" Garden Tour	
		After more debate, Planning Commission approves chicken ordinance and changes to hoop house permits	Ruth Mott Foundation; Genesee County Land Bank; residents Planning Commission
	May 2010	City Council rejects chicken ordinance in committee	City Council
"The gardens grow on" *Phase IV - Aftermath*		Next steps unclear. Widespread demand for a new master planning process that would address food if demanded by community.	

Table 5.1 Flint case summary and timeline of events.

Today, Flint's population hovers a little over 100,000 (estimated at 105,068 in

2009) and is 54 percent Black and 40 percent White. The median household income in 2008

was $28,584, substantially lower than the Michigan and U.S. medians - $49,694 and $52,175

respectively (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). Like many other cities in Michigan, Flint was built

for a much larger population and the current tax base is insufficient for maintaining the

urban infrastructure. The city has made many cutbacks over the last several years, including

a shift to bi-weekly trash collection and reduction in police and fire services. Consistent

leadership is an added challenge for the city, which cycled through five administrations in

seven years between 2002 and 2009. The mayor (at the time of this writing) was elected in

a special election in August 2009. He will be up for reelection in 2011.

Planning in Flint

Flint has not had a planning department for decades. A single administrator staffs

the zoning office and the planning commission. Though competent at her many jobs, this

coordinator does not have a background or formal training in urban planning. Some

planning activities are carried out by the Community Economic Development Department

while others are contracted out to private consultants. The last comprehensive master plan

for the City of Flint was completed in 1960 (Ladislas Segoe and Associates 1960), when the

city was expected to grow to a population of 250,000. In fact, the Flint population peaked

near 1960 at about 200,000 and has fallen consistently since. Although many plan updates

and specific area plans have been released since the 1960s, the city has not engaged in a

public dialogue to reevaluate its goals and vision for development. The Planning

Commission discussed the need for a new master plan publicly at several meetings in 2009

and 2010 and brought a planner from Grand Rapids to present about that city's recent

master planning efforts. Yet, Flint had no formal plans underway to develop a new master

plan as of this writing. Planning commissioners and city staff cited a lack of funding and personnel as well as political turnover as factors impeding this process.

The context for planning and policymaking in Flint had notable indirect implications for how urban agriculture advocates, the city, and the planning commission handled the policy issues surrounding urban agriculture. Below, I describe this process.

Hurdles for a hoop house

Michigan is the second most agriculturally diverse state in the United States. Over 200 crops are grown in Michigan soil. Surrounded by the largest system of fresh water lakes in the world, Michigan's many unique microclimates and rich soil nourish fruit groves on the Western coast, wine grapes near the 45th parallel, and vast fields of beans and sugar beets in the "thumb," the eastern peninsula that juts into Lake Huron. Nutrient-rich soils and secure fresh water underwrite Michigan's second largest economic sector, which includes 53,000 farms and generates $70 billion in economic activity annually (Knudson and Peterson 2008).

But the growing season in Michigan is short. For four months of the year the ground is frozen, the soil and air too cold, and the days too short for most annual crops or their seeds to survive. In recent decades, Michigan farmers and researchers at Michigan State University have tested and improved hoop house design and technology to "extend" the growing season in Michigan. With hoop houses greatly expanding the productive capacity of the land, some farmers say it is like adding a whole new season to the Michigan climate.

Hoop houses are simple structures usually made of steel balloon frames covered with a few layers of heavy plastic sheeting. Hoop houses are often unheated and rely only on passive solar energy to warm the soil and air under the structure allowing plants to grow almost every week of the year in Michigan. With several thousand dollars, a plot of land as small as 30 by 60 feet, and a few volunteers, a farm or community garden can put a hoop

house up in a day. They may use it to start seeds early in the spring for planting outdoors after the frost. They may direct seed into the soil under the hoop in January and, through succession planting, keep crops growing through December.

In 2007, the leader of a small youth development organization, Urban Youth Community Outreach (UYCO), decided to add a hoop house to her modest community garden in Flint. There was plenty of space on the almost vacant block across the street from the extant garden that she maintained with neighborhood teens. Because the ground was not suitable for direct seeding, she planned to use the hoop house for starting seedlings in trays early in the season and for installing raised beds in the future. UYCO applied for and was awarded a small grant from the Ruth Mott Foundation to buy the hoop house components. As part of their deepening focus on building a fair and sustainable food system in Flint, the foundation saw hoop houses as a great investment: for relatively low cost, the structures can last a long time and provide a significant volume of high quality produce for much of the year. Simultaneously, the Genesee County Land Bank saw the potential of urban agriculture as one of several strategies for managing and maintaining a large and growing number of vacant properties in the city. The Land Bank helped the community leader acquire rights to use several vacant parcels.

A few days prior to the planned groundbreaking and hoop house-raising, the UYCO director went to the City of Flint to apply for what she expected to be a routine permit. To her surprise – and to that of the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Genesee Land Bank – there was nothing routine about a permit for a hoop house. Because the type of structure was not specifically defined in the city ordinance, zoning code, or building code, it took almost three years and a lot more money than the initial grant to get the hoop house designs approved and built. The confusing and prolonged process was the catalyst a group of advocates

needed to develop a series of recommended changes to the Flint city ordinance and zoning code in an effort to make the local laws more supportive of urban agriculture and small-scale food businesses.

<u>An urban agriculture agenda: Agenda setting and policy development</u>

UYCO was not the only group in Flint interested in expanding its gardening efforts via hoop houses or other means. Community gardening efforts among youth organizations, churches, and block groups had been growing in recent years and with them, a demand to try new small-scale agricultural activities like bee and chicken keeping or setting up a farm stand to sell surplus produce. The Ruth Mott Foundation avidly supported urban food production as a way to promote health, community greening, and microenterprise. They provided funding for dozens of garden projects throughout the region including the UYCO garden. But the Foundation did not want to fund or promote something illegal. So, they hired a planning consultant firm to work with the Flint Planning Commission to identify ways the city might better support urban agriculture.

Due to the immediacy of the hoop house issue and the insufficient time and resources to take on a larger planning process, the Foundation and consultants chose to propose specific code changes to better support existing and expanding food production efforts in Flint. The firm conducted a diagnostic review of the city ordinances, researched other cities' actions on similar issues, and met with the Planning Commission several times to discuss the issues. After initial conversations with the Ruth Mott Foundation, the Genesee County Land Bank, and the Planning Commission, three key local policy issues emerged as priorities: hoop house regulations and permit process; backyard chickens, goats and beekeeping; and growing food for sale in residential areas. Other issues like trash pick-up and water access for gardens on vacant lots were also considered. After the policy changes were proposed, a charged public debate ensued.

<u>Fight over the future of Flint: Debate, revision, and votes</u>

Most participants involved in introducing the proposed food-related ordinance changes along with some of the planning commissioners were surprised by and unprepared for the vigorous public dialogue the policy proposals sparked. Planning Commission meetings attracted dozens of residents – far more than usual – who voiced both support for and opposition to the potential policy changes. Planning commissioners talked to their constituents and urged them to come to meetings to express their views. Residents brought up the topics, especially chickens, at unrelated community meetings.

The public debate revolved around deeply intertwined issues of city identity, neighborhood autonomy, and appropriate scale. Flint has a strong identity as an urban manufacturing center. At planning commission meetings and in individual interviews, some residents expressed that they moved to Flint to live in a *city.* They associated agriculture with the more rural landscapes and did not want to have farming and small animals in their neighborhoods. Food production beyond backyard gardening was a land use seen by many as incongruent with their notion of Flint as a dense urban community – as a city.

On the other hand, advocates believed local food production, as well as processing and distribution, should be at the center of Flint's future as a small, sustainable city. Referring to the "failures" of its corporate automobile manufacturing past, a foundation officer noted, "you have to launch from that point of where it all failed, recognize its limitations and say, 'OK, well, we gotta build something different, and that's more resilient, you know. So food just becomes the natural place to start that." Another interviewee reflected on the same circumstances, "out of the misfortune of losing all the manufacturing jobs, thus all this land, we do have opportunity." Like many others, she saw food production as a positive use of urban land that would not likely be used in another way.

Opposition to the proposed changes from one neighborhood in particular resulted

from residents' frustration about the city's lack of action on a housing redevelopment plan

approved years earlier. Some people felt that the proposed urban agriculture ordinance

changes disregarded their existing plan. They expressed concern that new urban farms

would take precedent over other needed redevelopment in the neighborhood, thus

undermining their neighborhood autonomy. The planning commissioner representing that

ward expressed,

> They never considered, never even blinked about all of these redevelopment plans
> that have been approved by the city already in the targeted areas that they want to
> use for farmland or urban garden.

After some months, some of the urban agriculture advocates came to understand his

dismay,

> On the Planning Commission … one of the gentlemen who was really, really adamant
> about, and still is actually, [we came] to find out that it wasn't as much that he hated
> the idea as much as there has been a development planned in his area that has been
> ignored for so long. … And it really is about that he doesn't want the community to
> be taken advantage of by this sort of development when they have been denied
> housing development for so long. And I totally get that.

The commissioner later related that had the advocates worked to integrate and align their

efforts with the existing neighborhood plans, they might be able to come to an agreement

about where to allow urban agriculture and at what scales.

Some Flint residents were concerned about "outsiders" coming into the

neighborhood to farm on vacant land, and possibly to do so only as land speculators. Not

holding back, one interviewee asserted,

> They want to save this property in escrow as urban gardens and stuff and then,
> when the element, the people they don't want to live here moves out, they're going
> to throw back, someone goes, Oh! I want to develop this land now. They're going to
> give it to them. See what I'm saying? That's politics.

These residents felt threatened because of their perception that the proposed ordinance

changes, and urban agriculture in general, were being pushed by outsiders who would in

turn influence neighborhood development. This related to a more general fear of the unknown and how allowing new activities into neighborhoods would influence the urban character and neighborhood autonomy as a notable barrier to policy change.

Some advocates felt, and interviews with diverse actors confirmed, that opposition arose, at least in part, out of misunderstanding about the scale of food production at issue. Opinions ranged widely with respect to how the ordinance changes would manifest in Flint neighborhoods, how the city would be changed, or not, and what types of food production would ensue. This revealed some of the communication challenges involved in introducing new policy to the city agenda.

Despite some very strong opposition, there was nearly universal support for community gardening and building community self-sufficiency. Even the most vocal opponents of the proposed ordinance changes respected the long-established tradition of backyard and neighborhood group gardens in Flint and felt it should continue and thrive. Some commissioners felt that changes were unnecessary because community and backyard gardening was allowed under the existing code as were greenhouses and even bees. The familiar community garden was a scale of urban food production with which people were comfortable. Many long-time Flint residents shared memories of gardens and chickens in the city going back decades. But for most people, there was a line between community gardening and agriculture or farming:

> Hey, I love gardening. Gardening is already on the books. The Planning Commission said it's already on the books. The thing that pissed me off when they went there is that they lied. They said urban gardening on the flyer, but when you got down to the meat of it, they wanted to do farming. They wanted to get goats, chickens, cows, llamas, beehives. I said, 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no.'

He clearly felt that small farm animals were beyond the bounds of community garden and that lumping them into that category amounted to an almost malicious dishonesty. Debate

revolved around a perception that the ordinance changes would allow for larger scale

agriculture and commercial farming in Flint neighborhoods.

Several advocates felt that their proposals and language had been misinterpreted.

They did not intend to allow large scale farming in the city, and thus learned the importance

of careful communication. In the middle of the process, when this confusion became clear,

the planning consultants and advocates adjusted their language. They moved away from

"urban agriculture" and primarily used the terms "community gardening" and "urban

gardening." The planning consultant created a presentation for the planning commission

defining terms like residential garden, community garden, block group garden, and market

farms using photographs to illustrate the different models. Still, one planning commissioner

reflected, "I think there's still a lot of confusion on exactly what the possibilities are and

what is possible, what's required in our changes to our ordinance."

Lastly, in addition to those vehemently in favor or opposed to the proposed code

changes, a few planning commissioners simply did not sense a strong enough groundswell

of support for the changes among Flint residents.

> It didn't seem like there was a big grassroots movement where the community was
> asking for this. It seems to be an isolated group asking for it. So, if you're going to go
> through this process, it should be the community that brings it from the grassroots
> up.

A few planning commissioners noted that more residents came to meetings to speak against

the changes than in favor of them. Yet, urban agriculture advocates in Flint described a

strong and growing food movement in the city. "I think there is a very real movement and I

am always surprised at how many, I mean, people always say that the general population

doesn't get it. I think people get it. Very heartily," a leading advocate noted. This discrepancy

likely reflected the different individuals' level of involvement with food production in the

city and it underscored the importance of effective communication by revealing that if there

was a strong movement, it was not made evident to the some of the decision-makers.

In part to address the low awareness about the existing urban agriculture activity in Flint, as well as to build community and promote resource-sharing among gardeners, both convening organizations helped bring together the Edible Flint Collaborative in mid-2009. Edible Flint is a network of local organizations and residents that provides education and resources for urban farmers. Modeled on a similar program in Detroit, Edible Flint coordinates a Garden Resource Collaborative that provides urban growers with seeds, seedlings, compost and technical assistance. Each summer, the organization publishes a free calendar of garden-related events, trainings, and markets. In July 2010, Edible Flint started a cooperative booth at the Flint Farmers Market to sell Flint-grown produce. The *Flint Journal*, published primarily on-line, published several articles celebrating urban gardening in the city and promoting Edible Flint activities like the community garden tour (Shaw 2009a; 2009b).

The gardens grow on: Aftermath

The Planning Commission was wary of making what they saw as significant change to the zoning ordinance or city ordinance without a broader public process. They requested additional public input. The planning consultant and Ruth Mott Foundation planned and facilitated two public meetings to inform community residents of the urban agriculture policy issues being discussed, to gauge the level of support for potential code changes and to collect other input. They developed informational materials on the three key issues: chicken, bee and goat keeping; hoop houses; and growing food for sale. The meetings were promoted through the Land Bank and Ruth Mott networks and flyers were posted in public locations throughout the city. At the events, participants were randomly assigned a table where a series of issues were discussed in turn. Each table had a facilitator and note-taker. The comments were collected and complied into a report that summarized key trends and included all raw data collected. The report was distributed to the Planning Commission. The

two sessions engaged about 160 residents, and most interviewees agreed that it was a strong turnout. However, the commission remained concerned about appropriately representing their ward interests. Despite a lot of support, several vocal residents expressed that they did not believe their city was a place for farms or animals.

In late 2009, the Planning Commission recommended to City Council simplifying the hoop house permit process and allowing a limited number of chickens. The commission did not approve bees for safety reasons or goats because they were not appropriate. Neither did the commission approve growing food for sale in residential zones. Importantly, many commissioners felt these issues needed to be further explored through a new master planning process. They did not discard the ideas out of hand, but wanted to see a more public process of visioning the future of Flint.

In late May 2010, more than one year after the process began, the Flint City Council dismissed the chicken ordinance in a committee meeting. A *Flint Journal* article quoted one councilman who echoed some planning commissioners' opinions, "I heard those residents loud and clear, this is not the kind of development they want" (Longley 2010). Another said, "I love to eat them… I don't want to be around them." The knowledge that some residents were opposed to allowing chickens in the city was sufficient for most committee members; only two of eight voted against dropping the ordinance. The *Flint Journal* article was critical of the committee's decision not to address the topic at a public meeting.

Discussion

Two well-known and influential local institutions spearheaded the food policy debate in Flint. To bring the issue to the Flint Planning Commission agenda, they helped mobilize community gardeners to advocate for the changes, and hired a consultant to inform the process through research and planning expertise. The advocates' efforts were impeded by their unsuccessful attempt to demonstrate definitive grassroots support for the

initiatives and by the absence of the active support and guidance of an influential elected or appointed official. Further, the advocates did not succeed fully in connecting their proposed urban agriculture policies with pressing local problems and other existing plans of importance to decision-makers. While advocates made the case that expanding urban agriculture could help address the vacant land problem in the city, they were unable to position urban agriculture policy changes as part of the solution to the strained capacity of the beleaguered local government.

In this section, I elaborate on the roles and influence of the participants, as well as the types of participants who were not involved. I then discuss the political context for policymaking in Flint and how it affected the attempt to change urban agriculture policy in the city.

Participants

Conveners

The Ruth Mott Foundation and the Genesee County Land Bank worked together to convene several key players and resources to introduce the issue to the planning commission and keep the dialogue live for nearly a year. The Ruth Mott Foundation was the leading convener. It used its financial resources to hire the planning consultants and mobilized its networks of grantees and other residents in the city to engage Flint citizens. Because of their knowledge of planning activities and systems in the region, the Lank Bank supported the efforts by helping manage the hired consultants.

The Ruth Mott Foundation focuses its efforts and resources in three areas: arts; beautification; and health promotion. Their involvement with community gardening began years ago through their neighborhood beautification efforts. As these efforts evolved and included supporting community gardeners interested in scaling their efforts to a micro-

entrepreneurial level, the foundation developed an interest in amending Flint's zoning

ordinance slightly to make it more amenable to this work.

Hired consultants

To explore the potential for policy change, the Ruth Mott Foundation provided funds

to hire a planning consultant firm to work on the issue. This was deemed necessary in part

because there are no staff planners at the City of Flint who could fill this role. The

relationship among the consultants, the Planning Commission, and the convening

organizations was a complicated and unique one. The Ruth Mott Foundation paid the

consultants who were supervised by the Land Bank to work with the Planning Commission.

As a result of this arrangement, one consultant felt she was "serving two masters," and

found it challenging to navigate the complex relationship between the funder and the

government.

This tension was not lost on the planning commissioners. Some of them felt that the

influence of the foundation was one of the things that made the food policy issues different

from the normal business of the commission. One commissioner characterized the food

issue as unique, "because of the funding that's involved. They put a whole lot of funding into

that study." From another perspective, the foundation provided financial support for the

planning staff that was not available from the city. In other cities, such as in Cleveland, Ohio,

staff planners have fulfilled the role that the hired consultants did in Flint. This arrangement

thus raises questions about the role of funding agencies in urban planning, particularly in a

period of drastic local government austerity.

Regardless of the financial arrangements, planning commissioners agreed that the

consultant helped provide information they needed to debate and decide on the urban

agriculture issues. On commissioner stated, "I found a lot of value in having the consultant

present what other communities have done and how they have incorporated this into the

ordinance. I think that was very valuable." The external standing of the consultant helped

bring information and knowledge from other communities in to the conversation in Flint. In

the case of a new, unfamiliar planning issue, it was important to decision-makers to learn

about other communities' actions. One advocate recalled, "[one commissioner], all he had to

see was the number of chicken ordinances that are available around the country. ... I handed

[the list] to him and it was like, 'this is all I need to see. OK, this isn't crazy.'" Though the

information provided was sufficient for that commissioner, his comment illustrates the

wariness common among the commissioners about wading into unprecedented, if not

"crazy" territory.

Grassroots

In addition to learning about potential local food policies and other cities'

ordinances, planning commissioners were keen to see whether their constituents supported

the effort. As committed appointed officials, constituent opinion mattered deeply to each

commissioner interviewed, even if their seat on the commission was not decided by voters

directly. Thus, when community opinion on the proposed zoning code changes was not

immediately apparent to the Flint Planning Commission, they requested that the planning

consultants hold a series of community input sessions.

The planning consultant worked with Land Bank and Ruth Mott Foundation staff to

plan the two participatory community input sessions. One advocate in Flint felt the

community meetings emphasized strong and growing support for urban agriculture among

diverse groups of Flint residents,

> Those meetings we held last summer to take community input on urban agriculture
> were really encouraging. Lots of people showed up and it started to be like, you
> know, we've really got a movement here. We have a lot of people who are coming,
> we have a lot of people who are seeing the wisdom of it, and the faith-based
> community is supporting it, which is huge, especially in this town.

Yet, not everyone interpreted the meetings in the same way. While some planning commissioners agreed with the sentiments expressed above, some recalled a more organized and unified voice opposed to the ordinance changes than in support of it. One commissioner reported,

> There seemed to be a movement where, 'OK, I don't want this so I'm going to bring all my friends to a meeting and they're going to all say they don't want it too so they can monopolize the decision.' And there wasn't a strong movement the other way.

Another commissioner who supported most of the urban agriculture policy ideas perceived that most of the interest in the urban agriculture policy changes came from the organizations that brought in the consultant. "I haven't seen a major push for growing, except for I think the organizations that would like to see people, more people, doing this," he noted.

Despite the efforts to involve residents to voice support for the ordinances, the decision-makers did not perceive the groundswell of local support that advocates believed was present and growing in Flint. Where advocates saw an undeniable "movement," commissioners didn't see a "major push." The burden of proof was on the advocates and their inability to effectively show the movement of support, if indeed there was one, hurt their bid for policy change.

City officials

City officials were missing as a part of the advocacy coalition that formed in Flint. Scholars highlight the pivotal role of a champion or "political entrepreneur" inside government to inform the advocacy effort and help move the process forward in a wide range of political contexts (Roberts and King 2000). The absence of an inside champion undermined the advocacy effort. Although most of the planning commissioners came to support at least some of the proposals – notably those they recommended to City Council – no commissioners emerged as active and influential supporters. At least one planning

commissioner actively opposed the efforts by encouraging his constituents to come to planning commission meetings to speak out against the proposed changes. But most of the planning commissioners interviewed stated that they did not want to impose their opinions or their community's preferences on any other ward. The commissioners were very respectful of each other and of the status quo. They were not motivated to take major action because they understood the Commission's primary responsibility to be to uphold and defend the existing city codes, rather than substantively change them. That substantive change would be the work of City Council and of a new Master Plan. No elected officials were engaged in the process let alone involved as active advisors to the advocates.

Processes

Problems: Shifting economy, uncertain future

Throughout Michigan, the economy and employment drives the policy dialogue. As a local official once said of meetings in the state capital, "if you're in Lansing and you're not talking about the economy, you're not having a conversation." Like Detroit, Flint, Michigan, has become a symbol of a shifting economy and the bleak plight of the once-thriving centers of American manufacturing. Well before the "Great Recession," Michigan faced high rates of unemployment as manufacturing jobs disappeared in the last decades of the 20th century.

This transition has left Flint a shadow of its former self and in a state of uncertainty and anxiety. The loss of jobs led to loss of population, which led to shrunken tax base and swaths of overgrown land in the middle of the city. In this section, I discuss how social problems of vacant land and public health and safety combined with a political context of high administrative turnover and the struggle to define a changing city identity to influence the local policy debate about urban agriculture in Flint.

Vacant land

One of the symptoms of the Michigan economy-in-transition is vacant land in urban areas. Vacant land was at the center of nearly every conversation about urban agriculture in Flint. It was a real, visible representation of economic downturn in the city. For these reasons, I consider it the leading "problem" rather than the broader, but more abstract economic transition that caused it. The vacant land problem is deeply intertwined with unemployment, population loss, and cutbacks in public services necessitated by the shrinking tax base.

The Genesee County Land Bank was established in 2002 to take "an active role in stabilizing neighborhoods and revitalizing the City of Flint and the surrounding areas" (Genesee County Land Bank 2011). The Land Bank helps Flint and Genesee County manage and find new uses and owners for an ever-growing stock of vacant land – uninhabited and unmanaged residential, commercial and industrial properties. The Land Bank has become a national leader in applying economic tools and creating innovative processes and systems to do its job. It has not, however, been able to stem the trend of properties becoming vacant. The foreclosure crisis that began in 2008 exacerbated the problem; the rate of properties becoming vacant in Flint increased dramatically.

One strategy for vacant land reuse that the Land Bank encouraged was food production, primarily through community gardens or "side-lot" and "Adopt-a-lot" programs. But while these programs helped connect vacant land with stewards to maintain it as gardens, the city's 50-year old zoning code posed challenges to many of those gardeners. Vacant land combined with an outdated zoning code became the central "problem" to which the proposed urban agriculture policy changes responded.

A Flint Planning Commission member noted that the Flint City Ordinance was grossly out of date, particularly with respect to vacant land,

With our loss of population we have a lot of open land now that we didn't have when the ordinance was written in the 60s. They were planning for 500,000 people because we are at 200,000 and growing. And now we're barely at 100,000 and shrinking.

As more Flint residents and organizations wanted to put some of the growing supply of vacant land into food production, questions arose as a result of the outdated city ordinance. The ordinance was either ambiguous or not amenable to some types of community gardening on vacant lots and was a disincentive to those wanting to invest resources in cleaning up a lot and creating a garden. "The problem as I understand it is vacant property that doesn't have a building on it and it becomes difficult as to what they can use those vacant properties for. That's why they were looking for help with the zoning," a planning commissioner recalled. If a hoop house was to be the only structure on a lot, it was considered a primary use and subject to the same building codes and regulations as a residence or commercial building. Lots with no structures on them did not have access to water or trash collection. Problems like these were not anticipated by the planners who developed the Flint Master Plan in the 1960s and the underscored the need for a new master plan.

Public health and safety

While vacant land dominated the discussion of broader problems facing Flint, issues related to public health and safety were mentioned as well. Several interviewees articulated connections between urban gardening and health, and those translated to the advocacy efforts. They believed that more local food production and consumption had the potential to improve the health of Flint residents. As noted, health was one of the three areas of the Ruth Mott Foundation's work in the area. A Foundation officer spoke directly about obesity, obesity-related disease, and discrepancies in life expectancy between poor urban neighborhoods and nearby, more affluent communities:

They [Flint] hired me back to do strategic planning for their health promotion program here. We funded health, arts and beautification. And, I was looking back and what we funded, what the kind of status of public health in Flint and we're seeing the rise of type two diabetes, we're seeing incredible obesity rates, everything that everybody is seeing.

But the conversation about food and health was not merely about eating better, it was also about eating enough. Families experiencing unemployment and poverty struggled to put enough food on the table. Backyard and community gardens were a way some families found to supplement their diets. A *Flint Journal* article reported, "a growing army of urban agriculturists is putting a green lining on all that empty inner-city landscape, filling it with gardens that can feed the hungry, create new business opportunities and enrich people's lives" (Rauschert 2009). The article quoted Ruth Mott Foundation employee, Erin Caudell, who said that more families were growing "grocery gardens" to provide them with vegetables in a down economy.

Youth access to healthy food – locally grown or not – was a priority for the Ruth Mott Foundation. One representative described the problem with urgency,

We've been working a lot on access issues first, because also it's devastating for me to go all of the shelters and some of the housing complexes and to the schools and the principals in tears tells me I don't want a garden to connect my kids to food, I need to send some food home on the weekends. I don't think my kids eat after they leave this school building. So, that's where my motivation is.

Many interviewees and numerous newspaper articles at the time expressed concerns about cutbacks in public safety and its effects on the wellbeing of Flint citizens. Struggling to balance its budget, Flint made cuts to police and emergency services during a time when violence in the city was on the rise. A planning commissioner summarized the policy dilemma,

We have an abundance of problems that we have to deal with, but we can't afford to do it. So, the mayor is in a very difficult position. What do I do? I know I need these officers, but I can't afford them.

Another expressed how he saw the cutbacks affecting neighborhood residents,

> There are people in their neighborhoods right now, in Flint, that has been denied house insurance because the mayor is saying they're going to reduce public safety, fire, police, ambulance, trash pick-up. We're going to reduce that because we don't have the money.

Few, if any, saw food policy as a way to address the public safety problems, however. Some research suggests that community gardens and other maintained green spaces may reduce crime while increasing other quality of life indicators (Kuo and Sullivan 2001; Trust for Public Land 1994), although that evidence is mixed (Gorham et al. 2009). The potential link between gardens and reduced crime was not an explicit or central aspect of the dialogue in Flint.

While public health and safety were cited as a secondary issues, many participants in Flint believed that urban agriculture had the potential not only to help the city put vacant land to productive reuse, and provide livelihood for some residents, it could also improve community health. The potential of this multiple impact became a theme in the cases studied and it increased the political viability of the urban agriculture issue.

Policy development and debate

The Flint Planning Commission debated urban agriculture policy alternatives extensively. They discussed many potential ordinance changes to address the three primary issues the urban agriculture advocates presented. To inform the debate, the planning consultant researched other cities' policies and produced a report summarizing the findings. The consultant met with the planning commission numerous times to discuss questions and consider how to incorporate concerns into the policy recommendations.

The advocates recognized the value of providing expert information to the commission. In response to concerns about bees, they brought in a local beekeeping expert. His testimony didn't support the effort as much as they may have hoped, however. As one planning commissioner reported,

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So, the guy came and presented his case to us in Flint, who was a master beekeeper or whatever, said, there's a ton of bees in Flint. He's always removing bees out of people's houses or abandoned buildings or trees. There's plenty of bees around here. We don't need to embellish the bee population.

Rather than allay and address fears of bees, the effect of the bee expert in Flint was to reaffirm at least some commissioners' concerns that there were already a lot of bees in Flint and that they constituted a pest. Another commissioner recalled,

He did do a presentation to the Planning Commission. But there are planning commissioners that are deathly afraid of bees… and bees are already allowed, they just don't want it spelled out that it is allowed. But it would be better if we did address that and then if somebody wanted to do something, they would know how to do it.

This response from the audience intended to be assuaged by the testimony suggested that expert testimony can have unintended or even undermining results if it is not thoughtfully tailored to the particular audience. As we will see in the next chapter, Cleveland had more success with their bee expert, whom interviewees there praised for his political shrewdness.

But one current of the policy stream continuously pervaded the policy alternative discussion: the outdated ordinances and the need for a new master plan. Most planning commissioners understood their role as primarily one of defending the existing zoning ordinances and city code. The food policy advocates were asking them to step outside of that comfortable role and into a more legislative one. Despite the fact that the Planning Commission's recommendations would be only that and would require approval of City Council, the commissioners wanted to make sure their decisions reflected the will of the people. They felt that the two public input sessions were insufficient basis for what they considered major change. Thus, they wanted to delay further consideration of the policy on goats and growing food for sale until the city undertook a new master plan. When asked

whether he thought the urban agriculture issues would be addressed in the master plan,

one commissioner replied,

> Only if its brought up from the community. That's something that should be considered in our master plan. Where do we want this? And how do we want it? So, that's going to have to be something that's pushed for by the community. The groups that are doing that, if they can build enough groundswell of support, then it'll be part of the master plan. Otherwise, it will probably be ignored, because I don't think administration wants, planning commission wants, the city's not going to push for it internally. It's going to have to come from outside, just like anything in the master plan.

Like others, he emphasized the importance of public demand for food policy, or any aspect

of the master plan. The desire to wait for a master plan to address some of the urban

agriculture issues did not discourage all of the advocates. One responded exuberantly,

> I mean, really, the thing that came out most important, that hasn't happened yet, but to get the planning commission to decide that this food work and farming work needs to be included in the master plan was huge. Huge! That was worth it even if [we] didn't get an ordinance.

The full effect of the master plan, should it happen, on the urban agriculture policy process

is yet to be known. But, the lack of a recent master plan that the planning commission felt

fully represented the interests of the community and reflected the current socio-economic

conditions undoubtedly slowed the new food policy process during the study period.

Political context: tumult, stasis, and reluctant evolution

    City identity

Flint did not need a master plan, or moreover a public master planning process,

merely to identify whether and where urban food production fit into the fabric of the city.

Flint needed a new master plan because the city had changed dramatically since the last

one. Flint residents and policymakers alike were hungry to chart a path for their future that

derived realistically from their present. An opinion piece by a Flint resident in *The Bay City*

Times lauded the mayoral debates for discussing the need for a master plan and

underscored the urgency of the topic,

We realize that Flint, its institutions, and its people no longer have the resources to proceed through an expensive process of trial and error. We just can't afford it. The only way that we can hope to create a viable, stable city for our children will be through developing (and following) a master plan that will have the backing of people and institutions at every level of Flint society (Hughes 2009).

It was a matter of city identity. "There's going to have to be some thought about, 'OK, where are we going as a city? And what's it going to be like?'" one planning commissioner said of the master planning effort. Differences of opinion about what the once and future city of Flint was, infiltrated the urban agriculture dialogue. Many Flint participants voiced concern that urban food production would fundamentally change the identity of the city for the worse. They feared that broadening the range of permitted agricultural practices would negatively impact neighborhood autonomy and access to city services amidst a flurry of recent cutbacks and rumors of more. They were wary that explicitly allowing, if not prioritizing, urban agriculture would be unattractive to potential industrial and manufacturing investors. Others participants, however, saw the necessity for, and were comfortable with, a changing city identity. They were excited about re-defining the city as a smaller, more self-reliant and sustainable community. For them, more urban food production, as well as processing and retail, would be a core element of the new Flint, the 21st century Flint. The debate about city identity would not be resolved through the urban food policy conversation alone, but the advocacy effort engaged more people in thinking about the identity and future of their city.

Administrative turnover

Part of the reason why Flint had not undertaken a master plan in decades was the frequent turnover in city administration. Flint cycled through five mayors in ten years. With each mayor came changes in appointed leadership and in approach to addressing the city's pressing issues. Some administrations came with seemingly outlandish ideas for urban development, such as a drag racing strip not far from Flint's downtown and adjacent to

Kettering University (Rauschert 2008). This tumultuous political context, combined with the city's tight financial situation and lack of a planning department, left little time or resources for conducting a master plan, or much other planning activity beyond upholding the current policies. Additionally, frequent administrative turnover made for a difficult environment for cultivating meaningful relationships with city officials. It also resulted in very low turnover on the planning commission because the political appointment process was perennially behind schedule.

The planning commissioners were cautiously optimistic that the new mayor understood the need for a new plan and he gave them reasons. Shortly after taking office, the mayor attended a planning commission meeting to express his support for the effort. The city posted a chief planner position for a few weeks, and then removed it due to lack of funding. (The position was reposted in early 2011.)

Is there a movement?

Political contexts and resources do not always allow for a model or ideal planning process, that would begin with public dialogue and research into shared goals, identify and connect with all "stakeholders," and let the publicly-informed plans dictate policy development and change. In the Flint case, the planning consultants, with the direction of the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Genesee County Land Bank, chose to work with the Planning Commission to identify changes or clarifications to city ordinances that affected the growing cadre of food producers in Flint. They did this rather than undertake a longer, more involved planning process around urban agriculture because of the immediacy of the hoop house concerns and the limited resources available to address the issue. While this approach moved the advocates to the agenda setting and policy development aspects of the process more quickly, one of the limitations was that it provided less time to show

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policymakers that there was a strong movement in support of the efforts, if indeed there was one.

As mentioned above, perceptions differed with respect to whether urban agriculture and food system change more generally had support in Flint. Social movements have long influenced policy change and Kingdon (1984) considers social movements a central aspect of the political stream. The planning commissioners were uncomfortable taking policy action without the backing of Flint residents, particularly those who lived in their ward. Some felt that their ward did not approve of the proposed changes. One was concerned that agriculture would take precedent over a residential and commercial development plan for his ward that the City adopted several years ago. Given the time and public investment in that plan, he did not want to see it replaced by what he perceived as external interest in growing food in the city. Another commissioner generally supported the idea of more local food production, but believed there was simply not enough community interest yet to require much change. "Why create the chicken before the egg?" he said, characterizing his perception that the Ruth Mott Foundation and a few other advocates were pushing the issue when most of the public was unready for it. If there was a movement in Flint, it was not yet strong enough and vocal enough to support the urban agriculture policy effort.

Confusion and communication: the question of scale

Many urban agriculture advocates in Flint were surprised at the zeal with which the public responded, many in opposition, to the proposed ordinance changes. Some interviewees noted that if they had known what kind of a response the process would ultimately engender, they would not have undertaken the effort. Or, they would have taken a different tack, perhaps focusing on public education and awareness raising, or waiting for the movement to develop further from within the community. These participants were

dismayed that at nearly every public planning meeting since the issue was raised, someone brought up chickens.

Much of the dismay and contention sprung out of the initially ambiguous communication about scale. As noted, many commissioners were uncomfortable with the language of agriculture, which to them meant large machinery, row crops, and the associated smells and noises. When the advocates realized this, the consultant developed a presentation and engaged the planning commission in a conversation about different scales of urban food production, from the backyard and block garden, to the urban farm. While this did not dissipate all of the angst and did not convince all the entire commission, it did clarify and help advance the conversation.

The advocates may have had more success if they more clearly communicated the linkages between the proposed urban agriculture policies and pressing social issues. The discussion above shows that framing urban agriculture as part of the solution to the vacant land management problem in the city alone was not sufficient to gain the support of the planning commission. The advocates might have been able to cultivate more support within the commission had they worked to connect the proposed urban food policies more explicitly to commissioners' priority policy issues. This would require additional time and resources.

Other participants, it should be noted however, saw the process as a needed opportunity to test the level of interest and acceptance for growing food in Flint. They felt the endeavor was worthwhile because they learned much more about the reasons residents both supported and opposed changes. To these advocates, the fact that everyone was talking about chickens was interpreted as an indicator of increased awareness in the issues. To them, this was a first step in a public communications effort, and the lessons learned would shape future advocacy and rhetoric.

Conclusion

Urban agriculture is not new to Flint. Like most cities around the world, Flint has been home to backyard and small community gardens for all of its history. One planning commissioner noted that his grandmother kept chickens in her yard in the city in the 1930s and 40s. Another recalled a surge in interest in gardening and urban homesteading in the 1960s and 70s. As the most recent wave of interest in urban agriculture swelled in Flint, however, many gardeners and aspiring *agropreneurs* (Hewitt 2009) looking to reinvigorate the city with new activity, encountered city ordinances that barred certain activities and failed to clearly address or define land uses required for small-scale food production. As a result, several advocates led by a local foundation embarked on what would become a multi-year process of adding food to the local agenda, proposing policy changes, and engendering an active public debate about the place of food production in the city.

The story of Flint wading into the uncharted territory of urban food policy and planning is not merely a story about urban agriculture and localized food systems – concepts, which may or may not turn out to be short-lived trends. It is a story of a city with an uncertain future, where perhaps the only certainty is that the future will differ greatly from its past. It is a story about how a city deals with issues and development models that are outside of traditional ideas of economic growth. It is a story of scores of people who love their city, who are deeply committed to it and who are working actively to see it through challenging times. Individuals on all sides of the urban agriculture debate share the desire to keep Flint a vibrant, safe and fulfilling place for its residents to live, almost as if they owe it to the people who have stayed and weathered the storms of the last few decades with an admirable stubbornness. These people are open to change, but cautious and uncomfortable with the uncertainty that it presents.

Chapter 6

Cleveland, Ohio
Imagining a "Breadbasket City"

<u>Introduction</u>

For years Cleveland had fallen in rankings of U.S. city size and economic activity, while unemployment rates and the number of acres of vacant land rose. Therefore, in 2008, when the city was ranked number two in the nation in local food, many Cleveland leaders took note. This ranking was a result of the number of farmers markets and community gardens in the city, second only to Minneapolis (Sustain Lane 2011). In fact, the rating system did not begin to capture all of the local food activity happening in Cleveland, including a trailblazing urban garden zoning district. But the ranking provided new inspiration and direction for policymakers and residents working to reimagine their city for a new century.

The Cleveland story told here begins as the others have by setting the scene and identifying events that triggered food agenda setting and policy development in the city. Here, it was a community garden land tenure dispute that got one city councilman engaged in a fast-growing movement to better support urban food production in the city. The next phase of the story describes how those relationships flourished into a dynamic food policy coalition with an ambitious policy agenda and effective advocacy voice. Although the coalition had much success thanks to the thoughtful guidance of the councilman and other seasoned local policy advocates, their serial process of amending the Cleveland zoning code in favor of food production and enterprise was not without conflict. The third part of the story discusses the debates and iterative process of policy amendment employed to address

policymakers' and residents' fears and misgivings. This story ends on a conspicuously positive note. As excitement and support for integrating local food production into the fabric of a 21st century Cleveland grew, a regional local food planning effort was underway, the City Council approved a local and sustainable food purchasing policy, and the advocates initiated more ambitious and unique urban agriculture policies.

The second section of this chapter critically assesses how the participants and the roles they played complemented each other and resulted in a strong coalition of support for new food-related policy in Cleveland. The coalition that formed was more prepared than those in Benton Harbor or Flint to mobilize the socio-political context to their advantage because of members' expertise and guidance from policy officials. Advocates effectively framed food policy and planning as part of the solution to not one, but many of the pressing problems facing the city, including vacant land, unemployment, and public health. The drive to become a more environmentally sustainable city also played a role in Cleveland where the city created an Office of Sustainability in 2005.

"Progress and Prosperity[10]," past and present: Context and trigger events

When talking with leaders and active residents in Cleveland, it is common to hear some variation on the following phrase: "You know, Cleveland was once the fifth largest city in the U.S." Often, that comment will be followed up with another noting that the Cleveland metropolitan region *still is* the 16th largest in the U.S. These remarks get to the heart of a defining aspect of Cleveland: Cleveland, by many accounts, is a big city. It covers 89 square miles that once housed almost one million residents. It sits on a Great Lake. It is home to major cultural institutions including a world-class art museum, a renowned symphony, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. It is home to three major league sports teams and an international airport.

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[10] Progress and Prosperity is the Cleveland motto.

	Timeframe	Events and activities	Participants
"'Progress and Prosperity,' past and present" *Phase I – context and trigger events*	2006	Long-established community garden loses land to parking lot.	Councilman Cimperman
	2007	City Council approves urban garden district to protect land tenure	Councilman Cimperman; City Council
	2007	Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition (CCFPC) formed	OSUE (Taggart); organizations, local officials, and individuals
	Feb. 2008	Farm cited for code violation for keeping laying hens	Gather 'Round Farm
"A growing agenda" *Phase II - Agenda setting and initial policy/plan development*	Mar. 2008	Meeting convened to discuss challenges for urban farmers within current code	CCFPC; City Planning Department
	Mar. – Jul. 2008	"Chicken and bee" ordinance language developed with diverse input	CCFPC; Planning Department; OSUE
	Oct. 2008	Ordinance introduced to City Council	City Council; Councilman Cimperman
"Chicken fight!" *Phase III - Debate, revision, and votes*	Oct. 2008 – Jan 2009	"Chicken and bee" ordinance debated; experts testify before City Council; amendments suggested	City Council; CCFPC
	Nov. 2008	Amended ordinance approved by Planning Commission	Planning Commission
	Dec. 2008	*Reimagining A More Sustainable Cleveland* plan approved	Neighborhood Progress, Inc; Cleveland Land Lab (Kent State); Planning Commission
	Feb. 2009	City Council approves ordinance (18-3)	City Council
"'We can be number one' in local food" *Phase IV - Aftermath*	Mar. 2010	Advocates continue pursuing incremental policy changes. Local and sustainable purchasing policy passed. Next proposal is urban agriculture overlay that would allow larger-scale farming in very low-density neighborhoods.	City Council; Office of Sustainability; CCFPC

Table 6.1 Cleveland case summary and timeline of events.

In 1920, Cleveland was indeed the fifth-largest city in the U.S. In 1950, with a population of 914,808, it ranked seventh. In the 2010 U.S. Census, the population dipped under 400,000 for the first time in a century and Cleveland placed 43rd (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). About 40 percent of the population is White, 53 percent Black and 9 percent Hispanic. The median household income is half the U.S. median and 24 percent of families

live below the poverty level. (These rates are notably higher than those for the largest cities in the U.S.)

Since 1950, Cleveland lost well over half of its population as the character of its economic base changed. Factories that once employed thousands shuttered one by one as the 20th century ticked to a close. Many financial and other corporate headquarters remain in downtown Cleveland, but little new industry has come in to replace jobs. As a recent *Plain Dealer* article put it, "Greater Cleveland used to be full of companies that made things: automobiles, steel, boilers. Now, its top employers are medical institutions that help people get well and companies that help people invest and spend their money" (Broussard 2007).

Yet, Cleveland continues to be a lively and thriving city despite what may appear to be grim demographic trends. In addition to medical and financial institutions, colleges and universities anchor the economic base of the city. A rich and dense network of community organizations including community development corporations is staunchly committed to supporting Clevelanders and improving quality of life throughout the city. In recent years, near downtown neighborhoods like Ohio City and Tremont have attracted young professionals and families. The local food and restaurant scene in Cleveland attracts visitors from around the country.

Planning in Cleveland

Among the legacies of Cleveland's former life as a large city is a large city government. To paraphrase one city employee, the City of Cleveland has departments that are bigger than many mid-size cities' entire governments. Unlike Benton Harbor and Flint, Cleveland still has a large and strong planning department led by a knowledgeable, dynamic, and well-respected director. The City Planning Commission is comprised of seven members; the mayor appoints six the City Council appoints one. A staff of planning

professionals supports the Planning Commission and develops plans, generates maps, and manages and analyzes data.

A rich history of community gardens comes under threat

In 2006, a long-established community garden in a Westside neighborhood was threatened out of existence when a developer needed space for a parking lot near a new residential building. The developer intimidated gardeners off of the plot by telling them they didn't have legal access to the land. The intrepid gardeners found a new location a few blocks away. As a result of the incident the councilman for that district, Joe Cimperman, became aware of the need for policy to help protect community gardens that were seen as valuable community assets.

Cimperman worked with his colleagues in City Council, urban agriculture advocates, and land preservation groups to create a new zoning designation, which a landowner could choose to apply to a parcel to protect it from other development. The proposed new district met with little opposition from City Council or residents. Interviewees agreed that this was due to the "opt-in" nature of the policy. While it provided a new opportunity and a form of legal protection for community gardens, few would be affected by the new zoning designation. In 2007, the City Council approved adding one of the country's first urban agriculture districts to the zoning code. This new district established a legal means of protecting the land tenure of community gardens.

The incident raised awareness of the rich history of community gardens in the city of Cleveland. Clevelanders are proud of their city's history and its diverse immigrant communities, many of which brought along traditions of small-scale food production. In 2009, the Cleveland State University Libraries compiled an exhibit of images of agriculture in Cleveland throughout the 20th century featuring commercial greenhouses, victory gardens and school gardens among other endeavors. One interviewee expressed

exuberantly, "it had a victory garden on it during World War II. Our Mall B! Our great

Burnham Mall had tomato stakes growing on it!"[11] By celebrating the city's history of

gardening, the exhibit subtly, and unofficially, endorsed continued efforts to change policy

to further support urban agriculture in Cleveland.

The City of Cleveland has supported urban gardening efforts for decades. The

Summer Sprouts program, founded in the 1970s (Beech 2005), partners with Ohio State

University Extension to provide seeds, seedlings, compost, and technical assistance to over

100 community gardens each year. In 2008, the Cleveland Department of Economic

Development began a Gardening for Greenbacks program, which provides small grants to

help develop urban gardens into small commercial enterprises.

Rethinking vacant land development

In 2008, after years of treating vacant land in the traditional way – planning for

commercial, residential or industrial use to locate on it in the future – community

development leaders and city planners started to change their approach. As the Cleveland

planning director remarked,

> And so generally, our attitude has been, well, that's the default. If we have a vacant
> lot, as long as it is not in an industrial area, we can probably build a house on it, the
> developer can probably build a house on it. And it was working, there were
> thousands of new houses built in Cleveland during the 90s especially. But in the
> more recent years with the market collapsing that wasn't happening. Then, with the
> creation of new vacant lots we saw, OK, this strategy is not going to fill these lots
> anymore. So that's when we started to get serious about 'let's find alternative uses
> for this vacant land. And things that are productive and beneficial,' [and] not just
> kind of saying we're going to hold it until development comes along.

Realizing the unlikelihood that all vacant land in Cleveland was bound for redevelopment,

particularly in the face of the widespread foreclosure crisis, the city and community

development agencies started to expand the range of potential productive new uses for

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[11] Also in the "Feeding Cleveland" series was an exhibit on Cleveland's breweries. Versions of both
are available online at: http://www.clevelandmemory.org/urbag/index.html.

formerly developed urban land. A coalition of community development organizations and university actors partnered with the City Planning Commission. Together, they developed a plan that identified multiple open space and green space uses for vacant parcels in Cleveland, and reflected a broader notion of "community benefit."

The Cleveland City Planning Commission adopted that plan, *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland: Citywide Strategies for Reuse of Vacant Land*, in December 2008. The plan identified food production as one use of vacant land, along with storm water management, and basic temporary greening strategies for lots more likely to be developed within a few years. That plan was one place where food – urban agriculture, community gardening, and market gardening – entered the policy and planning conversation in the city.

A growing agenda: Agenda setting and policy development

In 2007, with popular interest in urban agriculture and localized food systems growing in Cleveland, a Cuyahoga County Ohio State University Extension agent along with representatives from Case Western Reserve University and the Oberlin-based New Agrarian Center, began to "pull together" the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition (FPC). The FPC was initially funded through the Cleveland Department of Public Health and two major Cleveland-based foundations provided grants in 2009 to support part-time staffing and capacity building. By 2010, Coalition members included nearly 50 government agencies, non-profits, educational institutions, businesses and farmers (Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition 2011). The Food Policy Coalition, primarily through its Land Use Working Group, quickly became a lead player in local and regional policy and planning efforts (Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition 2011).

After an early success with the passage of the urban agriculture district, the Food Policy Coalition identified further local policy changes that would support the expanding urban agricultural activities already underway in the city and county. The next focus of the

Coalition's work was on what came to be known as the "chicken and bee ordinance." It was technically titled, Section 347.02: Restrictions on the Keeping of Farm Animals and Bees, and also allows and regulates the small quantities of ducks, geese, and rabbits on residential lots. Introduced in October 2008, the proposed policy garnered far more attention, including opposition, than did the urban agriculture district. This was in part, many interviewees noted, because it applied to the entire city, every district, every resident. By comparison, the urban agriculture district, passed a few years earlier, applied only when the landowner opted-in.

As in Flint, the Cleveland Planning Commission and City Council were more wary of making land use policy change that applied to all residents. A planning official explained, "so, in this new ordinance, the reason it was controversial is it was citywide. We were amending the regulations. This was not a new zoning district, it was just amending the citywide regulations." Another interviewee stated, it "raised the issue in a major way because this applied to everybody, every lot, no matter where you lived. And there was no approval process for council or planners and CDCs to go through to permit that use." She compared it to the urban gardening ordinance where it was "up to community development corporations, planners, and really city council members to decide if they want to use it in their Ward or not." Council representatives were less concerned about passing a policy if they would have a say over when and where it was applied in their district. Because they would not have that power with the chicken and bee ordinance, there was far more debate.

Well aware of the more contentious political situation, the Food Policy Coalition worked carefully with the councilman and the Planning Commission to chart a policy development process that included community input sessions and provided opportunities for dialogue with the Planning Commission and City Council.

Of the three cities studied here, Cleveland may have been the most successful at setting a new urban agenda around food and at changing policy, but their success was not without debate and compromise. A lively public debate about the chicken and bee ordinance emerged. The dialogue revolved around concern for public health and safety, fear of animals or how their presence would influence the city, and trepidation about the potential impact on the city's identity and reputation as a large urban center. One interviewee summarized many of the concerns:

> I think some of the major issues were how to regulate it and how much to regulate it. Do we really want to integrate this kind of food system into urban neighborhoods? And, a lot of interesting comments about whether farming belongs in cities and whether people will do this responsibly and can we trust them to really take care of it?

This comment encapsulates three central and intertwined aspects of the debate: logistics of regulation, city identity, and an overarching fear of the unknown. Advocates worked with the City Council and planning department to address these concerns.

Many, perhaps most, residents and council representatives were unfamiliar with urban food production and small farm animals. As a result, they had an associated fear of the unknown. After introducing the issue, "we realized that people just didn't get it. So, we had to have a lot of hearings," one advocate reported referring to many public City Council meetings where residents and experts on bees or small-scale food production presented information and responded to questions. "I think that there was just kind of a fear that this might spiral out of control if people weren't responsible and something that was absolutely brand new to people," said another participant.

Advocates had a thin line to walk between showing that there was sufficient interest among the public in bee or chicken keeping, but not such a large interest that the animals would populate every city block, affect every resident, and overrun City Hall with permit

applications. Even the advocates didn't know for sure how high the interest was: "Are we going to have 500 people lining up for a permit on day one? Or are we talking about 50 over the course of a year?" the FPC leader recalled thinking. She continued, "I think we got like 35 officially registered, so no big deal." In the end, fewer than 50 permits were issued in the year after the ordinance passed. The health department did not report feeling overwhelmed with applications.

Reflecting residents' mixed feelings about small animals and bees in the city, the City Council was uncharacteristically divided on the ordinance up to and including the final vote.

> Honestly, it was one of the few situations when there was a really significant divide among council members. A lot of council members thought, hey, there are only a handful of people in my ward who are interested in doing this, but there are a lot of people who may be bothered by this and may be complaining that it is smelly, it's noisy, maybe they're afraid of getting stung by a bee. So, [the councilman] had to do a lot of work with his colleagues and we held several community meetings that the councilman sponsored.

Some council members were swayed by the many efforts to provide more information for the council, and for the city more broadly. Community meetings provided an opportunity for residents to learn about the ordinances and to voice their support or disapproval. Experts such as a honeybee specialist from Ohio State University alleviated many fears through his honest and direct testimony. His recommendations to require a "fly-away barrier" to keep bees from swarming neighboring properties, and a source of fresh water near beehives to keep them out of swimming pools and to minimize stings were integrated into the ordinance. Concerns about public health impacts of domesticated animals were addressed in part by the strong support from the city's Public Health Department, which took on a large role in the permit process. Overall, a sense of humor and shared passion for the city helped proponents and skeptics work through many of their differences. The leader of the Food Policy Council reported doing the chicken dance and squawking a lot during meetings.

Councilman Cimperman worked doggedly with fellow city council members to assure the votes needed to pass the law. "I remember [the councilman] had to delay the passage of the vote by one meeting because he didn't have enough votes the first time, which is, you know, very rare," one interviewee noted, underscoring the councilman's influential role and the uniqueness of the situation. In a manner similar to his counterparts in state and national legislatures, Cimperman lobbied for the support of his colleagues. He was effective because he understood their concerns as elected officials and knew how to amend the ordinance in ways that satisfied most of the council. By stalling the vote until sufficient "yea" votes were confirmed, the councilman was able to avoid the added challenge of having to overcome a negative vote.

As noted, the proposed ordinance was amended up until the vote to allay fears about safety of both people and animals and nuisances. Some felt the ordinance was improved through input and revision. At least one proponent was wary of "death by amendment" noting that the ordinance had been made so strict that few if any people would bother obtaining a permit to keep small animals. To address this concern and make sure the permits were accessible to any city resident that wanted one, the councilman set up a small "scholarship" fund to cover the permit fees for those who applied a chicken or bee permit.

After several months of debate and revision, the "chicken and bee ordinance" was passed in February 2009. Although most Cleveland City Council votes are unanimous, three of 21 council members voted "nay" on the ordinance (Council of the City of Cleveland 2009). The planning director noted: "there were council people who voted against it and that is very rare for our council to have a split vote; normally, they either kill something totally or they'll agree on it. It was a split vote, but it did pass." Those council members who remained tentative about the issue required that the policy be reauthorized in one year, a "sunset provision." This requirement irked Cimperman, who remarked,

It's gotten more sunsets than any other piece of legislation council has ever passed, meaning, it has to keep coming back for reauthorization. It's passed, but everyone is worried about the four horsemen coming, that the end days are here, that Rapture is going to come down and its going to be in the form of a chicken or bees. It is so, absolutely Armageddon-like what people think is going to happen.

In good-humor, the councilman remained mildly riled up about the response from a few of his colleagues over a year and a half after the initial vote and after other successful urban agriculture policy initiatives.

The uncharacteristic vote reflected the unprecedented and unique character of the chicken and bee policy. Cleveland is a 20th century city eagerly trying to find its footing in the 21st century economy. Its City Council has been working for decades to fashion city policy to incentivize more traditional urban development: new construction and job creation. But in 2009, in the name of public health, self-reliance, micro-enterprise and sustainability, City Council voted to allow farm animals in Cleveland backyards.

"We can be number one" in local food: Aftermath

In 2008, SustainLane, the on-line "people-powered sustainability guide," ranked Cleveland "number two" in the nation in Local Food and Agriculture[12]. This national recognition added fuel to the fire of the food policy advocacy team in Cleveland; they wanted to be "number one!" City employees made sure to point this out. For instance, Cimperman stated:

We're a major city, we're number two in the country. If we get our act together, we'll be number one. This could get us to number one. And we have the land, and we have the workforce, and we have the state. We are a breadbasket state, why not be a breadbasket city?

After success with the chicken and bee ordinance, the Food Policy Coalition quickly began work on their next priority, incentivizing local food purchasing. The new

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[12] The ranking was based on number and activity of farmers markets and community gardens. Cleveland came in after Minneapolis, MN. http://www.sustainlane.com/us-city-rankings/categories/local-food-agriculture, accessed 4 October 2010.

procurement policy was developed in collaboration with Cleveland's Office of Sustainability and gives bidding preference to businesses that are locally-owned, source locally-grown ingredients, and employ environmental sustainable business practices. Passed in April 2010, this policy signaled movement beyond the initial issue of urban agriculture to consider broader food system opportunities. At the end of 2010, the city was in the process of drafting an urban agriculture overlay district, which would allow for more intensive agricultural activities in some parts of the city. Use of this district would be limited to very low-density areas of the city with an abundance of vacant and under-utilized land and would allow for larger farm animals.

In 2010, food system advocates in Cleveland became part of a new regional food system planning effort, the Northeast Ohio (NEO) Food System Assessment. The study was funded by the Cleveland Foundation and conducted by a local consultant Brad Masi, along with Leslie Schaller, the director of the southeast Ohio Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACENet), and Michael Shuman, the research and policy director for the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). The public was engaged in the process through events and an interactive networking website (www.neofoodweb.org). On the website, Masi posted short videos about aspects of the regional food system on the site and dozens of documents site visitors could read to learn more about food system change efforts in the area. The final report, "The 25% Shift: The Benefits of Food Localization for Northeast Ohio and How to Realize Them," used IMPLAN input-output analysis to quantify estimated economic impacts of "moving a quarter of the way toward fully meeting local demand for food with local production."[13] The team estimated that a "25% shift" could create over 27,000 new jobs, potentially addressing unemployment, and increase local and state tax collections by $126 million (Masi et al. 2010). The study also described potential

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[13] Information about the IMPLAN economic analysis model can be found at: http://www.implan.com

environmental, public health and quality of life benefits of a shift toward a more localized –

or regionalized – food system. More local food production and consumption could lead to

lower rates of obesity and diabetes, cleaner air, and a rejuvenated reputation for northeast

Ohio, a place many people still associate with a burning river and a polluted lake. The report

was intended as a blueprint to guide action and foundation priorities to support regional

food system development. Its final recommendation was for creation of a NEO Food

Authority.

<u>Discussion</u>

In Cleveland, the Food Policy Coalition convened and effectively wove together the

knowledge and expertise of diverse participants and policy entrepreneurs including

government officials, community development leaders, food system experts, and

community members. While the coalition successfully put food on the local agenda and

achieved some "policy wins," the process was not without conflict and debate. The coalition

was able to hedge some opposition by developing a consistent and strategic communication

strategy that linked urban food production to other pressing issues and avoided words and

phrases that were politically unpalatable. They won over most of the skeptics by directly

addressing concerns and fears through amendments to the draft policy. In this section, I

further discuss these participants and how they acted within and responded to the broader

social and political landscape of Cleveland, ultimately leading to a successful agenda setting

and policy change process.

Participants

Conveners

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition brought dozens of participants

together to work on planning and policy issues through its land-use working group. Nearly

all participants involved with the food policy advocacy in Cleveland were also involved with

that group, attended regular meetings, and used it as a way to connect with other players.

A foundation representative in Cleveland summarized the pivotal role of the FPC,

> To me [the Food Policy Coalition] provides two critical roles, one is it really looks at
> all the policy barriers along the entire chain of food. So, whether it is distribution,
> processing, what do you do with waste, any area that we really need to work on, the
> Food Policy Coalition is always looking at the different policies and the policy
> changes we need to further our whole food system. The second piece that they play
> a critical role in is that they have become the lead convener.

As important as doing the research and identifying policy leverage points for food system

change, the coalition brought together the key players and help them build a unified

movement.

As a convener, the Food Policy Coalition was true to its name. Consistent with

Sabatier's (1988) definition of an advocacy coalition, the FPC worked to bring together

people with at least some shared beliefs about the need for local food system change in

Cleveland and the coalition facilitated coordinated action. Advocacy coalitions are groups of

"people from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders,

researchers) who hare a particular belief system – i.e. a set of basic values, causal

assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated

activity over time" (Sabatier 1988, 139). Although this study did not aim to analyze the

espoused belief systems of all actors, the interviews did reveal that participants came to the

movement for different reasons, but shared some common interests or goals including

supporting small-scale agriculture in the city and region, strengthening the local economy,

and building community self-reliance.

The FPC convener used her knowledge of the growing "good food movement" in

Cleveland to strengthen the advocacy efforts in multiple ways. She helped get the right

people to meetings: "she knows who the grassroots people are that we should involve and

those who not to invite." She helped advocates integrate food policy and planning work into

their jobs: "she really took everyone's interest and turned it into a formalized part of our job for a lot of people." As a result, for several CDC representatives, community gardening groups and county officials, participating in the Food Policy Coalition's land use working group was elevated from additional volunteer activity, to official business.

The FPC leader reciprocated financial support for her work by providing insight and information to further guide funders' in their local food work,

> If the term guru fits anyone, it fits [her]. And [she] has really been my eyes and ears and has really helped inform me as a funder and the gaps that we can be funding, how it can help the local food world.

This funder's reflections emphasize the importance of effective communication among participants from different sectors.

The FPC was not alone in its efforts to bring people with shared interests in local food system building together. Entrepreneurs for Sustainability, E4S, maintained an active networking website and organized monthly social and informational gatherings. An email invitation to one of the events summarized the social, educational and movement-building purpose of the initiative,

> Local Food Cleveland events are a unique opportunity to grab a local beer, connect with like-minded people and learn more about the emerging local food economy in Northeast Ohio. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or just finding your place, join us to 'connect, learn, do' local food.

E4S's work with Local Food Cleveland further supported not only the policy campaigns, but served to build the Cleveland food movement.

City officials

City Councilman Joe Cimperman exemplified the role of the policy entrepreneur or champion. He collaborated with local advocates and experts and lobbied his fellow council members to support food-related ordinance changes. As the leader of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition summarized,

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I think having a strong political champion made all the difference. I think that was huge. I think without that we really wouldn't be anywhere. And not to overstate the councilman's role, but I really think his engagement on these issues and the importance of them to him and his constituents really just permeated city government.

The councilman advised advocates on how to approach the issues, particularly of small animals, with the planning commission and city council. Rather than propose ordinances directly, the councilman and his colleagues in the city planning department facilitated a more exploratory approach to the issue. From the beginning, planning commission and city council members had the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns and make suggestions for the policy. The advocates then collaborated with experts on the city planning staff to draft policy that addressed the concerns and desires expressed in the exploratory meetings. This process did not preclude debate about ordinance language and the addition of many amendments, but advocates felt the inclusive and responsive process helped the measure pass.

Cleveland Planning Director Bob Brown and the city planning staff provided expert planning and zoning guidance. The involvement of the professional planning staff lent legitimacy and expertise to the policy development aspect of the process in particular. Brown self-identified as an expert in zoning code language, but he admitted to not being an expert in food systems. By working closely with the lead advocates, he and his staff were able to help shape the urban garden district and "chicken and bee" ordinance language to fit within the broader Cleveland city code.

Grassroots and news media

"We wanted to be sure that all voices were heard and I think that was important to city council members as well," the Food Policy Coalition convener said of the reason for holding public input sessions. Regardless of the amount and quality of expert and insider

input and advice, vocal public support was essential for gaining political support for urban agriculture policy. "Policymakers are concerned—if not obsessive—about constituency opinion, and political scientists have long recognized that a lobbyist's work is enhanced by an active membership willing to contact policymakers when asked" (Berry 2003, 128). This "obsession" holds for politicians at all levels of government, including the local, although Berry notes that communication can happen more readily at the city scale. An advocate in Cleveland agreed that showing public support was important to the advocacy effort:

> I think that getting the community to show up at meetings also made a difference. Getting 28-30 people… we packed the Planning Commission room. I think to see that kind of support for something that was totally different. I think politicians do respond to that.

Residents were also involved directly through two public meetings that served as both information and feedback sessions regarding proposed food policies.

Several sympathetic, if not boosterist, newspaper articles helped the cause by stirring more public support as well as representing it. One CDC leader felt that public and press support was instrumental in winning over the support of the city and the planning commissioners and planning staff in particular. She recalled that the planning department was never opposed to urban agriculture, but was initially very conservative about locating urban food production and only saw it as a temporary use.

> Because the press has been so positive, the public is just genuinely positive, that government has really moved along that continuum of support to where, you know, there's the perspective that every neighborhood should have some land dedicated to food production and that's a viable use.

The Cleveland daily newspaper, *The Plain Dealer*, ran numerous articles about urban agriculture projects throughout the city. One article detailed multiple community and economic development goals for the new Ohio City Farm, founded in 2010 by a community development corporation. The six-acre farm included plots that would provide supplemental income for local immigrant families and a one-acre plot devoted to serving a

brewpub two blocks away (Snook 2010). Another *Plain Dealer* article showed how city

farmers were addressing issues of soil contamination common in urban areas (Scott 2010).

Positive news articles like these increased awareness of and support for urban farming in

Cleveland.

Supporting roles: experts and foundations

Advocate-leaders in Cleveland agreed that the testimony of an Ohio State University

honeybee expert was critical for allaying fears and identifying effective regulations for

residential bee safety. One interviewee noted,

> Having this one professor who was the expert in bees did help us. This guy came up
> and people were like, OK, this guy seems to know what he's talking about. He spent
> his whole life working with bees and he's telling us stuff that doesn't seem to have
> any spin on it, he's just telling us the facts.

It was important that the expert act not as a policy advocate, but as a disinterested

information provider. Another Cleveland participant offered a slightly different perspective

on the importance the bee expert, noting his political astuteness:

> we have a honeybee expert that we bring in to testify. We needed him! He was
> wonderful… He did a very wonderful job tip-toeing and presenting the information
> they needed to make the decisions. But also somewhat politically savvy for a
> researcher, I felt, too.

She emphasized not the facts and knowledge he shared, but his ability to focus his

testimony on relevant and helpful information. Compared with the experience of the bee

expert in Flint, whose testimony had the unintended effect of validating the planning

commissioners fears and assumptions. With the help of the bee expert, Cleveland added

clauses to the beekeeping section of the livestock ordinance that would help prevent

swarms and stings and keep bees away from people. These amendments successfully

addressed politicians' and residents' concerns about urban beekeeping and helped the

ordinance pass.

Two local philanthropic foundations played a supporting role in the food policy advocacy in Cleveland: The Cleveland Foundation and the Gund Foundation. Both institutions had a history of supporting some kind of food-related community work and both expanded their food-related grantmaking during the period of study and after. The Cleveland Foundation was the primary supporter of a five-acre indoor greenhouse project, the Green City Growers Cooperative. Nearly every interviewee made sure to mention this project, "just to make sure that you are aware of this. I am not intimately involved in this, but there is a Cleveland Foundation project to create a five-acre greenhouse." Part of a network of Cleveland Foundation supported worker-owned businesses, the project received considerable public attention and press during the time of this study, including an article in *The Nation* (Alperovitz et al. 2010). As noted above, the Cleveland Foundation also provided a grant for the Northeast Ohio Food Assessment (Masi et al. 2010).

The Gund Foundation had supported Cuyahoga County Extension for several years with a focus on community gardening. A program officer explained,

> what we basically fund are staff people to work with neighborhoods and communities to create community gardens. We also support the extension's market gardening program, which is basically their training to take people from community garden to market that in some way makes a profit.

Out of that training program, he went on to note, Gund partnered with OSU Extension and the City of Cleveland's Economic Development Department to create Gardening for Greenbacks. This program provides small start up grants for garden-based entrepreneurs, mostly graduates of the training program, and has become a model for other cities. The enthusiastic and innovative support of the local foundations added an influential, and moneyed, layer to the array of local food system advocates.

Another supporting participant in Cleveland was an organization that sponsors neighborhood-level community and economic development through small grants and sub-grants. Neighborhood Progress, Incorporated (NPI) managed the Reimagining Cleveland

small grant program that complemented the *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan.
The grant program provided start-up funds for more than 50 new urban agriculture
projects throughout the city in 2009-2010 including traditional community gardens as well
as a winery and tree farm start-up. NPI also helped sponsor events like the monthly Local
Food Cleveland meet-ups.

Processes

Problems

     Vacant land

The growing swaths of vacant land throughout the city were a primary concern of
Cleveland policymakers, community development agencies, and residents. In 2009, there
were 3,300 acres of vacant land in the city and 15,000 vacant buildings scattered
throughout the city (Cleveland Land Lab 2008). Population decline and the thinning of
urban neighborhoods is not a new problem for Cleveland. Like Flint and Detroit, Cleveland's
abandoned factories and empty industrial corridors became a symbol of the decline of
American manufacturing in the later 20th century. But the vacant land problem escalated
with the foreclosure crisis and recession that began in 2008. "We've been under this
foreclosure siege for a long time, I mean, it's been really intense for three or four years," a
Cleveland CDC representative remarked in 2010. Another participant noted,

> We had already lost a lot of our population by then and I think, you know,
> foreclosure in the last couple of years took it up a couple of notches. But I think
> there was already a sense of, 'we have a lot of vacant land and market demand is not
> really meeting all the vacant land that we have, and so we need to begin looking at
> innovative strategies.'

As the roles of vacant land grew, so did the sense that the city's traditional strategies for
dealing with it were insufficient. The combination of these two factors opened a window of

opportunity for urban agriculture advocates to position small-scale agriculture as an alternative, productive use of vacant land.

One of the CDC leaders of the *Reimagining* plan pointed out the potential for urban agriculture and other vacant land reuse strategies as a positive opportunity for the city as it struggled with the impacts of employment and population loss,

> so this was one of the bright spots. It was like, 'yes, we can afford to do this. We have some resources. We can manage this. We don't just have to twiddle our thumbs and bemoan it… We really became the choir for not only agriculture, but stormwater management, green infrastructure, that kind of thing.

The "choir" was the team who worked on the *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan, which was led by a CDC and a university design center and worked with the City Planning Commission.

City officials in Cleveland, where the first urban garden zoning district was developed in part as a response to a garden losing its land, stressed their commitment to urban agriculture as a long-term solution rather than temporary holding strategy. "By this, we're making a public statement saying no, we actually think that this should, in effect, be a relatively permanent use, just like anything else in the zoning code. You don't zone land for temporary things," a Cleveland planning official noted.

Unemployment and workforce development

In 2000 Census, Cleveland had the highest unemployment among the largest 23 cities in the U.S. It was 6.4 percent (Cleveland Planning Commission 2007). In December 2010, the unemployment rate was 9.2 percent after hovering a bit above 9 percent all year. While most of Ohio, including the Cleveland metropolitan area remained close to the national unemployment average in 2010, the issue garnered top attention from policymakers as it would in any city where one out of ten workers – and voters – is out of

work. Job creation was the focus of the city planning and policymaking. The third goal of the Citywide 2020 plan was: "Increase economic prosperity through job creation and improved access to jobs and business ownership by all segments of the Cleveland community" (Cleveland Planning Commission 2007).

Cleveland's economic development department was working to address unemployment in many ways, including the traditional approach of attracting corporations to open offices, factories or stores in the area. But it was also pursuing small and local business development. The first program listed on the department's "Small Business and Retail" page was Gardening For Greenbacks, the small grant program for gardeners looking to become entrepreneurs (Cleveland Department of Economic Development 2011).

With the waning of the manufacturing industry in the region, workforce development organizations were looking for new sectors for people with a wide range of skills to participate in. Some Cleveland and Cuyahoga County administrators identified opportunities for workforce development through training in urban agriculture. For instance, the Cuyahoga County Board of Developmental Disabilities "realized since they have to employ so many people, because the number of people with disabilities are growing, because the ability for them to find jobs for them in manufacturing has waned, urban agriculture is their next frontier." The Board started a farm near from downtown Cleveland that provided training for about 60 people with disabilities each season. Councilman Cimperman proudly promoted the program, "they're beginning to become the major force of urban agriculture in terms of muscle in the city of Cleveland." Rich Hoban, director of the department, had an ambitious plan for the program to grow into a network of ten urban farms producing for the city markets under the moniker Cleveland Crop. Not only would this expand the production, the multiple sites would increase accessibility to people with disabilities who participate in the program to work and develop skills (Segall 2010).

Public health and health equity

Cleveland, like many U.S. cities, is facing growing rates of obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and other diet-related chronic diseases. The County Health Rankings project ranked Cuyahoga 69th out of 88 counties in Ohio based on an index of health indicators. According to the Centers for Disease Control, two thirds of the adult population of Cuyahoga County was overweight or obese in 2009. Overweight and obesity have been linked to myriad health problems (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2011). Helping people make lead healthier lives, in part by making more fresh food available and affordable was a policy interest in the city. One Cuyahoga County planner discussed the connection between food and health,

> It's really been talked about as a tool for all these things, for like, there is an obesity epidemic, blood pressure is up, there's diabetes, all these things. So government at the city and county level, and board of Health, have all been geared towards reducing these chronic health problems, so that's a huge thing.

In conversations with urban food activists, the focus of the policy interest was particularly on the equity dimensions of the public health statistics. For instance, Cimperman referred to a study about health disparities in Cuyahoga County. He noted, "the life expectancy in Lyndhurst is 88 years and the life expectancy in Hough is 64. And, more than half of those years are directly attributed to diet. So, now it becomes a matter of life and death." A health department report on the same data noted, "Even more striking, is that the geographic distance between the Hough neighborhood and Lyndhurst is only 8.8 miles, which on average commute time represents an eighteen (18) minute drive" (Halko and Benko 2009)[14]. Lyndhurst is a suburban city just east of Cleveland Heights; Hough is an "inner-city" neighborhood. Life expectancy was a stark and powerful indicator of the

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[14] Cimperman and Halko and Benko (2009) referred to the research by Anthony Iton, Senior Vice President, Healthy Communities, The California Endowment. Iton gave a keynote presentation at the Cuyahoga County Health and Land Use Summit on Septemeber 17, 2009.

inequality in the region and of the implications for individual and community health of unhealthy diets and lifestyles. Cimperman felt a strong obligation to his city as an elected official to increase quality of life for all residents.

In addition to vacant land and public health concerns, some advocates mentioned the environmental or sustainability benefits of a more localized food system. Though several participants across cases mentioned this dimension, it was much less prominent in the "problem stream" than the others. One Cuyahoga County planner analyzed the phenomenon, "I got into the urban ag. and community food systems because of the environmental aspect. And its funny how quickly that drops away in communicating." What replaces it, she noted, is a focus on community building and turning deficits like vacant land into community assets.

Politics

   Social movements

Social movements are important forces in agenda setting and policy innovation. The "good food movement" or the "alternative food movement" was particularly influential in the process of adding food to the Cleveland policy and planning agenda. Notably, "the movement" was characterized differently by different people. There are many dimensions of the food movement and many different points of entry depending on one's other interests. This phenomenon was evident in Cleveland. Some scholars have argued that the looseness of the network of the many faces of the food movement pose a challenge to policy change (Gottlieb 2001; Buttel 1997). While this may be true on a state or national level, the case in Cleveland suggests that the multi-faceted nature of the movement helped attract the attention and support of a wider diversity of decision makers.

Some participants in Cleveland saw the food movement as a subset, at least in part, of a sustainability movement. A nonprofit staff member reflected,

I've also been interested in why the local food movement in general has taken such a strong hold here. Of all of the different sub-movements of the sustainability movement, transportation, biking, renewable energy, people really seem to get local food more than the others, I feel like. And it's something that we've just started to really take pride in, and take ownership over, more than anything else I think.

In one Cleveland city official's analysis, there were two strands of the local food movement:

sustainability and healthy eating. He said,

[There are] two elements of that local foods movement. One is the sustainability issue of I guess primarily limiting the need for transportation since the food's already here. The other thing is dealing with the issue that Michelle Obama has been promoting and that's promoting healthier eating and living especially in inner city areas you know with quote unquote newly defined food deserts.

Other participants emphasized social justice and community food security aspects of the

food movement,

It has roots in a social movement and the fact that Cleveland has a big population of people who don't have a huge income and who have very limited access to fresh and healthy food. It's taking a grassroots effort and making it into policy.

A planner in the Cleveland area attributed notable power to the social movement thread of

the politics stream. As the movement grew, it helped to quell critics of urban agriculture

policy in the city, she remarked,

I look at a community garden and think it looks beautiful, another person thinks it looks overgrown and ugly. Different people prefer different looks. [One critic] obviously preferred a more manicured look. But, really, I have not heard many of those. I really haven't. And, as the movement has gained momentum and support, those voices usually shut up pretty fast.

Another participant similarly remarked on the impact of the growing movement, "there is a

culture shift happening where some of the naysayers are becoming yay-sayers and some of

the nay-sayers are still being nay-sayers, that doesn't matter. I mean, it matters, but…" In

these interpretations, one of the reasons for relatively little conflict about allowing urban

gardens in Cleveland was the fact that urban food production was quickly becoming more

accepted as a result of the growing movement raising awareness among Clevelanders of the

potential positive impacts of local food production and distribution. This comment, among

others, suggested forces other than a business elite influence new local development policy.

City identity

Clevelanders were becoming increasingly open to a diverse range of land reuse

strategies, including urban food production. Yet, some residents and officials remained

wary of the impact it would have on the city and its prospects for attracting future

investment. One advocate described this aspect of the debate,

> Do we really want to integrate this kind of food system into urban neighborhoods?
> [There were] a lot of interesting comments about whether farming belongs in cities
> and whether people will do this responsibly and can we trust them to really take
> care of it?

Some elected officials seemed to have a reasonableness threshold in mind for how much

agricultural activity could be allowed while still maintaining a large city identity. A city

official noted,

> There's people who are pushing back on [the urban agriculture overlay district].
> They think the chickens and bees is enough. They don't even like that, let alone the
> urban overlay. And its just a few people, but they think, their attitude is that it's a
> joke and it doesn't make sense for a city to be focusing on things like agriculture.

While most elected officials had come to accept "chickens and bees" as part of the new

urban fabric, some were wary of broadening the scope to allow larger scale farming in

certain areas through the urban agriculture overlay.

A core of resistance to urban agriculture, some participants observed, was in the

more well-to-do areas of the city. Residents from these neighborhoods, and their elected

officials, did not see urban agriculture as relevant to them. One lead advocate noted, "I think

for the most part we got pushback from council members whose communities have more

wealth and are more stable, which kind of mimic a suburban framework than an inner city

framework where there's more vacancy, more challenges." One reason for this was,

"property values and whether this was going to kind of add insult to injury in terms of

property values if we become a more agrarian friendly community and what the

implications of that would be." A government planner observed the same phenomenon,

> One of the communities that had the most acres, is one of the outlying, not
> surprisingly communities in the county. Fairly well-to-do. Now, we have not delved
> into that quite yet, but certainly it has been brought up at a lot of these communities
> that are wealthier, that are on the outskirts of the county, associate these
> community gardens and urban agriculture with urban neighborhoods… and that's
> not… they don't feel like it pertains to their community.

These participants' observations suggest that residents of wealthier neighborhoods

associated community gardening with lower-income communities. Even if they supported it

in other parts of the city, urban agriculture did not fit prominently, if at all, in to their

neighborhood identity.

> A city employee remarked,

> I think Cleveland is in a position to be number one in local foods. And, gosh darn it,
> we're not number one in much of anything. And so, if that's true, then let's go for it!
> And then let's celebrate that success. And I think maybe many people would prefer
> it be something else, but the reality is this is what we're succeeding at right now,
> and it's something positive.

Other residents, she suggested, may have preferred the city become "number one" in

something else, a more traditional avenue of urban economies. She later summarized her

"psychoanalysis" of the local food debate linking the influence of social movements and of

the local mood,

> I think certain people want to see Cleveland revive its manufacturing base in a
> traditional or innovative way, and I definitely think that's part of our revival. And I
> think that their reluctance to embrace local food policy is because they view that as
> being defeated and having to settle for this agrarian future as opposed to a
> manufacturing future. And I think they see it as giving up and not as in addition to. If
> we say we can have chickens and bees and goats in the city and a six-acre farm, then
> we're done, you know, no one's going to take us seriously as a city.

> But, I think what they fail to see is how many of the residents, the people on the
> ground, are really energized by these possibilities and many are jumping whole-
> heartedly into this movement and that it is not necessarily up to a politician who has
> this vision of something else when the whole community is already... many of the

community. So, it will be interesting to see how that plays out. That's my
psychoanalysis.

The debate about chickens and bees and urban agriculture came when Cleveland was in the

midst of reshaping its image of itself. The identity of the city was changing and it was not

clear what it would become. It will be years before the interviewee above or anyone will be

able to say with certainty how it "played out."

Framing the issue

Urban agriculture and local food systems are not a panacea for the urban problems

of the early 21st century. "It doesn't stop people from smoking," one interviewee replied

when asked what local food can't do. At best, it will make only a slight change in

unemployment. It has little to do with improving housing conditions or halting the

foreclosure crisis. But a characteristic strength of food as a local policy issue was that it

could be linked with multiple other social issues simultaneously. And this characteristic

became central to the development of a communications strategy in Cleveland. It allowed

advocates to frame the issue in different ways to address the different priority areas of

decision-makers.

Participants in Cleveland commonly emphasized this potential. One Cleveland

official summarized the reasons food policy was gaining traction as a strategy,

> I would say those three things: surplus of vacant land, interest in reducing
> transportation needs for food and interest in promoting healthy eating, and healthy
> eating particularly in inner cities areas where they say people are more likely to be
> within walking distance of a fast food restaurant than a grocery store that has fresh
> vegetables. ... These are all relatively new issues. Not brand new, but I think the
> emphasis on them has grown in the last few years.

A county planner echoed similar sentiments,

> This issue of urban ag and community gardens unites so many different interests, I
> think, and I think really people have been good at talking about this issue of urban
> agriculture, putting it into the context of all those broader issues, rather than it just
> be sort of, 'oh, lets just put it back to nature,' stuff like that.

Advocates in Cleveland were thoughtful and careful about communication in order to maintain the desired framing. A Neighborhood Progress Incorporated employee recalled the pointed advice she received from the deputy mayor when the *Re-imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* was being developed. She recalled, "he gave me a couple words I could use - he said, 'but don't call it decline, shrinking city, banish that word, that phrase from your vocabulary, because anything that makes it look like Cleveland is not doing well, that's a non- starter.'" City officials – elected and appointed – advised their fellow advocates on communication approach. But, the lead players possessed the savvy needed to maneuver a policy campaign.

The leader of the Food Policy Coalition in Cleveland discussed the strategy of framing an issue in different ways to connect to the interests of policymakers:

> There are a couple of council members who are really about workforce development and economic development opportunity for their constituents. So, if we could frame chicken and bee legislation, our farm animal and bee legislation, as an opportunity for micro-enterprise development, bang, done! ... So, I think that understanding the lens and that comes through having political leaders like [the councilman] give us that information, but it also comes from going to council meetings and reading the paper and getting a sense of where folks are coming from. I think that was also super-critical.

Other council members were focused on community building, so "if it's about community gardeners in their ward and having an opportunity to do a community-based beekeeping project, bang! That hits them." The insight of city officials along with due diligence on the part of the advocates ("going to council meetings and reading the paper") were essential to identifying the different ways of framing food as an avenue toward workforce and economic development or promoting community building.

Shaping the policies

Cleveland's urgent social problems and the political imperative to address them shaped the advocacy communications, but it also influenced the policy development. To

create politically viable proposals, advocates in Cleveland worked intentionally to involve local government representatives – both supporters and skeptics – to develop the policy alternatives. With respect to the chicken and bee legislation in particular, they attributed much of their success getting the policy passed to this inclusive approach to policy design. One participant reflected on this method,

> I think it was smart the way we introduced the chickens and bees. It was really kind of a get to know you at the Planning Commission presentation, 'we're thinking of doing something like this. What's your feedback?' Nothing had been introduced yet. That allowed us to really go back, get our act together, get our research together, and then propose an ordinance for introduction that would take into account some of those initial concerns.

Yet, even with the exploratory, iterative process of developing a policy that would win the support of the majority of Planning Commission and City Council, the Cleveland City Council was cautious upon passing the legislation. Uncertain of the potential impacts of the urban livestock ordinance, the City Council chose to add a sunset provision to the ordinance assuring the opportunity to review it again the following year. "It's gotten more sunsets than any other piece of legislation council has ever passed, meaning, it has to keep coming back for reauthorization," Cimperman reported.

With only a hint of hyperbole, he claimed that he would have preferred Council reject the ordinance and send the advocates back to the drawing table than continuously amend it to be more restrictive.

> The most painful death of legislation isn't it not passing. The most painful death is death by amendments. Meaning, that you so amend the original legislation, that it is impossible to happen. It's better to die, because then you can start new.

There was no evidence yet suggesting that the restrictions in the ordinance precluded large numbers of prospective chicken-keepers from setting up a coop. At least one interviewee noted that some families likely continued to keep chickens without a permit, however.

As in the other cities studied, the urban food policy debate was not one between dueling variations of the legislation floating around as can be the case at the Congressional level. Nor did it appear to be a case of policy in search of an issue to attach to, as Kingdon (1990) describes in his model of the policy stream. Instead, the urban agriculture policy was developed iteratively through a dialogic exchange of ideas and concerns about how to locate and regulate agricultural land uses in the city.

Conclusion

The roots of the new municipal food policy story in Cleveland are many generations deep. Community and backyard gardening has always been a part of the city, just at it has been a part of Flint and Benton Harbor and most, if not all, cities. The foray into local policy change and planning to further support the expanding interest in urban agriculture and food, one interviewee noted, took the city's long-term commitment, "to another level." Increasing acres of vacant land within the city (an estimated 18,000 parcels), a need for more economic opportunities for Clevelanders, and growing interests in local and sustainable food motivated dozens of organizations and countless individuals to come together to encourage city policy in support of urban agriculture.

Cleveland's local-level food policy efforts started in 2006 and gained momentum consistently thereafter. Led by the politically-astute and highly collaborative Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition and a dynamic city councilman, Cleveland adopted a series of code changes supporting the growing efforts not only of urban food producers, but of regional farmers looking to increase their sales to northeast Ohio consumers.

The *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan provided some useful political backing for the otherwise incremental approach to food-related local policymaking. Strong, effective collaboration among a large array of groups and individuals, and their politically strategic communications kept the process moving forward, ushering the passage of one

ordinance after another. Partially behind the scenes, two of Cleveland's major local foundations supported the efforts through grants. Through collaboration and effective planning and communication, Cleveland has emerged as a leader of municipal food policy innovation. Local, and to an increasing extent regional, food advocates in Cleveland are busy redefining the Rust Belt city for a new century.

City Name	Case description	Timeline of key events	Key participants
Benton Harbor, Michigan	City hired consultant to create a "Local Food System Plan." That "Plan" took the form of a presentation. It identified goals and some strategies for improving food access and promoting food-based economic opportunities in Benton Harbor.	*2007-8: Kitchen Incubator viability assessments conducted* *2008:* Coming Home *film viewings* --- 2009 April: Consultant hired to develop food system plan 2009 August: presentation to City Commission 2009 November: Community Food Summit (at B.H. High School)	- Benton Harbor City Manager - Benton Harbor City Commission - Hired consultant - Benton Harbor Fruit Market manager
Flint, Michigan	The Ruth Mott Foundation and the Genesee County Land Bank hired planning consultants to work with the Planning Commission on urban agriculture policy. Debated three changes to city and zoning ordinances simultaneously: - Hoop house permitting - Urban livestock - Growing food for sale	*2007: Hoop house permit conflict* --- 2009 Jan?: Consultant hired 2009 Jun: Edible Flint collaborative established 2009 Aug & Sept: Public hearings 2010 Jan: Planning Commission approves chicken & compost ordinances 2010 June: City Council votes down proposed ordinances	- Ruth Mott Foundation - Genesee County Land Bank - Flint Planning Commission - Hired planning consultants
Cleveland, Ohio	A group of advocates worked with city officials to propose series of amendments to city and zoning ordinances: - Urban garden district - Urban livestock - Local purchasing	*2006: Community gardeners forced from land by developer* --- 2007 Mar: Urban Garden Zoning district passed 2007: Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition formed 2008 Dec: *Reimagining* plan approved 2009 Feb: Urban livestock ordinance passed 2010 Mar: Local purchasing policy passed	- Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition - City Council; one member in particular - Cleveland Planning director - CDCs and nonprofits

Table 6.2 Summary of cases and participants.

Timeline events in *italics* and above the "---" are key events that occurred before the beginning of the food policy or planning process. These events or activities triggered the planning and policy change processes.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study set out to answer the question: Why do local governments enter into the arena of food system policy and take action on food system issues? This inquiry was inspired by the observation that a growing number of cities are beginning to take local policy action regarding food production, processing, and retail even though food is not a typical area of local planning and policymaking. Food is an issue of mounting concern to a wide range of the American public and one that is increasingly linked to public discourses about local, regional, and national sustainability, public health, and economic development. As an area of growing public interest, food policy presented a compelling and timely case study of how new issues come to the attention of local decision-makers and how local planning and policy agendas change.

In short, my analysis suggests that two conditions must be met to achieve new municipal food policy: an effective advocacy coalition and an amenable political and social context. First, local governments are compelled to add food system issues to their agenda when advocacy coalitions demonstrate widespread popular support for the policies or plans and strategically link their desired food policy actions to other issues of importance to decision makers, such as unemployment, vacant land reuse, and social equity. This is because decision-makers want to represent their publics, minimize political risk, and show progress on established political goals, such as economic development. Second, the local political and economic context can either constrain or bolster the impact of advocacy

efforts. In particular, limited government capacity and finances, high administrative turnover, and differences in opinion over whether more food production would help or hinder the city's economic development goals curb agenda setting efforts.

In broad strokes, the finding that these conditions are necessary is consistent with what we might expect based on what we know about policy development in the United States. It reflects our hopes for a democratic, representative system of policymaking. It aligns with much of the research on policy advocacy and theories of the policy process, which maintain that new policy is a result of complex interactions among advocates, policy entrepreneurs, the milieu of politics, and external events like disasters and crises (Cobb and Elder 1983; Kingdon 1990; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Rochefort and Cobb 1994; Birkland 1997; 2005; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Yet, what we learn from close study of the detail of these processes in practice adds nuance to these theories and build a more robust understanding of the local policy process and how municipal agendas change and evolve.

This study uncovered intriguing details about the people involved in advancing local food policy, and the political process of adding food to the municipal agenda. These insights can be used to refine theories of the local policy process and inform practice and advocacy efforts aimed to change the local agenda and promote policy innovation. With respect to the people involved, I describe three critical dimensions of effective advocacy coalitions and offer a more refined typology of policy entrepreneurs who anchor those coalitions. With respect to the process, I argue that effective advocates frame their proposed policy action as a solution to multiple local policy problems and that a sense of local mood and city identity influences how city-level decision-makers and the public view a new policy issue such as urban agriculture.

This project introduces frameworks for understanding the policy process into a planning literature that rarely attends to this aspect of local policy and planning by demonstrating the applicability of policy process theory to the local policy arena and suggesting refinements that approve that applicability. Policy analysis often ignores the nuances of the political and social climate, and many practitioners and advocates fail to fully consider these influential dimensions when conducting their work or carrying out campaigns. These findings emphasize that scholars of planning and local policy must attend to the socio-political landscape and the policy process to fully understand urban policy adaptation and innovation. Consistently, to add new issues to the local agenda, activists and planners must build representative, active coalitions and develop advocacy rhetoric that is sensitive and responsive to the local social and political context.

In this chapter, I elaborate on what constitutes an effective advocacy coalition and an amenable political and social context. This critical discussion revolves around five propositions that describe causal relationships among actors, their communication choices, and the broader policy context. I then discuss the implications of these findings for: planning theory, research, and practice; policy process theory; and our collective thinking about how cities adapt to changing environmental, economic and social contexts. I conclude with thoughts on the nature of food as an urban policy issue and how it relates to other topics of emerging concern for cities in the 21st century.

Effective advocacy coalitions are diverse, dense and coordinated

Proposition 1: Cities enter into the food policy arena when diverse, dense, and coordinated coalitions coalesce to advocate for specific policy action because the coalitions give decision-makers confidence that the political risk of taking action is minimal and may even be advantageous. Effective coalitions confer political legitimacy on the issue, demonstrate the relevance or salience to the community, and have the capacity to conduct

the "due diligence" required to inform policy change, such as carry out research, identify policy alternatives, and garner public input.

Many scholars have analyzed the role of coalitions in policy innovation and change. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) developed the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) in attempt to make sense of a long and complex policy process that the authors observed tended to be driven by and revolve around advocacy coalitions. Sabatier's longevity condition made the ACF theory less applicable to this study of more nascent advocacy efforts, but the definition and idea of coalitions applies. As discussed briefly in Chapter 6, they define advocacy coalitions as groups of "people from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who hare a particular belief system – i.e. a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time" (Sabatier 1988, 139).

Coalitions of participants came together in every case studied here to advocate for, and in some cases against, municipal food planning and policymaking. These groups ranged in size, composition of members, and maturity. With respect to the diverse, dense, and coordinated criteria, there was a different level of coalition development and strength in each of the cities. The lesser effectiveness of weak coalitions in some cases corroborates the greater effectiveness of strong ones in others.

The first characteristic I propose of effective advocacy coalitions is diversity. Diverse coalitions are those that represent a wide range of local constituencies with members who are able to bring different resources to the effort. The diversity of a coalition lends political legitimacy and power through the capacity of the group as a whole to do the work needed for effective advocacy. A diverse and inclusive coalition has greater political legitimacy than a more homogenous group because it better represents the diverse constituencies, or the multiple publics, decision-makers represent. Diverse coalitions also benefit from having a

more diverse array of strengths and resources to draw from in their advocacy. "A diverse coalition can exert pressure on several political fronts and offers activists numerous choices for political action. Political influence appears most likely when a number of groups are able to cooperate and present a united front" (Hathaway and Meyer 1997, 64).

Some scholars have noted that the coalition model is ideal for representing diverse members because it allows them to be a part of a unified group, but also to maintain individuality. "The coalition is a vital and increasingly utilized mechanism for collective organizing and policy formation. Coalitions are often a preferred vehicle for intergroup action because they promise to preserve the autonomy of member organizations while providing the necessary structure for unified effort" (Mizrahi and Rosenthal 1993, 12).

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition anchored the advocacy efforts in Cleveland. The Coalition exemplifies the diversity characteristic, showing a very wide range of support for urban agriculture policy change in the city. Coalition members represent about 50 organizations, including eight governmental agencies, dozens of nonprofits, several educational institutions, and food and farm businesses. By contrast, the young group of advocates in Flint was not yet as diverse as the Cleveland coalition. The leading Flint advocates from the Ruth Mott Foundation and the Genesee County Land Bank along with a Michigan State University Extension agent had only started formalizing a network, Edible Flint, during the urban agriculture policy advocacy process. The membership and advocacy functions of Flint's coalition were not established in time to present a diverse but united front of support for the proposed ordinance changes.

The second characteristic of effective advocacy coalitions is density in the sense of numerous. More coalition members are better as long as communication among them does not become unwieldy. Dense membership builds more resilience and strength into the coalition by ensuring "back-up" if one or multiple coalition members drop out or are unable

to be active. In the hectic and under-resourced world of community organizations, this is a real possibility and a coalition has to be able to withstand member turnover. Density of participants reinforces political legitimacy of the group and the relevance of the effort to the city by representing decision-makers' multiple publics and showing more support. Like diversity, this builds decision-makers' confidence that supporting the policy action is not too politically risky and may be advantageous.

The Cleveland coalition demonstrated density by including multiple representatives of government agencies, community development organizations, and businesses, although the latter was the least well represented. The group in Flint had less dense representation during the period of study, but it continued to grow and organize Flint area gardeners and local food enthusiasts. If that group persists and expands, and if interest in urban agriculture in Flint continues, Edible Flint has the potential to become as effective as the Food Policy Coalition in Cleveland in the future.

Coordination is the third characteristic of effective coalitions. A diverse and dense coalition only works when its efforts are aligned and sufficiently synchronized that participants feel that they are working together toward common goal(s). As Sherraden and collaborators put it, "it takes a clamor of many agencies and individual advocates to effect policy…. In building coalitions, effective communication is essential" (Sherraden et al. 2002, 215). Coordination relies on effective communication and trust. Participants share what they are thinking and working on and are willing to listen to others and work together. They have faith that other coalition members will do what they say and represent the goals and actions of the coalition fairly and honestly.

In Cleveland, the Land Use Working Group took the lead on coordinating policy advocacy and development. The group brought together the community nonprofit leaders, city and county government planners, and elected officials who were most interested in

working on the local policy dimensions of food system change in the Cleveland area.

Participation in the group, that met monthly, helped these participants keep apace with

policy developments and advocacy and provided a forum for exchange of ideas and advice

and allowed advocates to develop a shared policy language and advocacy approach. The

Coalition convener noted that many key organizations and individuals participated in the

land use working group, "and," she said, "I think that does put forward a more unified,

comprehensive agenda, no question."

A coordinated coalition of support did not emerge in the Benton Harbor case. While

two groups had formed to discuss food policy and the community food plan, neither "stuck"

nor grew into a broad and diverse coalition. A lack of communication and trust was partly to

blame. Some Benton Harbor participants felt that there was political competition for

ownership of the community food plan idea. Rather than build a stronger coalition bringing

these groups together, the effort was divided and no coalition formed. The hired consultant

recognized this deficit and emphatically trumpeted the need to develop a network of urban

agriculturists and local food enthusiasts. The first recommendation of the Benton Harbor

plan was to build a network of community gardeners. Without a consistently active and

representative group to keep the topic on the local government agenda during a time of

local government turmoil, the plan gained little traction within government.

<u>Effective advocacy coalitions include conveners, city officials, and citizens</u>

Proposition 2: Municipal food policy success depends on the coordinated advocacy

of at least these three types of actors: conveners, policy champions within government, and

local citizens, or the "grassroots." Each contributes at least one needed resource, such as the

capacity to mobilize networks (conveners), an intimate knowledge of the local policy

process (city officials), or the ability to communicate the relevance of the issue (citizens).

Together, their coordinated action lends legitimacy and salience to the advocacy effort.

Specific coalition participants who are pivotal in the agenda setting or policy innovation are often called policy or public entrepreneurs, and they are the focus of much research on agenda setting and policy innovation (Mintrom1997; Roberts 1999; Roberts and King 2000). While the bulk of this work is focused on national-level politics, several scholars have turned their lens to examine the role of entrepreneurs in the local context (Schneider and Teske 1992; Teske and Schneider 1994). Based on the present research, I propose the convener-city official-citizen typology to describe the key groups of public entrepreneurs and advocacy coalition members working to add new issues to a local planning agenda.

Conveners are organizations or individuals that bring advocates together. They are pivotal because they facilitate coalition building, help build trust among coalition members, and manage communication among members. This role is necessary because it allows the group to present a united front and to make the fullest use of their existing resources. The Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition, and its leader (her title is convener) exemplified the convener role. A foundation officer in Cleveland concisely summarized the Coalition's centrality:

> They play a critical role in that they have become the lead convener. They've had over 50 food organizations that have participated in their different working groups and in the meetings that they have had and they really are the entity that convenes all the local food work that is going on in Cuyahoga county and in some ways in the region.

Another Cleveland participant recalled, "when I came to work here there were other people who had the same interests and it kind of just snowballed really with the efforts of [the FPC convener]. She really took everyone's interest and turned it into a formalized part of our job for a lot of people."

In Flint, the Ruth Mott Foundation and one of the program coordinators there were the lead conveners and the Genesee County Land Bank played a supporting role. Yet, while

there were individuals and organizations working to convene advocates in Flint, the coalition in Flint had not yet developed into a formal entity and did not have any dedicated staff (even part time).

A champion within local government is a critical coalition member because he or she provides access to other officials, offers pragmatic and informed guidance to shape the advocacy and policy development efforts, and, in many cases, can literally put the issue on the agenda of a governing body (i.e. planning commission or city council). The former city manager in Benton Harbor acted in this role by using his power and influence to gather support for the community food system plan project there. One councilman in Cleveland served as a classic and highly effective policy champion. He contributed invaluable political guidance to the advocacy effort regarding the process of proposing new ordinances. He lobbied his peers for their support and even stalled a City Council vote until he was confident it had enough votes to pass. One Cleveland participant remarked, "having that ally at City Hall can really move legislation forward." The Cleveland Planning Director played a minor champion role as well by providing technical guidance on crafting zoning language and supporting the effort within the planning department.

The absence of a policy champion or any support for the food policy efforts within the Flint city government was missed. Without the sage advice of seasoned government insiders, the Flint advocates were left to feel their way alone through what became a minefield of politics and suspicion. It was not the role of the planning consultants hired by the Flint advocates to lobby for support of planning commissioners or other officials. Rather, they were there to provide information and facilitate dialogue so that the commissioners could make their decisions. But the lead convener from the Ruth Mott Foundation was also wary of being overly involved politically because of her position. The

result was that the nascent advocacy coalition in Flint did not yet have the capacity to cultivate relationships with decision-makers.

Regardless of how passionate a few organizations are about local food or community gardens, or how urgent one resident's desires for a hoop house or backyard chickens may be, decision-makers want to see a clear demonstration of broad-based community support for the proposed policy changes. This requires vocal citizen involvement. "Getting the community to show up at meetings also made a difference. Getting 28-30 people... we packed the Planning Commission room. I think to see that kind of support for something that was totally different... politicians do respond to that," a Cleveland leader said. Indeed, the politicians in Cleveland did respond to a full house at Planning Commission meetings and other public events about the urban agriculture policy changes in the city.

Public input sessions were held in both Flint and Cleveland because policymakers wanted to hear directly from citizens and not only from a few organizations. In Flint, however, the desires of the citizens were more ambiguous and more divisive. The majority of the over 150 people who attended the two public input sessions held there were in support of changes regarding hoop houses, backyard chickens, and growing food for sale. But, some planning commissioners had doubts about how representative of the city of Flint those meetings were, and many citizens showed up at planning commission meetings to voice their opposition to the proposed policies.

Other types of actors supported the work and functions of the leading conveners, city officials, and citizens: foundations, hired consultants, and staff planners. The necessity of these roles is less conclusive based on their ambiguous impacts in this study, but the centrality of each type in at least two cases makes them important to mention. Flint and Cleveland benefited from the financial and network support of local foundations. Benton

Harbor and Flint hired consultants to conduct research and compile and present information to decision-makers and the public. This work was valuable to the planning and policy advocacy efforts in both cities. However, the consultants and their advisory teams were unable to overcome other aspects of the political landscape to realize policy change. Finally, government planners supported the efforts in Cleveland by providing their expertise about planning and zoning regulations and the process of changing zoning policy. One staff planner played a very muted role in Benton Harbor, conferring occasionally with the consultant. Flint did not have any planners on the city staff, which was part of the reason for hiring the consultant. This typology of actors is summarized in Table 7.1.

Participant role *Resources contributed*	Benton Harbor, MI	Flint, MI	Cleveland, OH
PRIMARY ROLES			
Conveners *Networks and organizational connections*	Fruit Market Manager (LaVanway) City manager (Marsh)	Ruth Mott Foundation Genesee County Land Bank	OSU Extension Food Policy Coalition (Taggart)
Officials *Political connections and leadership*	City manager (Marsh) City Commissioner (Henry)		City Councilman (Cimperman) Planning Director (Brown)
Grassroots *Legitimacy, political support*		Edible Flint collaborative Individual gardeners	Food Policy Coalition (FPC) Individual gardeners and farm entrepreneurs coordinated through multiple networks
SECONDARY ROLES			
Hired experts *Expertise, research*	Consultant (Bedford)	ENP & Associates (Planning consultants)	OSUE Officer/Food Policy Coalition leader (Taggart)
Supporters *Financial support*		Ruth Mott Foundation	Gund Foundation Cleveland Foundation
City/County planners *Technical planning expertise*			Cleveland Planning Dept. Cuyahoga Co. planners involved in FPC

← *Least dense*   *Most dense* →
← *Least diverse*   *Most diverse* →

Table 7.1 Summary of participants and the roles they played in the local food policy agenda setting and policy development process.

The decisive success of the advocacy coalition in Cleveland compared with the more muted successes in Flint and Benton Harbor suggests that a strong policy entrepreneur from within government along with multiple advocates contributing data and research, mobilizing public involvement, and providing funding and expert knowledge, can present an effective advocacy voice. The mix of participants alone is not enough; they become a unified effort by cultivating trust among the actors through consistent communication. But advocates do not act in a vacuum and even the most ideally composed coalition is not guaranteed success. In the next section, I describe several influential components of the socio-political context and offer three propositions about how that context influences the local agenda setting process.

The social, political, and economic context

Advocacy coalitions and other participants act within social, political, and economic contexts that shape, often quite explicitly, their advocacy strategy and tactics, and the development of new policy. In each case studied here, food policy advocates connected food, and their particular policy goals, to broader policy problems facing the city. Vacant land, unemployment, and public health were the larger issues most commonly cited by study participants and in local newspaper articles. Environmental sustainability was mentioned, but with less urgency and frequency as the other problems. Significantly, advocates did not focus on one of these topics alone; they framed food – both specific policy proposals and the more general idea of local food system building – as a solution to multiple problems.

Kingdon's Multiple Streams framework helps disentangle the many elements of the socio-political context of agenda setting and new policy development and identify moments of opening for policy change. The theory posits that three process streams – problem recognition, political events and trends, and policy proposals – may encourage or limit

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agenda change. The ever-flowing streams occasionally converge at certain "critical junctures," which can open up "policy windows." Aspects of each of the process streams were discernable in these cases and, consciously or not, effective advocates took advantage of open policy windows and drew connections between existing policy priorities and the opportunities that new food policy could present.

Next, I discuss how each of these process streams manifested in the cases studied, and propose some additions to the theory based on the ways that the local cases differed from the national models on which the theory is based. With respect to the problem stream, I propose that local advocacy coalitions are most effective when they can frame their proposed policy as a solution to multiple local problems. With respect to the political stream, I propose that high administrative turnover diminishes opportunities for policy change, and I present a new concept, the "local mood," as an additional aspect of the political stream relevant to local policy change. With respect to the policy stream, I discuss some of the ways that the local policy development process differs from the national process upon which the theory is based. In these cases, instead of searching for the "right" policy, the new legislation was developed iteratively through a series of meetings and input sessions. All of these phenomena are areas ripe for further study.

Problems become opportunities through food policy

Proposition 3: Cities enter into food system policymaking when advocates show how their desired policy actions can help turn pressing local problems into opportunities for community and economic development. Because time and money are limited and since constituents' priorities vary, decision-makers are most compelled when the proposed new policy has the potential to ameliorate multiple problems.

For politicians and policy advocates, problems are political opportunities. To act on the opportunities, advocates need to show how their proposed policy or plan is part of the

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solution to a pressing problem facing the city and engaging decision-makers. To do this,

effective advocates identify problems of political importance to residents and policymakers

and develop communications that frame their issue and proposed policies as solutions to

these problems. Advocates across all three cases invoked three problems that plagued their

cities: vacant land, unemployment, and public health. They acknowledged the gravity of

these issues as they affected the city and offered food policy, planning, and entrepreneurial

activity as a means to addressing these issues. Below, I describe these problems and then

discuss the strategies advocates used to communicate how their proposed policies could

help solve these problems.

Vacant land

At the macro-level, deindustrialization loomed large across cases. All three cities

had experienced decades of economic downturn and population loss associated with the

decline of U.S. manufacturing. Although this trend is not new[15], participants across cities

noted an exacerbation of unemployment, population loss, and increases in vacant

properties and foreclosure in recent years. A window was opening in both Flint and

Cleveland for innovation and experimentation with new techniques for vacant land reuse

because of the urgent need to return increasing supplies of vacant land to productive and

safe use. The city needed a better strategy. A foundation officer in Cleveland made the

connection between vacant land and urban agriculture, and noted some similarities

between his city and Flint:

> We have so much vacant land in the city of Cleveland, much like Flint, there just
> aren't going to be enough development uses. There's not enough money in the world
> to develop all that vacant land into housing and even if there were, there aren't
> enough people. So, there's a real reality setting in that we aren't growing. And
> agriculture hits so many things, provides food access, it potentially provides jobs, it
> makes vacant land much more active and attractive to a neighborhood.

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[15] Refer to Table 3.2 showing that the cities' populations started declining in the 1960s.

The need for better vacant land management and the increasing public and political realization that not all vacant land would be redeveloped as new housing or office buildings, ushered the way for the *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan and urged the Genesee County Land Bank to extend programs encouraging food production on Land Bank properties in Flint. When it came time for the urban agriculture policy advocates in Flint and Cleveland to make their case, they framed their policy proposals as part of the solution to the vacant land problem.

Unemployment

Another result of the decline of the 20th century industrial economy upon which all three cities were built, were high levels of unemployment. Of the cities studied here, the problem was most stark in Benton Harbor where some estimated a joblessness rate of 30 percent. While there were vacant properties in Benton Harbor, the problem was not as stark as in Flint or Cleveland and there was less of an emphasis on vacant land reuse or greening in the Benton Harbor community food plan. Instead, Benton Harbor focused on promoting self-reliance through local food production (gardening), small-scale food enterprise, and regional commerce in effort to address the burdensome problem of unemployment in the city.

Participants in all three cities noted that given the economic situation in their region, any intervention requiring political or community approval needed to address unemployment and the economy. As one foundation representative in Flint said, "it does not matter what you try to do to bring a community back to life, if you don't somehow design something that contributes to some kind of economic development, you're not getting anywhere. You're still spinning your tires." City officials and nonprofits in each city were

focused on creating opportunities for people out of work to find jobs and build skills at multiple scales. This focus presented another opportunity for food policy advocates.

At a basic level, many participants noted that permitting urban agricultural activities in the city would allow residents to supplement their income by growing food for their own consumption or for sale. Beyond supplemental production, some advocates touted the potential small business or microenterprise opportunities of building a community-based food system. Both Flint and Cleveland were home to many urban agriculturists who were scaling up their activities in an attempt to build self-sustaining urban farms combining time-tested and innovative growing techniques to get the most value out of small plots of land.

Participants in both Benton Harbor and Cleveland explicitly viewed their efforts as contributing economic development at a regional scale as well as at the city level. One of the goals articulated in the Benton Harbor plan was to build on the city's historical role as a major hub of regional fruit and vegetable commerce. One of the Benton Harbor's assets was its geography. The southwestern coast of Michigan is both a diverse and productive fruit-growing region, and it is a vacation destination for many northern Indiana and Chicago area families. Both of these characteristics have been sources of regional economic activity in the past and they present more opportunities for future entrepreneurship and new jobs in agricultural and food tourism.

Urban agriculture and a more localized food system is not a panacea for the problem of unemployment in the cities studied. They are all in the midst of identifying a range of strategies to create and attract jobs and prepare workers for the types of employment that is and will be available in a post-industrial economy. Yet, participants acknowledged that allowing and supporting urban food production could lead to new jobs and supplemental income opportunities for many residents.

Public health and health equity

The third commonly identified problem-turned-opportunity theme was public health. Participants defined the public health problem in different ways and focused on different aspects of it. One planner made the direct and historical connection between public health and urban planning noting, "planning in its inception was always about public health… you know, separating harmful land uses from residential areas." She continued, making the connection to urban agriculture,

> Planning, in its trajectory in the 50s and 60s kind of got away from that perspective of public health … And now this is like a new avenue for looking at public health in a really holistic manner. I mean, not just air pollution, but a whole host of public health issues from nutrition to social capital, to all sorts of things. The benefits of urban ag and community gardens are just … multitude. I think that is why government is now involved. Kind of revisiting the basics of planning.

For her, building healthy communities and promoting public health was at the root of urban planning.

Others emphasized various equity dimensions of public health. Discrepancies in access to healthy foods among Cleveland neighborhoods were a prime concern. As one Cuyahoga County planner said, "Cleveland has a big population of people who don't have a huge income and who have very limited access to fresh and healthy food." A Flint planning commissioner who works near downtown noted, "there's not very good access to food in the central part of the city as far as I know." Unequal access to food, in terms of both geographic proximity and affordability, is a well-documented problem in cities throughout the U.S. (Larson et al. 2009; Story et al 2008). It is important to note that geographic proximity to a grocery store that sells fresh produce and meats is not sufficient to ensure healthy diets, but it is likely necessary (Boone-Heinonen et al. 2011).

At least one Clevelander noted that a large part of the disparity in life expectancy in Cuyahoga County could be attributed to diet. For him, the equity issue was "a matter of life and death" and demanded local policy attention. Protecting community gardens that grow healthy food and allowing residents to keep small livestock and sell produce in their neighborhood were a few viable policy actions that might help address some of the health disparities in the city.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability was mentioned as a problem less often in interviews and newspaper articles in all cities. The topic came up most often in Cleveland where the city's mayor created an Office of Sustainability in 2005 to "help the city save money and reduce its ecological footprint" (Cleveland Office of Sustainability 2011). A planner analyzed the role of environmental sustainability in framing food issues in Cleveland: "I got into the urban ag. and community food systems because of the environmental aspect. And its funny how quickly that drops away in communicating." What replaces it, she noted, is a focus on community building and turning deficits like vacant land into community assets. This reflective comment hints at a potential reason for the secondary importance of environmental sustainability a problem. That reason is the discrepancy between the real and the ideal, the immediate reality of current economic and health disparities and the ideal of planning and policymaking for *future* environmental sustainability.

Coupling and framing

The core of advocacy is communication. "The language, symbols, anecdotes, and other information used in a communications strategy are critical factors in determining whether it will succeed or fail" (Bonk et al. 1999, 50). To help decision-makers, as well as the public, see the proposed food policies as partial solutions to urgent social problems, advocates use a handful of strategies to get the attention of policymakers and to persuade them to take a certain action on the issue. Two common, and related, tactics advocates use to connect their issue to others politically relevant topics are framing and coupling.

Coupling refers to the linking one issue with another of known importance or salience to decision-makers. The greatest policy changes "grow out of the coupling of problems, policy proposals and politics" (Kingdon 1984, 20). Advocates "coupled" food issues and proposed policy changes with problems or policy goals already on the local agenda, including vacant land management, economic development, community health disparities, and sustainability. To open dialogue with specific policymakers, advocates connected food with policy areas of known importance to those individuals. One Benton Harbor interviewee recalled how the consultant connected the community food plan to various politicians' interests, "he mentioned health outcomes and mentioned lots of community and youth development through urban garden projects, but he also focused on the economic, which more of the city leaders were definitely thinking." Similarly, the lead councilman in Cleveland helped advocates connect with his colleagues' interests, which ranged from community building to workforce development and job creation.

Framing is how an issue is talked about, the angle of the rhetoric or advocacy. Across cases, advocates framed local food policy in multiple ways, including economic development, health promotion, and self-reliance, and they loosely coupled the issue with other items already on the government agenda like vacant land reuse. As Cleveland City Councilman Joe Cimperman put it, "now it has become a political issue and the political

issue is we have it within our city to have our people live longer, to be employed, to have a gainful job, to use land as it should be used." The councilman forcefully listed at least three ways to talk about the proposed food policy: as a public health intervention, as a job creation program, and as a solution for the problem of vacant land. Issue framing emerged as a critical dimension of the urban food policy agenda setting and policy development processes. How food and urban agriculture were framed reflected the political climate, or perception thereof, in multiple ways.

The purpose of framing is to shape the way decision makers, the public, or any other target audience thinks about an issue. "As a macroconstruct, the term 'framing' refers to modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience" (Scheufele 2007 citing Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Framing helps connect a proposed program or policy to problems or issues of importance to decision-makers, voters or others in a position of influence.

Scholars of policy process, policy advocacy, and social movements emphasize the importance of issue frames and framing processes to policy change. In a review article, Benford and Snow (2000) found that, "framing processes have come to be regarded, alongside resource mobilization and political opportunity processes, as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements" (612). The authors focus on collective action frames, which they define as "action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization" (614). Effective framing can have significant impact on policy outcomes.

Some municipal food policy advocates, particularly in Cleveland, understood the importance of framing explicitly. "That's a frame. I mean, you got to frame this in ways that cut them off at the pass and open their eyes at the same time," one participant from

Cuyahoga County remarked. His comment suggested the importance of using framing to alter the way politicians, among others, view an issue, to make them break from their normal or default perspective and see the topic in a new light. Other participants had a more implicit understanding of framing as an advocacy strategy: "I do think that there is an angle, [but] I don't know if anybody has really determined what angle works for this community. Because I really don't think that talking about obesity or health issues has been effective." This Benton Harbor participant shared her sense that an effective frame, or angle, for harnessing decision-makers' attention and putting food planning and policy on the local government agenda had yet to be found.

Not only did framing food as a relevant and urgent urban issue matter in the political arena, it was also helpful in recruiting foundation support for the efforts. A foundation in Cleveland representative noted,

> It's all about how you explain local food. You have to use the language of the funder to get them to the table. And, I think for a while, we've had some resistance from the community development funders because this wasn't seen as a legitimate long-term strategy, and now they are beginning to understand that this is a legitimate long-term strategy.

The support of two large foundations in Cleveland and one in Flint was vital to the food policy efforts in those cities. It may be as critical to the local food policy efforts to frame the issues in terms of local foundations' philanthropic goals as it is to frame the issue in terms of the political context.

Whether they called them frames, lenses, or angles, advocates in all three cities used multiple frames to communicate about proposed food planning or policy. And most participants noted the power of food as a local policy issue because it touched on so many different aspects of urban development. None of the communities focused in on a single frame for the debate, but the economic development and health equity frames were most frequently referenced across cases.

Avoiding toxic phrases

An effective communication strategy not only connects the new issue to positive ideas and policy goals, it also avoids connecting the issue to negative or undesired problems or ideas. "Ideas matter, especially in public discourse, and ideas are communicated through words, which therefore must be carefully chosen" (Bonk et al. 1999, 50). Many participants articulated that certain words or frames were explicitly off-limits and counter-productive to their food policy change goals. While the Cleveland mayor and City Planning Commission supported the *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan, the terms "shrinking city" and "decline" were not to be used, as the interviewee above stated plainly. Cleveland policy entrepreneurs and other officials worked with the food policy advocates to strategically shape both the message, which, participants noted, helped immensely.

Some Flint advocates noted that "organic" was almost a bad word in the city because it suggested an elite, unaffordable kind of food. "So local is our angle. And that everyone should have equal access to food," a leader of the advocacy efforts in Flint remarked. A participant in Cleveland mentioned the importance of using inclusive language,

> We have to be very broad-based in talking about the benefits of these things, and, you know, always be cognizant of what our lingo conveys. The context and the sub-context of what we talk about, we have to be cognizant that this is something that is beneficial across socio-economic, any kinds of lines.

A nonprofit leader from the Cleveland area noted that he used the phrase "community-based food systems" in his work partly because of the ambiguity of other popular terms. He explained,

> [we use] 'community-based' as opposed to organic, sustainable, local. All of which terms have been bastardized... even local. You know, so what's local? Five blocks, five miles, five hundred miles? Basically, I'm one of those who says local is about relationships, its about community.

Advocates agreed it was necessary to emphasize the broad appeal of food as a local policy issue and that the policy changes would have positive impacts for all communities. Over-use of words like organic that ring elitist to some people was off-putting, as was suggesting that community gardens are only assets to poorer neighborhoods.

"Urban agriculture" caused consternation in Flint. For some, the term "agriculture" connoted huge cornfields, mammoth farm equipment, and noxious fumes. "Urban gardening," which suggested to most a much smaller scale food production, came to be the preferred term. Once this distinction was diagnosed, the planning consultants and lead organizations reported that they stopped using the word agriculture to avoid further confusion about the scale and scope of activities addressed in the proposed ordinance changes. While no toxic phrases were noted in the Benton Harbor case, the community food plan responded to the social-political-economic context by framing the issue in terms of self-reliance and cultivating economic opportunity from within the community. The Benton Harbor plan did not use the terms shrinking, decline, or organic and also emphasized residential and community 'gardening' rather than agriculture.

When asked why food was becoming a policy issue now, nearly every participant responded similarly, noting that a confluence of pressing issues in the city opened the way for planning and potential policy change. One Cleveland city planning official's reflections were representative of this sentiment:

> Surplus of vacant land, interest in reducing transportation needs for food, and interest in promoting healthy eating and healthy eating particularly in inner city areas… These are all relatively new issues. Not brand new, but I think the emphasis on them has grown in the last few years. A confluence of those three things coming together have created this increased interest in urban agriculture and increased attempts to facilitate it on our part.

Framing proposed food-related policy changes and plans as ways to mitigate multiple problems at once opened political opportunities. The three most commonly cited issues were vacant land, unemployment at the household, community and regional levels, and

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public heath, which encompassed healthy food access, diet-related, preventable disease and health equity. Environmental sustainability was mentioned at least briefly in each case, but was considered secondary given the immediacy of economic and other community concerns.

While advocates can harness some of the socio-political context to their advantage through strategic communication, some aspects of the context are beyond control. Next, I turn to socio-political forces that advocates have less influence over.

Administrative turnover diminishes new policy opportunities

Proposition 4: Local administrative turnover, particularly at the highest levels of government, may close windows and diminish opportunities for policy change and innovation because the transitory state of local government can undermine residents' and advocates' faith in the role of city policymakers and officials, limit opportunities to develop partnerships with seasoned and politically effective policy champions, and cause cities to be delinquent in appointments and long-term planning.

The political stream includes political events, like an election, administrative turnover, and jurisdiction change. It also includes broader trends like "national mood" and "organized political forces," including interest group pressure, political mobilization, and the influence of political elites (Kingdon 1990, 150). At the national level, administrative turnover can open up policy windows by refreshing the pool of decision-makers, which may usher in new supporting voices, or move out naysayers (Kingdon 1990). But this study suggests that turnover in local government undermines agenda setting and policy change.

Effective local government management is built on multiple and complex relationships among elected officials, public managers, and constituents (Feldman and Khademian 2002). "At the local government level, turnover disrupts the relationship structures on which urban governance depends" (McCabe et al 2007). This study supports

this claim and further suggests that impeded relationship building affects policy outcomes, particularly with respect to policy issues that are new to the urban agenda.

In Benton Harbor, the food system planning process was catalyzed by the city manager, an official appointed by the Benton Harbor City Commission. But the Commission fired him mid-way through the process. Not long after, the State of Michigan installed an emergency manager in the city. The one vocal champion on the City Commission had limited power and what power she did have was greatly diminished by the government takeover. That crisis, however, was merely the latest episode to feed resident distrust of the local government. Concerns about fiscal mismanagement and widespread community conflict about a large development project in the city also undermined relationship building among local food advocates and government officials. The emergency management of the city by State of Michigan officials paused action on most non-essential planning activities. But the few and weak relationships between decision-makers and the small group of advocates in Benton Harbor meant that the community food plan easily faded from view of most local officials.

The City of Flint experienced five mayoral administrations in the seven years between 2003 and 2010. Mayors left amid corruption and scandals. This left little opportunity for policy advocates to cultivate relationships with mayors or their staff. One result of the frequent turnover at the executive level was very low turnover on the Planning Commission. At the time of this study, most of the Flint planning commissioners had served beyond the end of their term of appointment. They remained in their posts in part because no one had appointed a successor. Under normal circumstances, the ward councilman recommends Planning Commission nominees to the mayor for appointment. A few planning commissioners expressed the sense that this condition resulted in a "stale" Commission, comfortable with its usual routine and less open to new ideas or planning issues. "You can

get kind of complacent. You can get kind of stale in 30 years," a newer commissioner, but long-time Flint resident, remarked.

More significant, however, was the need for a new Flint master plan. Even the planning commissioners who had served 30 years had never participated in a master plan process, despite the dramatic changes in the composition and conditions of Flint. Although it was not the only cause, some commissioners attributed the overdue master plan to the high administrative turnover; no administration was in place long enough to get past the urgent crisis management and to embark on longer-term projects like planning. Urban agriculture was not addressed in the old master plan and the planning consultants identified many elements of city code that restricted and limited urban food production at many scales. But the Planning Commission needed a plan that represented the public interest to back their actions on the proposed urban agriculture policies. The Commission decided it would not recommend action on growing food for sale in residential areas or livestock besides chickens until there was a new master plan. High administrative turnover and an outdated master plan left the Flint Planning Commission, and ultimately the city government, ill-prepared to manage advocate requests for food-related policy change.

Compared with Benton Harbor and Flint, Cleveland was in a period of relative government stability. The City of Cleveland was able to contribute far more resources to food planning and policy efforts than in the other two cases. The most involved city officials were not new to their offices and had not experienced changes in jurisdiction. Rather, their years of experience, local political knowledge, and wealth of relationships within the city government and the community proved invaluable to the agenda setting process. Cleveland did have an updated master plan, *Connecting Cleveland 2020,* and the city adopted the more specific *Reimagining a More Sustainable Cleveland* plan in December 2008. The *Reimagining*

plan identified multiple "green" uses of vacant land in the city, including urban agriculture, and it provided backing for policy decisions supporting urban agriculture.

The influence of administrative turnover as a political force was indirect in the cases studied. High turnover among elected officials negatively impacted food policy and planning efforts because it undermined opportunities to build relationships with some officials and caused the city to be delinquent in planning responsibilities and political appointments. The well-established elected and appointed officials in Cleveland served as ideal champions because of their developed knowledge of the politics of their peers and of the local political process and climate. Further research with a much larger set of cases might probe deeper into the influence of administrative turnover – both elected and appointed – on new food policy outcomes and other new urban policy issues.

The food movement and the "national mood"

While difficult to pinpoint or define at any moment, policymakers and policy advocates claim to have a sense of the national mood and to respond to it (Kingdon 1995, 146). Changes in public opinion and identification with broad social movements are considered part of the national mood. When discussing the emergence of food as a policy issue in their city, most participants cited social movements as an influential force. Different individuals gave different names to "the movement" that was at work across the country and in their city: the local foods movement, the urban gardening movement, and the good food movement, among other variations. While there was not a consensus on what exactly "the movement" was, as the national movement broadened its reach, it helped bring a diverse array of residents to the table in support of local food policy.

A foundation representative in Flint stated this plainly when he praised the ability of the local food movement to bring different groups in the city together,

And [food is] also an area in which, and Flint is one of the most segregated cities in the country, [but] it's one of those places where you sit in a room and its farmers, and nonprofit agencies, and public officials, and foundations and community folks and black folks and white folks and brown folks. And there's no tension about that. You know what I mean? It's one of those places where everybody gets it.

Many participants in Flint and Cleveland felt strongly that the movement, however defined, cut across social, ethnic and economic groups. This further amplified the public and political appeal of the topic. "I would say it is a little bit more trendy in some of the more yuppy neighborhoods, but it really is a cross-cultural, cross-ethnic movement, which is great," a Cleveland city official noted.

The sense of a social movement force at work was most strong in Cleveland. Participants there felt that the national "good food movement" helped energize local food enthusiasts and that the coverage of the movement in the newspapers cultivated a sympathetic public even among those not participating in it themselves. The food movement was becoming more mainstream, more familiar to the public, and Cleveland leaders felt that helped their cause. Participants described the movement in different ways. Some thought the appeal of the food movement came as a result of the sustainability movement that was also gaining ground in the city. Others felt that the equity and social justice themes of the food movement resonated with many Cleveland residents.

Scholars of the food movement argue that it has multiple dimensions or consists of multiple movements. This is at once a strength and a weakness. The strength is that the broad appeal of good, or just, or safe, or local food attracts a lot of supporters with different backgrounds and interests. The weakness of the broad movement is that the looseness of the network of food movements and the lack of a shared strategy for change limits the overall effectiveness of the movement (Buttel 1997; Gottlieb 2001). Patricia Allen (2004) argued that the food movement has two main branches – community food security and sustainable agriculture – and that the two are comprised primarily of different people with

different motivations. The community food branch is concerned with hunger, social justice, and equity. The sustainable agriculture branch is concerned primarily with environmental health. Allen found little overlap in these groups at the time of her work.

The success of the local food policy advocacy efforts in Cleveland, as well as the growing movement in Flint, suggest increasing continuity, collaboration, and coming together of the strands of the food movement, perhaps overcoming some of the challenges of the "loose" movement. Nearly every advocate spoke about multiple dimensions of the food system and the food movement. The equity, opportunity, and health dimensions were the most prominent, and environmental aspects were framed as complementary rather than working at cross-purposes. The coalitions that come together to press for food policy at the municipal level may play a role in pulling the larger movement together because those local coalitions gain strength in diversity and by representing the multiple facets of the food movement. More up-to-date, systematic research is needed to assess the current state and dimensions of the quickly growing and changing food movement and to consider role that local food policy advocacy may play in movement development.

The notion of a "national mood" was manifest in these cases as the local experience of the growing national movement for food system change. This mood and movement cut across ethnic and cultural boundaries thereby increasing its political appeal. The power of the social movement was particularly strong in Cleveland, but was developing in Flint and Benton Harbor. A further study might return to the cities in a few years to see how, if at all, the movement grows over time and analyze whether a more mature movement might be more influential in Flint and Benton Harbor.

City identity and the local mood shapes the public dialogue

Policymakers' and citizens' notions of appropriate urban land use and the types of development the city ought to enable reflect both an individual and a collective sense of the

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city's identity. This collective sense, I call the local mood. The emergent importance of the

local mood to agenda setting and policy action in the cases study leads me to propose that

the construct of the local mood should be added to theories of the local policy process so

that its nature and force as a dimension of local policymaking can be better understood.

Proposition 5: In addition to the influence of the local manifestations of the national

mood, which is defined in part by social movements, the *local mood* helps shape the public

dialogue, policy proposals, and outcome of the agenda setting and policy change processes.

Because individuals' senses of city identity vary, the local mood is often characterized by

contention over competing notions of what their city is, what it might be, and what it should

be. The stronger the alignment between policy advocates' visions for the future of the city

and the local mood, the greater the chance of agenda success and policy change.

City identity refers to how residents and their government representatives see the

defining characteristics of their hometown. This identity changes over time and is often

contested. Each city studied here was in the midst redefining its identity for a new century

and a very different economy.

Vacant land reuse was a central dimension of the dialogue about city identity in both

Cleveland and Flint, further revealing the link between this pervasive problem and city

politics. In Benton Harbor, where vacant land was a less pressing issue, city identity was at

the heart of the conversation about community food system planning. Each city was in a

period of transition, looking to rebuild its economy and find its way in an economic era very

different from the one out of which it grew.

The effect of the local mood on the food policy and planning efforts depended on the

perceived alignment of the food policy with one's sense of city identity and feeling about

where they wanted the city to be headed. Participants across cities agreed that they did not

want their city to be seen as *deindustrializing*. But one dimension of the debate was whether

their future would be *neo*industrial or *post*industrial. The neoindustrialists in each city wanted to continue to focus on more traditional economic development strategies and to revive a dormant industrial economy with new manufacturing and other large scale enterprise. These residents questioned whether allowing urban agriculture would preclude other economic development efforts. Some feared that allowing food production would cast their city in a less desirable light to potential developers or businesses looking for a place to locate. Others simply did not believe that agriculture had a place in the city. For them, as for Max Weber, one of the identifiers of "city" was "no farming."

Another camp saw local food and urban agriculture as core to the city's new, postindustrial identity. They felt that agriculture added to the quality of life and desirable amenities to the city that would attract newcomers while improving conditions for the current residents. Many advocates in Cleveland, from both government and nonprofit organizations, were determined to become "number one" in local food. Their boosterist approach was one way to sell the idea to skeptics who nonetheless did want to see their city be a leader in something positive.

Related to the notions of the political tide and the local mood, timing was an important factor of the advocacy strategy, though it was one advocates had little control over. When participants in Cleveland opined that "it all came together," or "it was the right time," they were implicitly referring to a confluence of process streams. The political mood, the need to address problems of vacant land, unemployment, and public health, the influence of the growing movement for food system change, and the expert development of new ordinances came together in the same political timeframe.

Conversely, very few participants in Benton Harbor and Flint opined that it was the "right time." Instead, several interviewees felt the city was not ready for food policy change. Many Flint planning commissioners did not sense a groundswell of support among

residents for the policy actions and the commissioners felt the city needed a new master plan to draw a more complete picture of the public's mood on the issue. In Benton Harbor, the political timing was not ideal, as many interviewees mentioned, because of the turmoil in city administration, a state financial takeover, and ongoing vicious debates about a large development project in the city.

The debates about city identity were deeply embedded in the debates about how to survive the realities of a shrinking city. Although the term *shrinking city* was not politically or socially accepted in some circles in Flint and Cleveland, no one could ignore decades of population decline and a shrinking tax base. The local mood, characterized notably by conversations about changing, reinventing, or rebuilding the city's identity was an important political force that both supported and opposed local food policy efforts. Future research is needed to further explore the construct of the local mood, identify indicators to measure it, and track its impact on agenda setting and policy change over time.

<u>Iterative policy development</u>

The policy development process observed in the cases studied here departed from that described in Kingdon's multiple streams theory among other theories of the policy process. To respond to problems through policy action, advocates propose policy alternatives. In some cases, some political scientists argue, the policy alternatives preexist the advocacy effort or even the precise political goal. Kingdon likens the process of developing policy alternatives and proposals to natural selection out of a primeval soup: many ideas are floated around, but only a few "survive and prosper" (1995, 117). Elements of this characterization appeared in the cases studied, but the policy development process was better characterized as an iterative and collaborative one where the policy language was continuously amended until it was put to a vote.

This study suggests that the policy stream, the development of policy, looks different at the local level because local residents have much more direct contact with local officials and local officials can more directly represent their constituents. Due to the closeness of these relationships, advocates are directly involved not only in proposing a policy alternative, but in working with local officials to amend it based on the context and concerns. As a result, the process can be more collaborative and constructive rather than combative and divisive.

Proposed policies in the form of changes to the city ordinance and zoning code were presented, debated, and amended in Flint and Cleveland. In Benton Harbor, though at least one city official was interested in policy change, no policy alternatives were presented for public discussion. The policy development process in both Flint and Cleveland was one of collecting input, drafting policy proposals, amending them per public and official input, and repeating that process until the final vote. As noted above, the local advocacy coalitions took on much of this work. Advocates researched other cities' policy language to inform the local policy development. In this sense, they considered different policy alternatives. But policy proposals were crafted to be specific to the unique political and environmental context.

The two local government entities most involved in policy alternative development and debate in Flint and Cleveland were the Planning Commission and City Council with support from their respective staff, when available. Local government professional staff was most involved in Cleveland where the capacity of the local government is greater. Externally, as discussed in the 'Participants' section above, nonprofits, foundations, consultants, outside experts, and grassroots groups participated in policy development.

The proposed food policies were developed and amended iteratively through public input sessions and Planning Commission and City Council debate. With respect to zoning code changes, proposed ordinance changes moved first through Planning Commission

before being recommended to City Council. In these public venues, decision-makers discussed how many chickens should be allowed, what the permit processes should be, when and under what conditions residents should be allowed to sell food they grow, or should not be allowed. The answers to questions like these were inherently specific to the city and the desires of the public and of the decision-makers.

In Flint, most of the public debate on policy alternatives occurred in Planning Commission meetings. The Planning Commission's eventual recommendations were quietly dismissed in a City Council committee meeting. In Cleveland, most public debate on the issues happened at the City Council level. In Benton Harbor, where specific ordinance changes were not considered as part of the community food system planning process, the City Commission and the city manager were the primary participants along with the hired consultant.

In the cases studied here, policy alternatives were developed as the advocacy efforts unfolded. While a few policies in other cities preexisted the efforts in Flint and Cleveland, the "right" policy was not waiting to be found and linked to local problems and politics. Instead, advocates worked with local officials to iteratively craft and amend policy language to address specific local needs and concerns.

Summary of propositions

Five propositions emerged out of the analysis of the three cases of new municipal food policy measured against the multiple streams theory and other theory relevant to the local policy process.

1: **Local agenda setting requires diverse, dense and coordinated coalitions of advocates.** Cities enter into the food policy arena when diverse, dense, and coordinated coalitions coalesce to advocate for specific policy action because the coalitions give decision-makers confidence that the political risk is minimal and may even be

advantageous. Effective coalitions confer legitimacy on the issue, demonstrate the relevance to the community, and have the capacity to conduct the "due diligence" required to inform policy change, such as carry out research, identify policy alternatives, and garner public input.

2: **Three types of actors anchor effective local advocacy coalitions: conveners, city officials and citizens.** Municipal food policy success depends on the coordinated advocacy of at least these three types of actors: conveners, policy champions within government, and local citizens, or the "grassroots." Each contributes at least one needed resource, such as the capacity to mobilize networks (conveners), an intimate knowledge of the local policy process (city officials), or the ability to communicate the relevance of the issue (citizens). Together, their coordinated action lends legitimacy to the advocacy effort.

3: **Effective advocacy frames the proposed policy action as a solution to multiple local problems.** Cities enter into food system policy making when advocates show how their desired policy actions can help turn pressing local problems into opportunities for community and economic development. Decision-makers are most compelled when the proposed new policy has the potential to ameliorate multiple problems because time and money are limited and since constituents' priorities vary.

4: **Local administrative change hinders agenda setting and policy innovation.** Local administrative turnover, particularly at the highest levels of government may diminish opportunities for policy change and innovation because the transitory state of local government can undermine residents' and advocates' faith in the role of city policymakers and officials, limit opportunities to develop partnerships with seasoned and politically effective policy champions, and cause cities to be delinquent in appointments and long-term planning.

5: **The local mood matters.** In addition to the influence of the local manifestations of the national mood, which is defined in part by social movements, the local mood helps shape the public dialogue, policy proposals, and outcome of the agenda setting and policy change processes. Because individuals' senses of city identity vary, the local mood is often characterized by contention over competing notions of what their city is, what it might be, and what it should be. The stronger the alignment between policy advocates' visions for the future of the city and the local mood, the greater the chance of agenda success and policy change.

Implications for cities, planning, and local policy in a changing world

New municipal food policy does not just happen. Rather, cities venture into this new policy arena carefully and only at the urging of effective local advocates. Through close examination of the emergence of local food policy and planning in practice, this study reveals opportunities to refine theories of the policy process in an effort to make them more useful and applicable at a local level. Below, I consider how this study contributes to the scholarly dialogue about the role of cities and urban planning in the food system and the place of food on the urban agenda. I then discuss how the cases studied and the propositions put forth here inform our understanding of food system planning in practice, and, more generally, of how urban planning agendas change and adapt to changing social, political, and economic conditions.

Is food a planning issue?

What is a planning issue? Who sets the planning agenda? How does a planning agenda change? The answers to these questions have significant implications for the practice and study of urban planning and for the shape of our cities. While scholars debate

what planning is and what issues fit within it, they less often take up the other two deeply

related questions.

Taking time to consider the latter two questions – who sets the planning agenda?

and how does a planning agenda change? – as this study has, helps to answer the question

of what constitutes a planning issue. What planning is, is not up to scholars. Instead,

citizens, particularly local advocates and their elected representatives and appointed

officials, are constantly at work shaping and reshaping local planning agendas, and, by doing

so, they define the field. Of course, local governments do not have free reign; their powers

and jurisdiction are bounded by state and federal law. But within well-accepted dimensions

of local government authority, like local land use planning, the government decision agenda

can be quite dynamic.

Whether or not substantive policy change ensued, food became a planning issue in

each of the cities studied here, as it has become one in numerous and varied cities across

the United States in recent years. At the most perfunctory level, food issues came to the local

planning agenda in Flint just as other planning issues do, because a resident had a conflict

between what she wanted to do on her land and what was allowed by the zoning code. What

she wanted to do happened to have to do with agriculture. Had she been alone in this

interest, or even been one of merely a few, the Planning Commission would likely have

handled the issue as a routine permit request and moved on.

The fact that it turned out not to be a routine permit request is less relevant than the

fact that this one Flint resident was not alone in her interest in using a vacant lot to grow

food with neighborhood youth. Instead, she was part of a growing cadre of residents who

had the enthusiastic support of a local foundation and the willing endorsement of the very

busy land bank. These organizations and many Flint residents shared a vested interest in

addressing problems like vacant land reuse and public health and saw food production as

part of the solution. A group of advocates, though small, coalesced to elevate food beyond a simple permit issue to a planning agenda issue. By hiring a planning consultant, engaging residents in the conversation, the advocates kept the topic of food the subject of Planning Commission debate for over a year. Even after the City Council voted against the recommended policy changes, food – community gardening and urban agriculture – continued to be a topic of local debate and participants, both for and against the proposed policy changes, expected to hear more about it at future planning meetings.

Where does food fit?

Food has become a planning issue in Flint, as it has in Cleveland and Benton Harbor. But where does it fit? Where within the known dimensions of local planning practice does food belong?

This study highlights the benefit of integrating theories of the local policy process into research on urban planning to build our understanding of what planning is and how it changes. Policy process frameworks can help us learn how planning agendas change, how new issues like food come to the attention of local decision-makers, and how and why some new issues change the scope of urban policy.

But, does food as a local planning issue really alter the scope of urban planning and local policy? Is this one more concern that resource-strapped local governments need to worry about? Are food issues another example of public entities being forced to "do more with less"? Yes and no. And I would argue more no than yes, as I think would creative policymakers and advocates like those in Cleveland.

On the one hand, yes, food is one more topic local governments need to think about because it, like the other issues planning takes up, is essential to a healthy and functioning citizenry and economy. The reasons why food matters to local planning and policy have

been well articulated by Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999; 2000), Raja et al (2008) and the American Planning Association (2006; 2007).

To summarize, food fits the criteria often used to distinguish local planning issues. Planning has traditionally taken up issues related to our most basic needs: housing, employment, transportation, and clean and safe environments. The justification for most planning interaction, or for local government interaction more generally, in a capitalist system is to correct market failures and assure the public goods are provided. Just as people need clean air and water and safe and secure housing, they need food for nourishment. Food also plays a role in social and cultural reproduction; it is central to many of our social interactions and cultural traditions. Despite these characteristics, food has been conspicuously left out of planning and local policy. There are two primary reasons for this. First, the assumption that food needs are and will be sufficiently met by the market has discouraged local policy intervention. Second, the policies that govern the food system are the jurisdiction of state, federal, and international lawmaking bodies by necessity of the current global system (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000).

Market failures and policy failings are rife in our food system. Ten percent of Americans are food insecure, meaning they do not have regular and reliable access to nourishing food for primarily economic reasons. A far greater percentage of Americans suffer from preventable diet-related diseases including heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension. While the reasons for the rise in diet-related disease in the U.S. are many and complex, access to affordable, healthful food plays a role (Boone-Heinonen et al 2011; Story et al 2008). Market forces, with the support of certain federal policies, have created a food system where shelf-stable, nutrient-poor processed sugars and fats are cheap, while fresh produce, whole grains, and meat are expensive and harder to find in many neighborhoods (Story et al 2008; Morland et al 2002). On the production end of the food system, the

tendency toward consolidation and vertical integration among firms, along with policies and regulations that favor large corporations, have made it difficult for small and mid-size, diversified farms to remain in business (Hendrickson and Heffernan 2001; 2005).

The growing awareness among the American (and international) public of the limitations of the food system and their impacts for health and wellness, employment, and the environment is fueling an energized movement for food system change. Many of these issues need to be addressed by federal and international policy. But local governments bear the brunt of the effects a food system that makes people sick because they are the locus of consumers. As a result, and similar to other global issues such as climate change, greenhouse emissions and energy efficiency, cities are developing programs and policies because they can have a direct stake in and influence on the well-being of their citizens.

On the other hand, no, food is not an entirely new concern that cities should start to plan for and legislate; the food system is already deeply intertwined with many of the established aspects of planning. Cities already affect the food system tacitly through zoning, permitting, transportation, and physical planning, and they always have. What advocates are asking of their local officials is that cities think about food more actively as they go about their planning business. For instance, by targeting and supporting food-based businesses in their economic development plans and activities, cities can help create employment opportunities and economic activity while improving access to food. Transportation planners should consider not only how people get to work but also how they get to groceries and opportunities for physical activity. Many public health departments are already working hard on healthy food access and education because diet-related diseases have become one of, if not the major health concern in their area.

Some scholars and advocates have proposed that cities create a department of food, like many have created a department of sustainability (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000).

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Such a department could help raise the public profile and awareness about the food system and how it intersects with other urban systems and would create a venue to bring trained staff to work on local food policy issues. But cities do not need to create more bureaucracy or wait for a "food mayor" to be elected to enact change. Instead, existing departments need only turn their heads and add a new perspective to their thinking.

This study, and the Cleveland case in particular, shows that rather than adding more stress on local governments, taking a new perspective may add more opportunities. It may be as or more effective to do what Cleveland is already starting to do: to integrate food system policies and programs into multiple city agencies, often in partnership with non-city agencies. For instance, the city has supported a Summer Sprouts program for thirty years through the Department of Community Development in partnership with Ohio State University. The Economic Development department has the Gardening for Greenbacks program. Most recently, the economic development department, the department of sustainability, and the city council created a local and sustainable purchasing policy for the city. On the county level, the Cuyahoga County Department of Mental Health is creating a series of working urban gardens the provide workforce development and training opportunities for people with mental disabilities. This program in part fills in some of the gaps in workforce development left by the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector.

As one Flint participant put it:

What you find as you develop the rhetoric and see all the connections that food and local food in particular work makes, suddenly, you're the person in a meeting who is the one with the answers. Everyone else can talk about problems all day long, you're saying, if we do this, people will get healthier. People will have opportunities to make their own businesses. People will have opportunities to subsidize their income by virtue of not having to spend money on food. People will feel empowered. People will be more active.

Local food policy will not do all of these things on its own. It is not a silver bullet for all cities' problems. But food, as this interviewee argued, is connected to so many problems

facing cities today and is already linked to the current activities of cities in many ways. Food is both something new for cities to address, and it is an issue so basic and core to human existence, that it has been under the purview of cities all along, they just haven't always noticed.

Is municipal food planning and policy here to stay?

We will not be able to say with certainty whether local food policy and urban agriculture is a "fad" for a decade or two when we have the benefit of hindsight. However, there is substantial evidence suggesting it is not merely a short-term effort to breathe new life into a few old cities.

First, there is a long history of community gardening and food production in all cities. It is by no means a new idea. For the last century, urban food production has mostly been the purview of community organizations, block groups, churches, and schools, which have quietly provided food for communities. Only recently, due largely to the increased demand for community garden plots, local and traceable food, and efforts to "scale-up" some urban food production enterprises has it become an issue for local government and a topic that a broader public, those not directly engaged in urban food system work, has developed an awareness of. Cleveland actively embraced this history and the Cleveland State Library created an exhibit of archival photographs of people gardening in the city. This was not the result of a brilliant stroke of political manipulation, however, it was the brainchild of a librarian who was also involved and excited about the urban agriculture movement in the city. This is another example of the widespread and diverse appeal of food as a community development and mobilizing strategy.

Second, the advocates do not think it's a fad, and, as this study shows, neither do the skeptics. Strong advocates in Cleveland and Flint did not engage the language of "fad" at all.

Instead, they framed the issue as part of the future of their city, and, importantly, as an opportunity for leadership. Their rhetoric was not about jumping onto a bandwagon, but noting that these cities were already leaders in some ways and they could continue to expand this role. This framing was strongest and most effective in Cleveland. As one Clevelander said, "we don't make laws for temporary things." They see connections between food and the health and longevity of their residents. They see a stronger local food system as part of the city's new future – a more sustainable, resilient, diverse, and adaptable future. On the other side of the issue, the passionate disapproval of the skeptics, primarily in Flint, suggests they did not entirely conceive of the issue as a fad either. They were concerned that it would change the course and fabric of the city in a way they did not like. A minority of participants in Flint did relay their fears, however, that this was—if not a fad—a subversive strategy of land speculators to acquire vacant land cheaply and hold it in "urban agriculture" until it gained value and they could sell it to a developer at a large profit.

Third, the good food movement is still growing in nearly every city, large, small, growing, shrinking, rich, and poor. Since the beginning of this study, many more cities have taken action on urban chickens and urban garden districts. Many have looked to Cleveland as a model and a resource. Seattle and New York City have gone as far as passing official platforms for the U.S. Farm Bill, taking an unprecedented stand on federal food policymaking because of the many implications it has for urban and regional food systems.

Agenda setting and advocacy coalitions in urban planning

Planning is political. Because of that, policy process theory is useful for analyzing how new issues come to a local agenda and become policy, or do not. Local policy change, including land use policy, is affected by broader political context. Local food policy goes well beyond researching policy language and drafting a new ordinance to push through the

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planning commission and city council. While researching other cities' policies is a crucial part of the policy development process, it is only an early step. That language needs to be adapted to fit the local context in terms of other political priorities, such as economic development, public health and environmental sustainability, but also in terms of the local mood and notions of how and in what ways food fits into an ever-evolving city identity.

The multiple streams framework, in particular the aspects of it emphasized in this study including the addition of the local mood dimension, can serve as a practical tool for advocates and their partners in local government to begin to decipher their political context and tailor issue advocacy and policy alternative development to that context. What are the major policy problems facing the city? How is or could food be linked to these problems as part of the solution? What political trends are shaping the make-up and perspectives of local leaders, such as administrative turnover, elections, national movements, and the local mood and sense of city identity? What are potential policy alternatives to addressing the food issues? What can be learned from other cities and what would make sense here given the political realities identified?

The cases studied here also highlight the importance of demonstrating strong public support for municipal food policy action. Effective local food advocacy coalitions are comprised of a diverse and dense group of participants. They must be diverse in order to represent the wide range of interests in food policy and the range of constituents affected by the issue. They must be large enough to mobilize substantial grassroots support and robust enough to survive advocacy campaigns that can last multiple years.

A more robust agenda setting theory

There are many similarities between local policymaking and state and national levels, which makes a theory like multiple streams applicable at the local level. But there are

also some differences and examining to those differences and refining the theory to address the variation will make for a more robust theory. First, at the local policy level, advocates have much closer access to local officials and decision-makers. They are easier to contact and meet with. It is also easier to add an issue to the local policy agenda, and the planning agenda in particular, because when one has a dispute, or a request for a variance, one can appear before a planning commission or city council to present it. This is not the same as adding an issue to a governmental agenda, which implies a more sustained attention and an issue that applies to an entire population. But this level of access, the permeability of local government, does make it easier to bring new topics to the attention of decision-makers. Broader issues like local food system governance can stay on the agenda if there is a coalition that continues to push for new policy action, keeping the issue "live."

Second, whereas national policy advocacy is affected by a "national mood," local policy advocacy is affected both by the national mood and a local mood. When applying policy process theory, and agenda setting theories in particular, to analyze policy change at the local level, one should also consider the influence of the local mood, the current conversation about city identity and where local leaders and the public want to see the city going in the future. This additional aspect of the political climate, or the politics stream, has a notable influence on the debate and outcomes and advocacy framing and rhetoric should reflect the local mood.

Third, the development of policy alternatives in these cases departed significantly from the process described in multiple streams theory. The local policy development process was iterative and collaborative. Local food advocates and planning professionals researched existing policy language related to urban livestock, community gardens, and local purchasing. And while this research informed the drafting of local food policy, the local policies were designed to fit the local environment and resident's needs and concerns.

Likewise, there were not competing coalitions or advocacy groups proposing policy

alternatives, as often happens at state or federal levels of policy development. Instead, the

interested advocates, along with the skeptics, worked together through sometimes-

extensive amendment processes to create a policy that worked. To apply maximally to the

local policy arena, policy process theory should be adaptable to these differences in the

local process.

Food systems planning in action

These three stories shed some light on the political opportunities and challenges

that local-level food policy innovation presents. The cases show that changing ordinances to

support urban food production may become part of a strategy to address unemployment,

public health, and vacant land redevelopment. At the same time, food policy proposals can

incite divisive debates about city identity, neighborhood autonomy, and the future of urban

centers struggling in the early 21st century. One factor of distinction between these two

scenarios is advocacy communication and framing food as a fruitful policy solution that is

popular with the public. Yet, communication alone cannot overcome hostile political

landscapes in which broader problems, such as political stability and financial solvency,

take precedent. Advocates, planners, and policymakers must be sensitive to the particular

political context of their place and build a strategy that fits the local realities.

To be effective, local policy advocacy groups must develop a deliberate

communication strategy that connects the desired food policy actions to other issues of

large social significance to citizens and policymakers ("problems") and avoids politically

toxic terms and phrases. Because local policymakers are already concerned with more

problems than they can realistically or fiscally address as a city, advocates need to show

how their proposed policy changes will alleviate or mitigate other local problems and do so

in a way that results in a net benefit. Local food policy provides a unique opportunity because it can be framed as a means of addressing multiple related social and political issues, including unemployment and public health, simultaneously.

These cases emphasize that local food policy development efforts should include a deliberate process to collect and incorporate public concerns into proposed plans and policy changes. Incorporating public input is a key to agenda and policy success at the local level because policymakers are concerned about fairly representing their constituents and aim to avoid negative retaliation. Policymakers need to feel confident that the policy change will benefit those requesting the change without unduly affecting other residents.

While these findings apply to policy arenas besides food, these cases also suggest that there is something special about food as a local policy issue. Advocates in Cleveland had it together, they had the components of successful policy advocacy regardless of the issue: strong political champion backed by diverse coalition of public support and the coordination of an effective convener. With these components in place, along with an amenable political environment, they might have had success adding any number of issues to the local agenda.

Yet, there is reason to believe that food, as a policy issue, was distinct from other issues in a few ways. The food issue brought a lot of people together in part because there was a convergence among disparate groups on urban food production and enterprise as part of the solution to a number of challenges in the city. But they came together also because food served as a positive and motivating rallying cry; it was not merely a solution to problems, it was something to get excited about. As one Cleveland participant noted, "it was a collision" of ideas and people and the zeitgeist. Cleveland and Flint may not have been able to build the coalitions they did had there not been broad and broadening interest in food from the perspectives of health, community resilience and self-sufficiency, economic

development, and environmental sustainability. Food has what Green-Pederson and Wilkerson (2006) call "agenda-setting attributes."

That this new policy related to food and not something else mattered to the opposition as well. Some of the resistance in Flint as well as Cleveland was also linked very directly, very viscerally to the implications of food in the city. Opponents implicitly recalled the popular notion that the city is the place where agriculture is not, not a major land use or source of economic activity. Indeed, most American planning documents use "Agriculture" as the land use zone that is most easily "up-zoned" to something else as soon as the opportunity arises. It is the land-in-waiting for development. At least, it has been for the last 100 years. For opponents, to explicitly allow, even support, larger scale food production in the city, anything beyond the backyard garden and occasional quaint community garden, was nearly equal to admitting failure as a city.

Supporters countered this notion by framing it quite differently, framing it as economic opportunity rather than as a temporary fix for economic failure. Advocates talked about urban agriculture and food business as an opportunity to develop a new, innovative, and still distinctly *urban* economic sector. They saw functional gardens and small farms as assets to the urban environment and to urban neighborhoods, not only as uses of unused land, but as businesses, green spaces, workforce training sites, and community gathering spaces.

Conclusion

Benton Harbor, Flint, and Cleveland are old industrial cities that have lost much of the manufacturing sector that made them bustling hubs of mid-20th century America. Though jobs, livelihoods, and some optimism have been lost, many assets remain including land, abundant fresh water, a skilled workforce, and a core of dedicated residents with visions for a new future. Many of those residents see the new food agenda as a way to

reconnect, reinvigorate, and reimagine their city for the new century. Others are wary of urban agriculture as a fad, or as something imposed on the city by outsiders, or as an activity that will change the character of the city for the worse.

The path is long and there are many bumps along the way to reinventing our old industrial cities. Food system enterprise and localization may be a part, and only a part, of the solution to a very complex challenge. But, as advocates show, food can be a powerful focus of evolving approaches to robust, resilient placemaking. Using policy and planning to support urban agriculture entrepreneurs and community gardens can become a key strategy in the pursuit of economic and community development, improved public health, and environmental sustainability.

In an era of change and uncertainty in the global climate and in the global economy, localities will likely continue to adapt laws, regulations, programs, and approaches to development to meet the changing needs of residents. Food is merely one area ripe for local policy innovation and debate. Cities and planners may find themselves unprepared for the politics of local food and land use policy. Planning is political and food planning is no exception. No amount of technical expertise, no encyclopedic knowledge of other cities' food ordinances or command of the principles of sustainability alone will usher cities into the arena of local food policy. Planners and food advocates must be prepared for a public dialogue and debate about the place of food in their city. As standards of good planning practice would demand, food system planning and policy innovation requires working with diverse community members to identify how food production, processing, and other system functions fit within the dynamic fabric of the city.

Through this study, I came to understand new food policy as one example of local policy adaptation. Food became less an issue unto itself and more one dimension of a much

larger, more complex conversation about how cities adapt in the face of changing economic, social, and environmental conditions.

Countless people in cities across the country are getting excited about food – about growing it, cooking it, selling it, and sharing it. They have set up new community gardens, reclaimed vacant land, started new businesses, and breathed new life into withered economies. In many communities, they have taken the movement to City Hall. Advocates have asked local leaders to start programs and change laws to support their work. These citizens have asked their cities to change, to adapt just a little bit to allow for something that is at once new, and also as old as the city itself.

Appendix

Table of Interviewees by case and sector

Case	Sector
BENTON HARBOR	
1	Business leader
2	City government, elected official
3	Community member
4	Consultant
5	County government, planning
6	County government, public health
7	Economic development agency
8	Michigan State University Extension
9	Nonprofit, city
10	Nonprofit, city
11	Regional planning agency
FLINT	
1	City government, planning
2	City government, Planning Commission
3	City government, Planning Commission
4	City government, Planning Commission
5	City government, Planning Commission
6	City government, Planning Commission
7	Community members; urban farmer
8	Consultant
9	Foundation
10	Foundation
11	Michigan State University Extension
12	Nonprofit, county
OTHER	Informal conversations with several urban gardeners on site visit
CLEVELAND	
1	City government, elected official
2	City government, planning
3	City government, sustainability
4	County government, planning
5	County government, social services
6	Foundation
7	Nonprofit, CDC
8	Nonprofit, city
9	Nonprofit, city
10	Nonprofit, city
11	Nonprofit, regional
12	Nonprofit; consultant
13	Nonprofit; university; FPC
14	Ohio State University Extension; FPC

Multiple affiliations are separated by semicolons.

Benton Harbor Secondary Sources (listed by type and date)

Title	Author, Source	Date	Type
Windy City	Julie Swidwa, Herald-Palladium	20090302	News article
Plant It Forward takes root in BH	Julie Swidwa, Herald-Palladium	20090507	News article
Wanted: Healthier food sources in Benton Harbor	Kevin Allen, Herald-Palladium	20090825	News article
Getting Benton Harbor to tap area's bounty	Kevin Allen, Herald-Palladium	20090907	News article
Fresh-food movement gains steam	Kevin Allen, Herald-Palladium	20090909	News article
BH Food summit set for Nov. 21	Herald-Palladium	20090913	News article
Planting the seeds for BH Gardens	Mark Fontecchio, Herald-Palladium	20091122	News article
Organizers: Benton Harbor's vision lies in citizens	Evan Goodenow – Herald-Palladium	20100111	News article
Pushing for a healthier Benton Harbor	John Matuszak, Herald-Palladium	20100306	News article
BH Arts District is starting to jump	Ralph Heibutzki, Herald-Palladium	20100307	News article
The weighty truth… three-quarters Berrien Co. residents overweight	John Matuszack, Herald-Palladium	20100414	News article
Question and Answer: Emma Kinnard	Herald-Palladium	20100510	News article
Gardeners "Plant it Forward"	Julie Swidwa, Herald-Palladium	20100515	News article
Plant something good – and watch it grow	Dan Scheid, Herald-Palladium	20100515	News article
Food pantries trying to deliver healthy choices	Ralph Heibutzki, Herald-Palladium	20100711	News article
Benton Harbor Grows: Food, Poverty, and Community Resilience	Christopher Bedford, Solutions	20100321	Online article
Benton Harbor Master Plan, draft	Houseal Lavigne	20100816	Planning doc (local)
Benton Harbor, A Plan for Positive Change	Governor's Task Force	20031015	Planning doc (state)
Emergency Loan Board Names Financial Manager for BH	State of Michigan	20100401	Press release
Benton Harbor Benchmarking Study	Cornerstone Alliance	2003	Report
City of Benton Harbor – Community Profile	Berrien County	2008	Report
Sodus/Benton Harbor Region Kitchen Incubator: Market and Feasibility Analysis and Business and Operating Plan	Larry Molnar, EDA University Center for Economic Diversification	2008	Report
CEDS for SW Michigan	SWMI Planning Commission	2009	Report
Master Plan Community Visioning data	Houseal Lavigne; BH residents	2009	Surveys

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Title	Author, Source	Date	Type
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Flint Zoning Ordinance (City Code, Chapter 50)	City of Flint	n.d.	City code
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Flint Planning Commission Minutes – 4/28/09	Flint Planning Commission	20090428	Minutes
Flint Planning Commission Minutes – 1/26/10	Flint Planning Commission	20100126	Minutes
Green thumbs; urban agriculture in full bloom here	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20080128	News article
Sowing savings: Community gardening given residents way to cut costs	Carol Azizian, Flint Journal	20080623	News article
Urban gardens gain popularity as economy stumbles	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20090305	News article
Shrinking Flint finds a big backer	Ron Fonger, Flint Journal	20090320	News article
An Effort to Save Flint Michigan by Shrinking It	David Streitfeld, New York Times	20090422	News article
Growing confusion	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20090705	News article
Permaculture expert to teach local residents ideas, techniques for sustainable lifestyles	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20090717	News article
Tour shows city good enough to eat	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20090828	News article
Visitors eat up garden tour	Elizabeth Shaw, Flint Journal	20090903	News article
Flint's future; Study offers possibilities for city's vast stretches of empty, overgrown neighborhoods	Flint Journal	20100110	News article
A plan for Flint's empty quarters can't come soon enough	Flint Journal	20100117	News article
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Flint to host conference on urban land use	Kristen Longley, Flint Journal	20101107	News article
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4 BR, 3.5 BA, Grm Ftr: Why I want to buy a house in Flint, Mich.	Gordon Young, Slate	20090618	News/Blog
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Genesee County Land Bank Winter 2010 Newsletter	GCLB	2010	Newsletter
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On Display: City of Flint Department of Community and Economic Development Report to the Community	Department of Community and Economic Development	2007	Report
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City of Cleveland Zoning Code Update: Agriculture in Residential Districts	City of Cleveland	20101103	City Code
Cleveland Urban Agriculture Overlay district	City of Cleveland	n.d.	City Code
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Hopes of renewal invested in land bank…	Steven Litt, The Plain Dealer	20090517	News article
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The Cleveland Model	Gar Alperovitz, Ted Howard, & Thad Williamson, The Nation	20100211	News article
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Cleveland among 5 finalists to host markets conference	Michelle Jarboe, The Plain Dealer	20101203	News article
From vacant to vegetables	The Plain Dealer (opinion)	20101016	News article (opinion)
Local food cluster in Northeast Ohio	Marc Lefkowitz, GreenCityBlueLake	20090819	News/Blog
Is Cleveland a local food leader? (2010)	Marc Lefkowitz, GreenCityBlueLake	20100526	News/Blog
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