HUNGER FREE COMMUNITIES
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2011

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF FOOD SYSTEMS IN PASSAIC COUNTY

POSITIVE FEATURES

- City Green is a important organization and has several Farmer's Market in the area – one offers a double voucher program supported by the Wholesome Wave organization
- Bodegas abound in the urban areas – so food is available, opportunities exist to we can partner with bodega owners to expand the healthy options offered
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension educators are available to provide nutrition education to the community
- There is a large willing and able community of volunteers in Passaic County
- Active faith-based community in the urban and rural areas of the county
- Food assistance programs are also available within the community
- Societal norms are shifting slowly but surely: people are recognizing the healthy food is best
- Community members are eager to help those in need (i.e., post flood time period)
- Emergency food providers are available and do interact well with each other
- There is funding available from the Community Food Bank of NJ
- Fast food options are getting healthier, better than in recent past
- Interstate transportation is good – gaining access to food retailers in the down-county area is OK
- There is interest in above ground farming – particularly in areas where the land is contaminated
- There is effort to address transportation barriers and improve access to healthy foods – there is a trolley to Farmer's Market on Fridays in Paterson NJ

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- There is a lack of farmers and producer-only farmers markets
- There is a lack of affordably priced culturally appropriate food (i.e., halal foods for Muslim community)
- Food swamps persist
- So-called "healthy" food is available but is high undesirables (i.e., salt, sugar, etc)
- Lack of supermarkets – specially in Paterson and other urban areas
- Lack of transportation (up-county – north of Paterson NJ)
- There are regulations that discourage farmers from operating
- Under-utilization services – education, distrust
- There is a lack of access to healthy foods and these foods, when available, are not affordable
- Contamination is an issue particularly in the up-county region
- There is lack knowledge about above ground growing
- Transportation remains a problem for many
- Need better policy framework related to nutrition and agriculture issues
- Food pricing not favorable in urban areas (i.e. bodegas have few healthy options, and if available are expensive)
- Even when children are exposed to nutrition education, limited translation of information learned education from kids to parents occurs
- There is a need to create infrastructure for food distribution among non-profits, churches – currently all work on their own agendas, in own neighborhoods - all working in silos
- There is a need for improved infrastructure –someone needs to take leadership
- Transportation to feeding sites is a challenge in both urban and rural areas
- There is little available government support at the municipal and state levels

SELECTED COMMENTS ON FUTURE OF PASSAIC FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

WHAT WILL THE STRUCTURE BE?

- Need to know what the county provides
- What the city does or does not
    - Question for Passaic County: Does Council need official city and county government representation?
- What will be the governing structure of the Food Policy Council?
    - Non-profit umbrella – CUMAC, UWPC
    - Community-based with government participation
- Improving health of the county – Passaic County ranks near the bottom [possible source for this ranking is: http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/new-jersey].

WHAT PROJECTS SHOULD THE COUNCIL FOCUS ON?

- Develop a strategic plan, understanding of group's structure
- Needs assessment work needed – Council should strive to really understand local food environment
- Develop a white paper/food charter – there are examples from around the country
    - Sample language "whereas with recent flooding showed lack of coordination and food-related flood plan", etc - "We hereby establish a FPC to make recommendations ….
- Take Charter/Paper around to government to endorse and resolve and appoint a representative to FPC – ensures/improves credibility
- Disaster Analysis vs. Available Food Resources is highly recommended

HOW BEST WILL LOCAL JURISDICTIONS BE SERVED?

- Identity who is at the table and who is not
- What localities are represented?
- Membership – need representatives from each community

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL FROM MARK WINNE

- Move quickly
- Establish government outreach, language statements, membership drives, etc
- Look at New Haven, Kansas City or Baltimore – they are good models
    - FYI: New Brunswick's Hunger Free Communities is a collaboration between City official and Rutgers University professionals