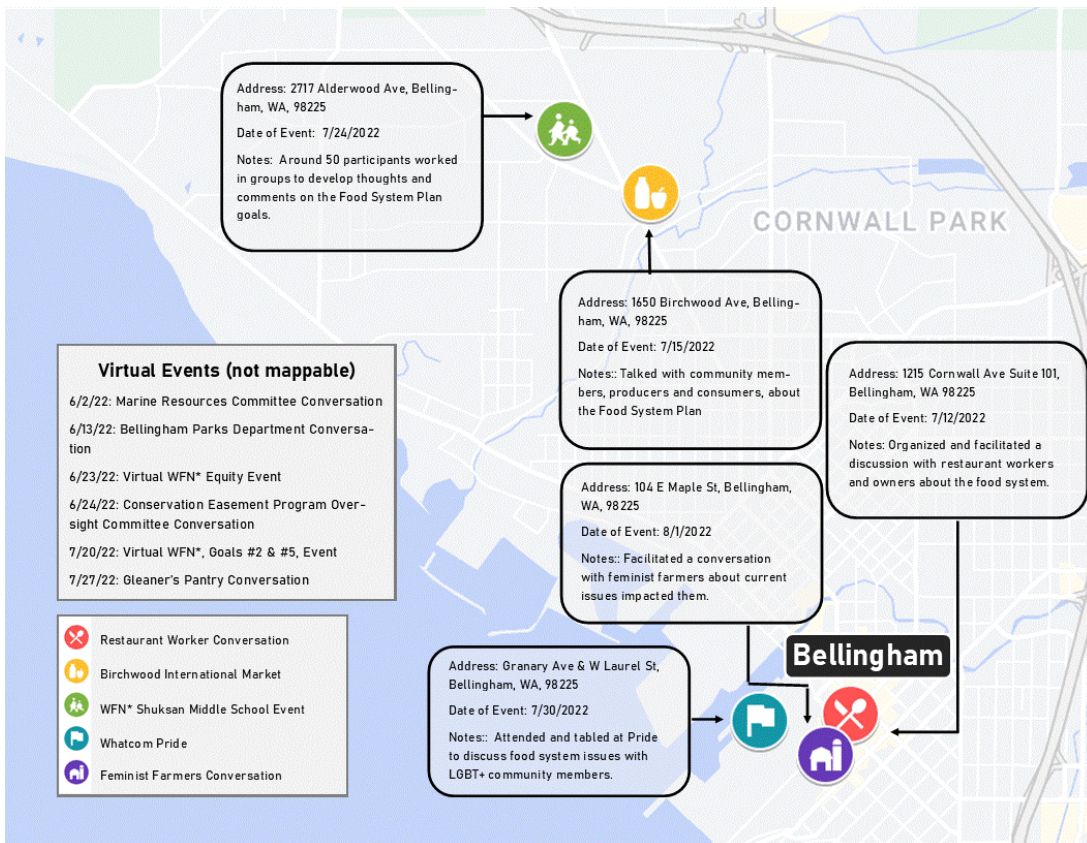


## Community Engagements for Food System Plan: Summer 2023

Event	# of attendees
Marine Resources Committee	<10
Birchwood International Market	10
WFN Virtual Event Goal: Cultivate Equity and Justice	27 +
Conservation Easement Program Oversight Committee	8
Restaurant Worker Focus Group	10
WFN Virtual Event Environmental Goals	7
WFN In-person event Shuksan Middle School	45
Whatcom Pride	<10
Farmers event	9
<b>Total: 9</b>	<b>136</b>



At each event, we asked the community to reflect on the draft goals and share what actions would be needed to achieve those goals. The raw data can be found in this document.

## **WFN Virtual Event 6.23.22**

### **Building a shared definition of justice and equity**

#### *Group 1*

- public, and political education about the real costs of food production
- removal of racial barriers to access emergency services in times of disaster; local ownership of food production and labor (no H2A).
- removal of racial barriers to access and production of food
- distribution of real property and political power;
- eliminate food deserts; consumer

Our definition is: Equity: Community process to promote racial equity and diversity of food available to the population; living wages/earning capacity

#### *Group 2*

- leadership - who is at the table
- climate justice
- Food system resources available to all
- labor and immigration laws
- Access
- opportunity for all - food system ownership and participation
- language
- Reparations for past harm
- systemic privilege & barriers to capital
- geography
- transportation
- web access and tech access

Our definition is: A just and equitable food system is participatory, community-driven, locally-grown, and accessible to all. It addresses systemic privilege and historic barriers to resources and addresses climate, language, labor, and immigration justice. It ensures that all communities are represented in ownership, leadership, and decision-making.

#### *Group 3*

- living wages for farm workers
- feel cohesion and connectedness and people cares for one another (felt effect)
- regenerative design that is culturally rich, ecologically restorative
- feeling replenished and abundance
- Food apartheid/deserts
- farm worker ac

- how do farm works / migrant works have access/voice to community and farmer discussions about food system issues
- public access means welcoming access at times that all can participate
- eliminating stigma
- community-informed & community-led
- food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability
- multiple language / accessible multiple tools/modes for community access

No definition

#### *Group 4*

- empowered
- network
- connection
- education
- teach a man to fish
  - Q: Who is the "man"? This sounds like a bootstrap argument
- Access
- sovereignty
- giving stewardship back to indigenous nations
- access to culturally appropriate foods
- black farmers with indigenous farms
- distribution of power and resources
- food insecurity high among trans folks
- white person in settler context on stolen land
- rematriation of indigenous lands
- Removal of fear and shame
- Access to evaluation metrics
- food is grown medicine
- barriers to farming for trans people
- Re-evaluation of qualifications to claim rights to land and land use

Our definition is: A food system centered around justice and equity needs acknowledgment that there is room to learn and improve how to keep all people at the center of Who What Where When How food is accessed (???? -BR)

#### *Group 5*

- Justice in the food system - nobody is suffering for someone else's food
- Big table that everyone is sharing
- Paid for their work, aren't exposed to toxic chemicals in the production
- Everyone has access to healthy locally produced food
- Accessibility - culturally appropriate food
- ease, comfort, respect, lack of worry - comfortable, healthy, vibrant, abundant
- Everyone has access to healthy, local food, that is produced by people respected, valued and empowered in their work

Our definition is: A food system where everyone has access to affordable healthy local food, that is produced by people respected, valued and empowered in their work.

#### *Group 6*

- access
- culturally appropriate
- equal
- fair (fair pay, fair treatment, workers' rights)
- honor
- dignifying
- respect
- outreach
- information
- transportation barriers
- possibilities
- language barriers

Our definition is: a just and equitable food system means all people have access to culturally appropriate foods with dignity, honor, and equality of possibilities regardless of language, transportation, and any other barriers. People are treated with respect and dignity when accessing food systems, and workers are treated with respect and fairness.

#### *Group 7*

- dignity
- wholistic
- access to all communities (racial, ethnic, abilities, LGBTQ+) - no community is left out
- respect and dignity for the process of growing food and those that grow food and the vital role they play
- culturally appropriate
- fair wages and benefits for food workers/food worker justice
- honoring native cultures and the foods they grew/grow on the land
- ways of farming that are restorative and healing to people and the land
- right relationship to the people who originally inhabited the land
- equitable access to land and the tools, financial resources etc to grow food

Our definition is: A dignified, accessible and culturally appropriate food system provides food and land access and the necessities of food production to all communities. And addresses and repairs structural and cultural harm.

### **Actions to support cultivating justice and equity in our food system**

#### *Group 1*

- Develop for Whatcom Food System and Action planning group (could administer the Whatcom health impact map)
- Develop a Whatcom County Office of Food (monitor metrics etc)
- Develop a metric that could be regularly updated with the existing gaps in wages for agricultural work
- Build on WA Enviro Health Impact map, add Whatcom County metrics that we choose
- focus on groups that are already taking actions
- seeking alignment from the different siloed efforts working within the county
- more data available and correlated between groups
- build on community-conjoined actions to distribute food
- put some of the climate action funds to food systems (tax fund allocation)
  - Q: City or county climate action plan?
- continue farm to freezer programs, expand to consumers
- Prioritize economic investments in our food system at the county level
- funding to pay farmers to distribute food to local food banks at a fair rate
- lower barriers to local food distribution, cottage industry
- circumvent federal guidelines requiring collecting names and addresses of those collecting food aid

### *Group 2*

- intersectional food justice means addressing poverty and access to resources
- Increased coordination and collaboration among food system advocates
- Funding for food system work is shared
- Land access programs for residents to take control of their own food security
- Transportation network supports all users (moving people and materials) County crews could facilitate moving compost, woodchips, etc.
- Govt/Inst. collab & support at community level
- multiple community kitchens & knowledge sharing
- budgeted/funded city & county departments to address/implement local food justice programs
- Food access programs with dignity (client choice models)
- varied funding sources (fed/state/local)
- edible public environments and landscapes
- diverse representation in/on those depts and throughout implementation of food justice programming
- C: Would love to see our city, county AND state adopt universal public income
  - C: Just want to note that the 2nd item I added here in re addressing poverty/low-wealth issues is often not tackled alongside food justice, but it is absolutely necessary to look at poverty and food justice solutions together as intersecting problems with intersecting fixes!

### *Group 3*

- Increased wages, especially farm workers
- Coordinated information regarding sources for food access and food sharing of home grown food
- Worker owned coops (Tierra Libertad)

- Encouraging changing from mono culture to food forest concept,
- Make agricultural land more accessible for families
- Connect efforts to poverty-alleviating services
- Aquaponics & hydroponics- workers who move across urban farms
- bee stewardship
- For what specific action items, our County can take I would like to add "Changing the building and/or zoning codes to allow for multiple small homes in a clustered environmentally sensitive way on what is currently single dwelling units." This would allow more affordability for land access for small farmers in rural areas.
- C: For what specific action items, our County can take I would like to add "Changing the building and/or zoning codes to allow for multiple small homes in a clustered environmentally sensitive way on what is currently single dwelling units." This would allow more affordability for land access for small farmers in rural areas.

#### *Group 4*

- having some acreage in a safer area in the county- queer and trans farm collective
- make small scale farming profitable
- more equitable funding sources (reducing barriers to farming)
- more opportunities for up and coming farmers (including land)
- having a space specifically queer and trans community garden in urban areas
- prevent sexual harassment in food bank lineups
- Engage students in the countywide effort - "pop" the WWU "bubble" - && other school districts
- Involving all parts of the food cycle with each other - from farm to table / animal waste > grow food > feed animal > produce waste
- Reassessing value/availability of mass-produced & heavily preserved food items versus healthier, smaller quantity, local foods
- Generating more awareness of existing efforts being done -- in person versus online? "Door to door"
- Reintroduce bartering (good for good, service for good) commerce at some level
- Approach lawmakers at local, state & national levels re: food capitalism/sovereignty
- Creating opportunities for those who are facing shame and fear to engage in food related learning primarily and access as secondary

#### *Group 5*

- Closing some pay loopholes for ag workers - minimum workplace safety standards
- Living wage jobs/affordable housing = more household income for food
- Eliminate food deserts! Development incentives for grocers in underserved communities
- subsidized capital investment for small producers scale up. Processors?
- Universal school meals for all - extend temp during COVID-19 to permanent
- Supporting tribal sovereignty (especially with land, water and stewardship)
- County financial incentives for BIPOC farmers/smaller farms
  - C: Important! We just talked about low wages amongst ag workers. We don't want to continue marginalising those already marginalized in a new sector.
- Skilled labor gap for processing - tech colleges?
- Flexibility on ag zoning to allow alternative farm setups, not just big ag

- Local institutions should spend their food dollars on local food
- (schools/colleges/peacehealth)

### Group 6

- Involve the community in events, fundraising, food drives, etc.
- Supporting workers' rights
- Networking: interconnection among groups working toward a common goal
- Encourage feedback and input from program participants on what their needs are, what type of services, how they can access services
  - Q: How do we do this, when there is so much negative stigma associated with food insecurity?
  - Q: there are some food banks that are already distributing surveys where customers can specify needs or different types of preferences towards food
- knowledge: people knowing what's happening, awareness of programs and resources
- People to help make connections: support systems, interpretation services, connecting people to services
- Involve the public sector, i.e. police delivering food
- Help people get stable income: employment, disability benefits
- More land access: help new farmers purchase land, preserve farm land
  - C: ^the county can update their ag zoning to provide more flexibility for non-factory farm model facilities
  - ^and leveraging that free meal commitment to large scale purchases from local producers
- Changing state and local policies
- Supporting farmworkers of all different backgrounds/support farmers being owners of their businesses
- Help beginning farmers
- Empowering women
- Free meals for all students permanently
- Childcare: improved and increased
- Empowering leaders in our community to enact change, especially for underrepresented groups
- Less rules for food providers: i.e. no ID required for food banks
- More support from schools for languages

### Group 7

- food vouchers that have more choices for what foods can be purchased (culturally appropriate etc)
- whenever possible support approaches that work to end/disrupt white supremacy, paternalism, and other systems of oppression!
- wage, workplace, and organizing protections for all workers in the food system (including farm workers)
- rental protections and other efforts to help protect and generate wealth
- low barrier grants to marginalized communities for means of food production (land, tools etc)
- local public benefits that increases the number of folks who can access SNAP

- Actions that affect purchasing power
- food production that increases climate resilience - with business models, like cooperatives, that don't rely on exploitation of labor
- access to local, healthy, affordable throughout the county in each community - accessible through public transportation/within a mile of every resident
- reparations - locally thinking about tribes, sikh populations, and other communities that were exploited/pushed out
- increase programs that put money in the hands of people

Other comments not within the format:

- Neighborhood Agricultural App. Supplemental to the Sustainable Connections Food and Farm Map. A new neighbor can come in and download the app and be connected to all the free food boxes and food bank distribution and times in the neighborhood, plus be connected with neighbors who are growing food on their property or within their residence. As neighborhoods grow their own food and expectations on our farms shifts, farmworkers tend to food being grown on building facades and in neighborhoods. Keeping them out of the worst of climate conditions. Farms would transition from monoculture to native species agroforestry, aquaponics, hydroponics, and honeybee/apiary stewardship
  - C: MFN has a software developer working on an app like this - for countywide launch and use

## CEP Oversight Committee 830 am 6/24/22

Becky talked about [the Conservation Futures Fund](#).

Used [these slides](#) to provide context. And asked the following questions:

### Which goals stood out to you?

Heather McKay said local food economy and healthy food for all stood out. She asked what amount of food consumed in Whatcom is produced in Whatcom. Chris Elder said that Jeff Volz used to say 2-3% in Whatcom.

Sean mentioned that the Olympia farmers market is a great model (open 4 days/week), but is pretty time consuming for farmers. Ali mentioned that Chris had been jazzed about Eastern Market in Detroit (aggregation center for local growers and a farmers market) before.

Someone asked what the yield of CSAs and farmers markets can we connect to the land we're farming.

There is no policy for encouraging small farmers. We need more policies for developing the local economy.

Commodity growers aren't going to last in future markets. The sooner large land owners can diversify their land, the better (Ali note- I feel like I read something about this at some point- I know Karen Steensma has pivoted to a value-add).



How are large growers planning for their future and the future of the community. Look at other models around the country.

Puget sound food hub- interview them. Cloud mountain can't meet capacity as hub. In 10-20 years, we'll need more than 2 aggregation sites.

We have some significant infrastructure needs. Connect with port of bellingham, who should really be investing in this.

Access to land is a huge issue- can help for acquisition to buy our own land to lease an easement (county would own land).

Buy, protect, sell acquisitions- this is a revolving door model. Land trust only has so much \$\$ to buy farmland.

Cost of farmland is going to increase. \*\*Buy, protect, sell fund model.

State [Farm Protection and Affordability Investment program](#).

It would be helpful for the CEP Committee to see what it would take to have 10-15% of our food consumed be sourced locally (an increase from 2-3%).

Someone suggested asking Sharon Shewmake about this, as she is an agricultural economist.

## **Restaurant worker conversation 7.12.22**

### **what's missing from the CFA?**

Patrick – Rent control is tied to food insecurity. People he works with are less concerned with buying food, but paying rent.

If you could run one initiative, what would be?

For the specific Hazard pay initiative, their business would not be able to afford it and they should be able to remain open.

Some would rather have a job (businesses stay open) instead of get hazard pay and businesses be forced to close.

Restaurants should be local and easier to create.

Create funding to turn food waste and loss into a solution for food insecurity – being able to designate it for food at a lower price. The money would be able to come back to the workers. Perhaps a tax break for restaurants that give away food that is not yet bad, which would go towards the workers.

Restaurants have not been making that much money around here, so it is hard to also pay their employees more. Small businesses are struggling, and can't afford to have the mandates imposed on them as they are barely scraping by.

Tons of waste- so many things to get the job done. Food waste and loss in restaurants. Increase can restaurants get a tax break for donating their waste?

The food that we brought for this event was not local!

How to bridge the gap for getting businesses to pay their employees, and keep small businesses alive.

Cosmos Bistro tip shares with back of the house staff. Business owners want to pay benefits, but can't afford it. And many smaller restaurants only have 5-10 employees, which wouldn't make any sense to buy insurance for them.

Acknowledge that there is so much bandwidth taken up by working in the hospitality industry, because people are often one unfortunate event away from homelessness. Landlords imposing so much stress and not taking care of what they should.

When asked to define "fair," Patrick said "sleep in the same bed everynight and be able to afford food."

Having a landlord is super stressful.

PPP helped some workers during COVID who kept getting COVID and owners were still able to pay them sick leave (Ali note: I believe they said paid sick leave was required- is it still?)

Lots of people hired in the summer to support events and tourism, but we need more tourism in the winter. We need more events in the off season.

Restaurant owners are not as diverse as they used to be. It's hard to save money to become an owner when the cost of living is increasing so much.

Shifts are inconsistent and small – money might either be good but only working a few hours, or long hours and little money.

The culture has shifted to being people can't NOT work even when they are sick. Have to come work.

Festival season is hard for restaurants. But also great business. Would be great to have events in the off season to help small businesses stabilize during winter.

We would not have as many foodborne illnesses if employees didn't feel like they had to lie to their employer about being sick, because they had to work or lose their job.

Need to be able to save money as a restaurant worker, and that is hard when rent prices are too high.

-Tips are inconsistent, and wages are thus inconsistent too. When you are not salaried, hard to have the consistency enough to save and do goal setting

-Social expectations of hospitality workers circulating the money by going around to different friends bars while they are working, and partying and being out.

-Having an organization like a bank that only funds community projects. Sean had the idea of a Bellingham Bank.

People trying to putting down a bid for a place, we can barely afford the asking price, but then if a larger company comes up with a bid, we cant outbid them.

Food trucks are a great way to make the jump into a restaurant, and are easier to start with. Are they the answer?

-They are a lot of work.

What if BTC or Whatcom County owned a food truck they could lease to people for a little bit to see if people actually wanted to do that as a living.

We

Community Commissary kitchen that operates on a sliding scale and actually cleans would be great (Make sure they are up to code) NABC tried to pass this. Apparently there is a lot of funds for this.

-Is there a way to bridge the gap between restaurants and a commissary kitchen to share a space.

-Test kitchen?

We need some third party to ensure our kitchen is all up to code and clean.

What 's available for small business owners? Tina from homeskillet says there is the Small Business Development Center @ WWU that does free classes for business owners.

Ali idea- risk pool for dental insurance (it's a scam, but if we had some way of connecting people to insurance like Evergreen dentistry- like, all restaurant employees know they can go there).

Go into the walk-in fridge to cry.

The group discussed turning businesses into collectives or cooperatives- specifically Cosmo's Bistro wants to share equity with her cooks.

Pop-ups of other restaurants in existing restaurants is a great way to support other restaurants.

Tina from Homeskillet – doing classes for low income families. Turning parking lot into a much discounted rate-based farmers market, making a little cooperative. All about the pop-ups.

Making permits easier to get to ease the lift of start up costs.

Whatcom county food system owned two food trucks for people rent for a little bit of time so they can try it out to break into the world and see if its for them . Then it wouldn't have to be such a big lift for people, and also not cost them their life's savings.

In San Diego, Kristina saw that there was much more structure in training in the hospitality industries, and what are the effective habits to have for both employees and employers to keep a place open.

-Lot of nuances for actually opening a business, and how much contact that government will have with you about taxes and stuff.

Small businesses development center in Downtown and Western has a lot of resources to help out small business. Free classes for taxes.

-Need to get more info about this resources out there. Not being left to the wolves immediately upon starting.

-Putting together grants and scholarships for hospitality work on the higher ed side of things.

-Also a “new hire” packet for new employees.

Business Owners coming together to have a conversation about not having to pay for space rent. Storefront rent.

Having a restaurant workers cooperative make a healthcare plan, to be able to provide their workers a discounted healthcare plan.

-hard to be jazzed about a job that doesn't provide healthcare. In this liminal zone where you can't afford healthcare, and make too much to have ACA.

-This also means not having consistent PCPs or therapy.

Would be great to have a service in town that offered mental health counseling for hospitality workers.

Tina is thinking of starting a social club for hospitality workers to vent and connect.

Holiday inn at the airport has large kitchen and space for events.

Hotel Leroy also has a large freezer space.

Restaurant workers have a motto “Cry in the walk in”

Make sure that people have access to infrastructure for compost and other “waste free” alternatives to plastics and Styrofoam. Phasing in these initiatives instead of implementing them immediately at a higher cost. And also have education about it, so that people can understand why and get on board with it.

\_Actually finding compostable materials, where is the supplier? HUGE burden for business owners.

-If People throw their trash into the compost bin outside, and then the restaurant gets dinged for it. Why is it on the restaurants to sort out their trash and compost that other people throw in there willy nilly. Eric Johnson at Public Works.

-No structure with this implementation (Which apparently goes into effect July 31<sup>st</sup>, but will not be enforced until January.) Sustainable connections. The launch of the plastic ban is confusing and there aren't a lot of resources.

Is there a viable business where people can get hired to sort out peoples trashes into recycling and compost. Need funding.

City contracts out to SSC, not for a profit. Look into how much benefit would Bellingham have if they were to do these actions. The cities have the rights to mandate which contracts come in and what they control. Look at ROI for this. Having Non-extractive business models where the

**Shuksan Middle School event 7.24.22**

Rosalinda introduced a food system and the importance of the event. Ali shared the five draft goals and asked the group to brainstorm what actions are needed to achieve these goals:

The first  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the meeting was dedicated to reflecting on goals 1,2, and 4. And the last quarter was dedicated to goals 3 and 5. Here are the notes from the brainstorms:

- More grocery rescue
- Avoid wasting food
- Taxing the disposal of edible food
- “Use Food Well Washington State Plan”
- Equitable purchasing for food bank producers
- Collective gardens in City Parks, with education and coaching for meaningful production of staple crops.
- Improving access to healthy food:
  - neighborhood food boxes
  - more veggie markets in neighborhoods (bodega),
  - expand meals on wheels to reach more people in need,
  - burden of equity cannot fall onto producers/consumers.
  - Who can connect? Fresh Bucks/Double up food bucks.
- Work with Conservation District
- Production strategies:
  - Perennial production systems (nut trees, etc).
    - Transition unused land into nut orchards to be gleaned (10 year plan)
- Get volunteers from Northwest Youth Services
- Community gardens
  - Churches
  - Schools
  - Public spaces
  - Parks
- Encourage home gardens
  - Seed harvesting for ideal plants for region
    - Plant seeds in all local gardens
  - Glean from all gardens by creating more food boxes (little free food libraries).
  - Construct more food boxes with electricity
  - Collect non-perishables by network of gleaners
  - Distribution to low-income housing and communities
- Regenerate Soil, water and land:
  - Permaculture classes
  - Local species of plants
  - Seed guilds for local seed distribution for all gardeners
    - Volunteer to attend permaculture and seed guild classes
    - Inspiration Farm
    - Salish Seed Guild- promote and encourage
      - Volunteers from underprivileged and troubled youth to cultivate, distribute, etc.
  - Access to Healthy food in our community
    - More gleaning volunteers and network for collection and distribution
    - Appliance donations for food boxes
    - Canning supply pickup

- More volunteers for harvesting (troubled youth) and food distribution, gleaning, etc.
- Local food economy- stop the separation of business from community by integrating community relationships with economic goals
- Vertical gardening, gray water systems for toilets and irrigation
- Strong neighborhood connections- neighbors care for each other before a crisis begins.
- Community kitchen- Kulshan Community Land Trust property on Birchwood and Plnewood
- Promote and educate about composting
- New site for free/subsidized compost for home food growers
- Incentivize goodness in the neighborhood
- Invest in our business district (I think this is in reference to the Birchwood Neighborhood in Bellingham)
  - Find money to develop a living, eating, recreating space at the center of our neighborhood.
  - A sense of value (aesthetic spaces and places)
  - Walkability to services
  - Independence autonomy
- Gleaning apps
- Food trucks (like an ice cream truck) to deliver fresh fruits and veggies
  - By Rite Aid in Birchwood
- Establish community farms (like York neighborhood's) w/ paid interns that employ marginalized people
- Food forests/ edible landscaping in ALL our parks
- Make policy for farmworkers to have decent housing, water, shade that ample, cooling stations, etc.
- Organized, well-publicized food gleaning programs
- City should sponsor free food libraries
- All apartments need community gardens and places or spaces to play.
- Free seed libraries throughout the city
- Engage the city (and grants) to entice/ incentivize grocery stores to the Birchwood neighborhood.
- Legally remove all non-compete clauses for grocery stores
- Ban bee-killing pesticides
- Provide free classes to teach people about organic/permaculture, soil-building methods
- Parks dept- city to provide materials for people to garden (like wire, buckets for compost, fertilizer, watering can).
- commercial/centralized kitchens throughout the city.
- All apartments/ multifamily developments have:
  - Community garden space
  - Orchards,
  - Berry patches
  - Edible landscaping/ foraging
  - Pet runs for pets
  - Space to raise fowl for eggs
  - And small mammals for milk
- All public parks, spaces with edible landscaping and foraging/ orchards/ trees
- Get rid of single-family zoning and make all lots allow up to four housing units
- Electrify public transit and offer incentives for people to change out all gas appliances to electric
- Provide incentives for people to open their rooftops for solar even if they can't afford it.

- Developing a grey water irrigation system for watering- city and countywide
- Allow more composting toilets
- Shared tool sheds
- Shared food libraries throughout the city
- Multiple neighborhood accessible food banks
- Free school lunches and breakfasts to all school children
- Weekend dinner meals to all school-age children
- Meals to go at senior centers
- Neighborhood based farmers markets and food share spaces
- Neighbors caring for neighbors to keep an eye on each other to assure folks aren't going hungry
- Vertical farming with all new apartment developments
- worker -owned cooperative grocery store
- Food forests and edible landscaping throughout all parks
  - Medicinal plants
  - Indigenous plants
- Rain barrel harvesting city to provide info and resources
- Provide infrastructure for walkable/bikeable vibrant communities
- Free and ongoing community garden space and resources
- Park-sponsored community events to plant/care for/ harvest veggies/fruits/medicinal
- Emergency planning/prep for neighbors to rely on each other
- Buyers, cookeries, deliveries
- Compost collection
- treatment center homes for help
- Food desert fighters
- Promote easy healthy food→ how?
  - Can we make quick garbage food less appealing financially?
- No "second class" labor
  - All work is valued work and must be compensated appropriately.
- The community that is being fed is the community that should manage their local resources
- Create multiple food hubs throughout the county- one in every neighborhood
- Local ownership + local operation
- A market that is not the established farmers market (which can be very expensive for families that don't qualify for market bucks, etc but still have limited income.
- There needs to be an option for accessible/ healthy foods for those families that don't qualify for assistance.
- Neighborhood community kitchens to be used in a multitude of ways, such as processing produce, canning from individuals
- remove / readjust zoning regulation for land to be utilized, as not necessarily single-family, but create a [something] for 5 acre lots to have more than one resident on it.
- Promote redirected "food waste" (unsold produce, restaurant product) to the community. How? Incentives or find stores/ restaurants.
- Provide rain barrel use within communities and [something] to catch the water
- Remember it's not just low-income community members that need access. Families with income but time constraints also need to be supported in this economy.
- Meals on wheels to expand access- homeless? Younger people?
- Access to kitchen infrastructure
- Who should be responsible? How will local/ nutritious food be available to all income levels
- Food bank is moving towards buying directly.

- Save food/ food rescue (drivers)
- “Use Food Well Washington” has passed, but is waiting for funding
  - No money for education. Responsibility would be on the shoulders of the consumer
- Fresh box program works on San Juan island
- When applying an equity lens it can’t all fall on the producer to make food affordable.
- Fresh bucks is/could be funded locally (on orcas it’s funded by food co-op and community resource)
- Community organizing to rescue food and cook it.
- If food banks no longer accept unused food and buy direct instead what could be done with that food.
- Support small- mid scale groceries. What is needed for neighborhood co-ops and food access? What are barriers?
- More small acre farms within Bellingham- city should purchase unused lots
- Supporting local farmers
- Revise ag zoning for non traditional farm set-ups
- Expand bulk food processing capacity (commercial kitchens, cold storage, etc).
- Neighborhood grocery store with co-ops.
- Small scale hydroponic system
- Overtime pay for ag workers
- Transform vacant lots to farming space
- Grocery store in Birchwood
- Remote distribution
- Farmers market
- Zoning for small business in neighborhoods

## Whatcom Pride 7.30.22

Here are the questions that I asked while tabling for Whatcom Pride:

1. What do you think about the current food system? What’s good? What’s not working?
  2. What are the challenges you face regarding food? (Cost of food, access to healthy and culturally important foods, making food/access to a kitchen, eating food, etc)
  3. Do you feel represented in Whatcom County’s Food system? Why or why not?
  4. What does Queer Food Justice mean to you? What does it mean to be queer and be a part of your local food system?
  5. What do the draft goals for the Food System plan mean to you? How would you want to see that/live that?
- Additionally, I asked if there were any experiences that they (the LGBT community) had in the food system that impacted them/they wanted to share.

Responses:

- “Develop more farm opportunities for LGBT people”
- “Imperfect foods in grocery stores”
- “Queer youth outreach by Bellingham + other community food banks”
- “I think there is not enough gluten/allergen free food-options”
- “Increase access to specialized diets”
- “More responsible water consumption in agriculture”



- “Collect rainwater to help with droughts”
- “Native Lawns, not just grass”
- “Less golf courses, more housing/food”
- “Not enough factual information being delivered to children + parents in the USA :(“
- “Access to affordable, diverse produce!”
- “More action in winter weather, plows
  - Talked with the people that wrote this, they both worked in farm labor before in different place (or places, I can’t remember) with a hotter climate that had a lot of ways of adapting to increasing heat (it was a hot place already though, already had heat resistant infrastructure)
- “Farmers/livestock farmers need more volunteers, especially in winter”
- “Remember how green Washington was 10 years ago, easier way to access climate information”
- “Company focus on speed, cut corners but still expects perfection”
  - Was talking with a person who has worked in food/restaurant industry for 11 years and talked about their experience in food service

## Farmers Conversation 8.1.22

In attendance: Kate Steensma, Margaret Girard, Kat, Nick, Anya, Mike Finger, Kamea, Alex, Chris Elder

Group started chatting about food system committee background and CFA-

Cat- loves the first one. Manages the markets. Hard time with how POC were treated in the RFSP- conversation went so quickly that Rosalinda felt uncomfortable. Cat working with mariposa and cooperative- people talk a lot about meeting with stakeholders. Rhys facilitated. Felt impersonal. Struggling to get a contact with nooksack tribe. For #4- big grant specific to nooksack tribe- punch card for twin sisters market every single week for a certain amount.

- Idea: here are four things we want to talk about- can you lead that conversation.

Insights from working the market- receiving direct feedback from community members. Cat had the issue with the Foothills Community Alliance. Some of the communities we’re trying to serve are so distrustful and disenfranchised.

- For TSM to thrive- we need to incentivize people coming to the market. Lucky to make \$1000/ market.

Mike says it would be helpful to have a community ambassador- Cat said board next year will have representatives from each community they serve. county should fund TSM if they keep putting it on a pedestal. SNAP market match- need additional nutrition incentive programs that are privately funded to make this model work.

Veggie Rx program- where is that? What happened to that?

Nick quick take on the draft goals- why “vibrant” local food economy, seems hard to measure.

Net sales by small scale and mid-size farm. % of sales per farm size. Something to keep tabs on size

Another stat- how much food consumed locally is produced locally OR how much food grown local is consumed locally.

Sustainable Connections may be the numbers group or the NW Ag and Business Center- Alex said it's super hard to get that metric. Maybe check it every 5 years. What is WSU extension. What if you got money to track it.

Western's energy dashboard is a good model- it's open source. Not just one person owns it. City IQ- what can county do? Is there the ability to do something similar in food system?

Resiliency- if something fails, there is something that scoops that up. Environmental, grant-funding, etc.

Kate said she wants a vat of pureed raspberries and Margaret said "she doesn't have a kitchen"

Kate says the number one crop in Whatcom County is milk- and most of it is going to milk. Most of the dairy made into dry milk and sold in China. Most of what's bought as fluid in Whatcom is processed in Issaquah. Raspberries have a similar. 90% of Kate's milk goes to China- but she is thriving in yogurt sales and farmer's market.

Any- #2, #3, #5 are all intertwined. Resiliency—so much in, so much out- not at all resilient in terms of climate change.

Local dairy co-op- Kate is working on it with a couple of other farmers. Cat wants to hear a different conversation about this. She said there is another conversation about how meat processing is in limited.

Coldstream farms in the 70s there were 1000 dairy farms and now there are 70.

Dairygold started in Lynden. But they are too big. We have great soil and great ability to grow grass. Ireland and New Zealand have perfect milk. It's okay to export milk from here.

Some dairy farms sell their land because it's more lucrative.

Cat asked about Agrarian Land trust. Whatcom Land Trust is thriving. Kulshan Community Land Trust was starting a farmland trust model- they abandoned it and pumped the funds into Cloud Mountain. Other strategies: property tax incentive if you can prove your selling ag food. Some people are using land as a dodge. Cat is in favor of making it easier, but Nick and Mike are saying people are already exploiting it. We have a lot of land tied up that's not being used for ag. Flip side is even if they aren't commercial, they are keeping the land available for long term. Chris is planning to sell is development rights but only qualifies for the state plan.

Where the taxes go- county gets to determine- le you have good soil, we're going to take half your taxes and apply it to education (I have no idea what Chris is talking about).

Mike's question- what is broken that you're all trying to fix? Mike has been able to thrive in this local economy. The future is uncertain. It's unsettling. What can we actually do? What is the problem.

Nick- market forces are just overwhelming. Technology drives so much.

Margaret is saying “make sure healthy food for all”- markets don’t really address that. Disrupt the “local, organic food isn’t accessible.”

The only thing keeping markets running- how do we increase sales- TSM sells 50% of what they bring. Hard sell to “subsidize farmers” Cat tried calling it a reimbursement for donation. Money for farmer subsidies should be privately donated.

Lots of farms are profitable. Orcas Community Participatory Agriculture- started 8 years ago who went to another person on the island land host hosts a garden. Garden has two grant-funded positions for site manager and coordinator. Receive shares in a CSA of food they have grown. 7-10 participating land hosts. Good for bringing local food to locals. Caitlin Lecke is doing this.

They talked about Gleaning at the farmers- Tip the Scales was a cool program- \$2.50/pound of anything left over was paid for.

If you want POC at the table, you have to bring people to the table. How do you do it without tokenizing people. Cat wants to see a latinx person working a birchwood market funded by the county. Pay people for community ambassador or consultants. This is a non-profit.

Racial equity trainings for some farms- farms serving low-income people. Sounds like something you’d have little participation.

Mariposa got \$70,000- tilth did support this but it was mostly white guilt.

Can we harness white guilt to take care of people in the county who need help.

Mike- 5 is a lot of goals. If we were to vote, how would we rank these?

## BUILD METRICS INTO THE PLAN

Can we make up our own metrics

Metric for equity- from cat- Kendall vs Deming vs Birchwood are so different. Not a one-size fits all marketing plan. When it comes to equity, 75% of farmers at TSM are Women or BIPOC-owned. Land access- ag trust- racial equity metrics around farmers. Queer farmer numbers AND can we address these deficits with ag land trust.

Where is conservation district buying in. Whatcome Family Farmers?

Oak Meadows- opened and closed a poultry processing facility within a year. Butcher gap- tried to fill it but couldn’t make it work. Kiesha from small acres- worked there for a year.

Butcher dates are two years out. Big issue.

Anya- a lot of people who are vegan or vegetarian see value in local meat. Island cooperative, lynden meats- Cat has been a processor on their waitlist for years. Port of Skagit has been instrumental in getting support for food system infrastructure.

We have a huge community of people who want to support food- sustainable connections making connections with small farmers. More fundraising- from small businesses. Farm fund, but on a broader scale. Local businesses want to be supportive.

## NOTES FROM PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T MAKE IT BUT EMAILED COMMENTS

### ALLUVIAL FARM

Hi Margaret,

I think the goals you have listed are good, and here are my ideas for how to move some of them forward, from a survey that I just sent to folks who attended an event here on the farm. This reflects my three aspirational partners for the future: The Nooksack Valley Food Bank, the Nooksack Tribe, and the Nooksack Valley School District:

1. How to get more local food in Whatcom county food banks:

- Our farm could have a "round up" option at checkout for online, bulk, and farmers market sales for customers to contribute \$ to purchase pork for the Nooksack food bank.

- Someone (who?) could host a once-a-year targeted fundraiser (online? in person?) to raise money to purchase local food for all Whatcom county food banks.

- Work with a local foundation (Whatcom Community Foundation?) to fundraise to create an endowment whose annual income can purchase local food for Whatcom County food banks.

2. How can Alluvial Farms partner more with the Nooksack nation? Alluvial Farms is located on the homelands of the Nooksack nation. As a first generation family farm, we acknowledge the sovereignty and the traditional territories of the Nooksack people. We acknowledge the treaties that were used to remove the Nooksack from their land, and the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of our farm. Alluvial Farms is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion, understanding the historical and current experiences, and building relationships with members of the Nooksack nation will help inform the work we do. Our farm could...

- Create a 'cultural easement' agreement with the Nooksack tribe to use the reforestation part of the farm for wildcrafting

- Partner with the Indigenous Beginnings project of the Nooksack tribe to co-host wildcrafting and other cultural workshops in the new event space on the farm.

- Build relationships with tribal council leadership to learn more about food sovereignty projects already underway that the local farming community could support.

3. How can Alluvial Farms partner more with the Nooksack Valley School District? In 2021 we partnered with the Nooksack Valley Scholarship Foundation to contribute our first \$1500 scholarship to graduating Nooksack Valley seniors who were interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. In 2023 we hope to refine our scholarship recipient qualifications to students of color who want to pursue a career in agriculture, or children of migrant or first generation professional farmworkers who want to pursue a college education. In the future we could...

- Work with partners, stakeholders, and our client community to increase funding for the scholarship mentioned above.
- Work with the school district to recruit local students for our yearly summer internship, and for other employment on the farm.
- Meet with district staff to learn about efforts currently underway to promote local food, resource management, and equity within the school district community to learn how local farms might be able to support or join in.

Thanks again for doing this work, looking forward to learning more about it and finding out if there is collaboration potential on any of my ideas above.

## WRIGHT BROTHERS FARM

1. Did these goals capture the issues you care about and think the community should strive for?

Yes!

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2. Which of these goals should be a priority for the community? Why?

**I have two that I think should be a priority:**

"Cultivate equity and justice": We know that the current system disproportionately affects certain communities. every decision about regenerative practices and activities is not seen through this lens then the same problems of the current system will be present in the new one.

*"Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land" - I believe that this is foundational to all efforts. Regenerative practices that focus on biodiversity are climate-resilient, create a culture of abundance, and support a well-functioning food system where every local human has access to high-quality nutritious food.*

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3. Do you see your field of work fitting in here? Are we missing anything?

*I would like to understand the definitions being used for some of the words i.e. local- is it Whatcom County, within 100 miles, regional, state, etc.?*

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Here was the agenda margaret attempted to work off of

5 proposed goals for the Food System Plan:

1. Cultivate equity and justice
2. Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land
3. Build a resilient and vibrant local food economy
4. Ensure access to healthy food for all
5. Adapt our community food system to a changing climate

Here are some question prompts to prepare for the discussion:

Did these goals capture the issues you care about and think the community should strive for?

Which of these goals should be a priority for the community? Why?

Do you see your field of work fitting in here? Are we missing anything?