

BUILDING HEALTHY AND EQUITABLE CITIES AND TOWNS

RESOURCES FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERS

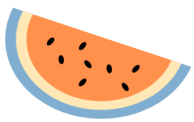
In cities and towns throughout the county, residents are actively seeking environments that help foster a healthier lifestyle.¹ Cities and towns can leverage this interest through policies and practices that enhance the built environment to include pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and healthy food enterprise, such as local grocery stores, community agriculture, and farmers markets. These amenities can transform streets, neighborhoods, or even entire cities, by encouraging increased tourism, higher property values, and new employment opportunities.^{2 3} As cities and towns experience economic changes, municipal leaders are uniquely positioned to help encourage *equitable* economic development that promotes a thriving city/town for *all* residents. **This resource sheet provides tools for municipal leaders to advance healthy eating and active living policies while promoting equity, economic inclusion, and sustainable growth.**

What is equitable economic development?

“*Equitable* economic development unlocks the full potential of the local economy by dismantling barriers and expanding opportunities for low-income people and communities of color. Through accountable public action and investment, it grows quality jobs and increases entrepreneurship, ownership, and wealth. The result is a stronger, more competitive city.”

-- Policy Link ⁴

BUILDING EQUITABLE FOOD ENVIRONMENTS:



Healthy eating policies and practices can facilitate opportunities for food enterprise and dramatically shift the local food environment through an influx of high quality grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers markets. While these changes can help increase healthy food access, stimulate regional farm and food economies, spur job growth, raise property values, and boost tax revenue,^{2, 5} cities and towns must facilitate place-based strategies that ensure *all* residents, particularly low-income and under-resourced communities, are able to remain in place and take advantage of new amenities and their associated economic opportunities. Local policies can help residents and small businesses remain in place as rental and housing prices increase, while programs and community engagement practices can help ensure new investments are responsive to existing residents' needs and create a more accessible and inclusive food environment.⁶

Commercial Food Retail

- Pass local municipal policies that protect small business owners from displacement.⁶
- Develop zoning ordinances and incentives that a) support existing food retailers and b) considers how new development proposals will impact existing food retailers.⁶
- Require new development receiving subsidies to hire low-income city residents and/or pay workers a living wage.⁷
- Support community benefit agreements with supermarket chains to support local hiring and affordable pricing.⁷
- Encourage local developers to meet community food needs by incorporating plans for grocers, community gardens, and cooperative kitchens.⁶

Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens

- Provide long term or permanent municipal tenure for community gardens/urban farms and require reallocation of suitable land should land parcels be developed.⁶
- Pass a resolution or policy that prioritizes urban agriculture resources and investment in low-income, underserved communities.⁸

Community Driven Food Systems Infrastructure

- Support food cooperatives and local buyers' clubs to reduce food-purchasing costs in underserved neighborhoods.⁹
- Support the development of community kitchens that link healthy procurement with food preparation and job training programs.¹⁰

Develop a community food systems plan!

“Through the food systems planning process, local and regional governments develop and implement a variety of public policies to influence and shape how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, purchased, consumed or disposed. These policies provide direction and guidance on how to address opportunities and challenges faced by the community's food system.”

—Growing Food Connections¹¹



FURTHER ACTIONS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION:

As a municipal leader and decision maker, your actions can have intended and unintended consequences. Remember to consider how policies can impact all residents and community members. Work with your residents, staff, and fellow municipal leaders to help prevent negative impacts and create more inclusive and equitable decision-making processes to enable all residents to participate fully in the social, economic, and political life of your city or town.¹²

- Help elevate community input and voices by holding public and participatory city/town meetings. Host listening sessions in communities or in less formal venues like a weekly walk with the mayor.
- Conduct a health impact assessment to understand the impacts of policy or planning decisions.
- Integrate a health and equity framework into general and comprehensive plan updates.¹³



TOOLS FOR POLICY CHANGE:

- Healthy Food Access Portal, The Food Trust, the Reinvestment Fund, and PolicyLink. Access at: <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/>.
- Economic and Community Development Outcomes of Healthy Food Retail, PolicyLink Access at: <https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/economic-and-community-development-outcomes-of-healthy-food-retail>
- Incentivizing the Sale of Healthy and Local Food: The local government's role in promoting access to and purchase of good food, Growing Food Connections. Access at: http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/GFCHealthyFoodIncentivesPlanningPolicyBrief_2016Feb-1.pdf

ABOUT US:

The HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) Cities and Towns Campaign of the Mid-Atlantic provides free technical assistance to local government leaders to help them create healthy, prosperous communities by adopting policies and practices that improve their communities' physical activity and food environments. HEAL is a project of the Institute for Public Health Innovation, in partnership with the Maryland and Virginia Municipal Leagues, and funded by Kaiser Permanente, founding partner. For more information, visit the HEAL website at www.healcitiesmidatlantic.org and contact HEAL Campaign Manager Sydney Daigle at sdaigle@institutephi.org



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- ¹⁰ Institute of Medicine (US), National Research Council (US) Committee on Childhood Obesity Prevention Actions for Local Government. *Local Government Action Plans to Prevent Childhood Obesity*. National Academies Press (US). 2009. Accessed at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219682/>
- ¹¹ Growing Food Connections. *Community Food Systems Planning*. Accessed at: <https://growingfoodconnections.org/about/community-food-systems-planning/>
- ¹² City for All Women Initiative, Ottawa. *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*. 2015. Accessed at: <http://www.cawi-ivf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web.pdf>