

Seattle

Food Action Plan

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Photo credit: Naomi Ishisaka,
for Fresh Bucks



Community Acknowledgment

The 2024 Food Action Plan was prepared by the City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability & Environment and Human Services Department in partnership with the City of Seattle Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team and with input from the wider community.

Thank you to the more than 250 leaders from community-based organizations, coalitions, businesses, institutions, and Tribes who participated in the process of developing this updated Plan and contributed ideas for making Seattle’s food system more equitable, sustainable, and resilient.

This Plan aims to amplify and respond to the priorities and values articulated by these community leaders.

PREPARED BY

The City of Seattle’s Office of Sustainability & Environment and Human Services Department

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

City of Seattle Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team

WITH PARTICIPATION FROM

250
community leaders





Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team

CITY OF SEATTLE

Angela Miyamoto

Human Services Department

Bridget Igoe

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Chris Iberle

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Chukundi Salisbury

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Claudia Paras

Office of Labor Standards

David Goldberg

Office of Planning & Community Development

Elizabeth Kimball

Public Health Seattle & King County

Kenya Fredie

Department of Neighborhoods

Lisa Chen

Department of Neighborhoods

Liz Fikejs

Seattle Public Utilities

Paris Yates

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Phillip Sit

Office of Economic Development

Robyn Kumar

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seán Walsh

Human Services Department

Shuxuan Zhou

Office of Civil Rights

Star Berry

Office of Labor Standards

Todd Burley

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Ximena Fonseca-Morales

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Other Major Contributors

Dakota Murray

Office of Planning & Community Development

Eyob Mazengia

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Kate Kurtz

Seattle Public Utilities

Francesca Murnan

Department of Neighborhoods

Mike Lufkin

King County Department
of Natural Resources and Parks

Myduc Ta

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Natalie Thompson

Human Services Department

Peggy Liao

Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Sharon Lerman

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Tim Reynon

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Tribes and Tribal Consultants

Environmental Justice Committee Food Justice Workgroup

Brianna Castilleja

Hannah Wilson

Jeraldi Gonzalez

Joshua Jenkins

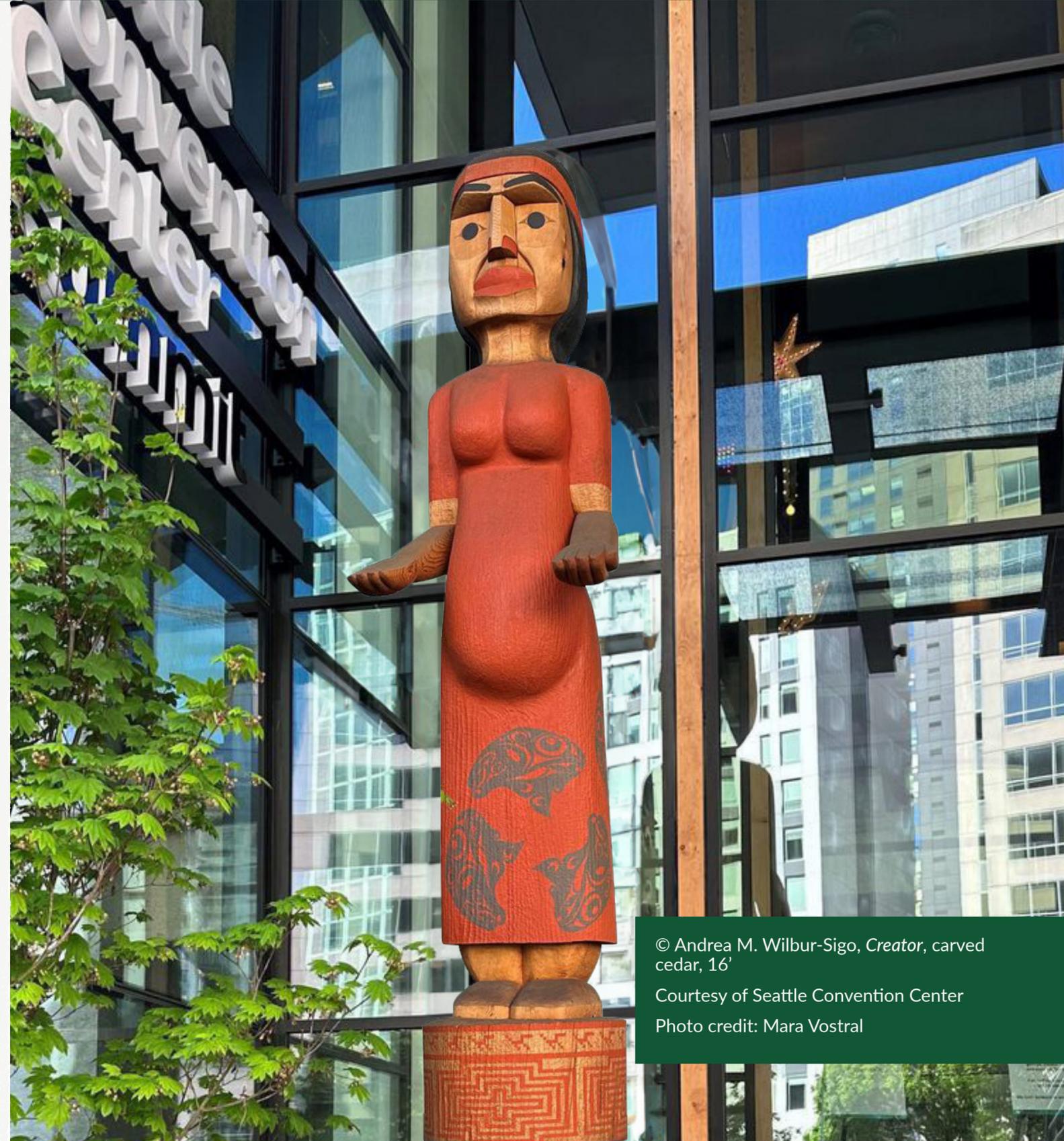
Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that the City of Seattle is situated on the ancestral lands of the dx^wdəwʔabš (Duwamish people), who were the original stewards of this land. Many relocated to be on or near the area's federally established tribal reservations after being displaced from their homeland, while continuing to exercise their traditional fishing, hunting, and gathering activities in their usual and accustomed territories.

We acknowledge that the descendants of the dx^wdəwʔabš are enrolled members of the region's federally recognized Tribes, including bæqəlšut (Muckleshoot), suq^wabš (Suquamish people), sduk^walbix^w (Snoqualmie), dx^wlilap (Tulalip), spuyaləpbaṣ (Puyallup people), Lhaq'temish (Lummi people), and other Puget Sound Tribes. We further acknowledge that the descendants of these original inhabitants are the recognized stewards of this land today.

City of Seattle is situated on the ancestral lands of the dx^wdəwʔabš / Duwamish people.

Like their dx^wdəwʔabš ancestors, members of these and other Salish Sea Tribes are expert fishers, hunters, gatherers, canoe builders, and basket weavers, and live in harmony with the lands and waterways as they have for thousands of years. They have



© Andrea M. Wilbur-Sigo, *Creator*, carved cedar, 16'
Courtesy of Seattle Convention Center
Photo credit: Mara Vostral

lived on this land since time immemorial. Here, they continue to live on and protect the land and waters of their ancestors for future generations, as promised by the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855. They work, raise their children, take care of their community, practice their traditional ways, and speak their traditional languages – just as their ancestors did.

The City of Seattle affirms our government-to-government relationships with federally recognized Tribes and strives to uphold trust, treaty, and racial equity obligations with Tribal and urban Native communities. We will seek consultation with Tribes early and often to ensure that Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights are recognized and respected throughout the many City policies, plans, projects, programs, and actions that impact, or may impact, Tribal interests.

We seek to engage our region’s Tribes, the recognized stewards of the natural and cultural resources in and around the City of Seattle, and we will engage the Indigenous Advisory Council as culturally grounded advisors to the City of Seattle.

This acknowledgment serves only as a first step in honoring the land that we occupy and the first peoples of this land. The City recognizes that this will be long and evolving work to build and repair relationships with Native communities, and we are committed to doing this work.



© Andrea M. Wilbur-Sigo, *Mowitch Man*, carved cedar, 16'
Courtesy of Seattle Convention Center
Photo credit: Mara Vostral

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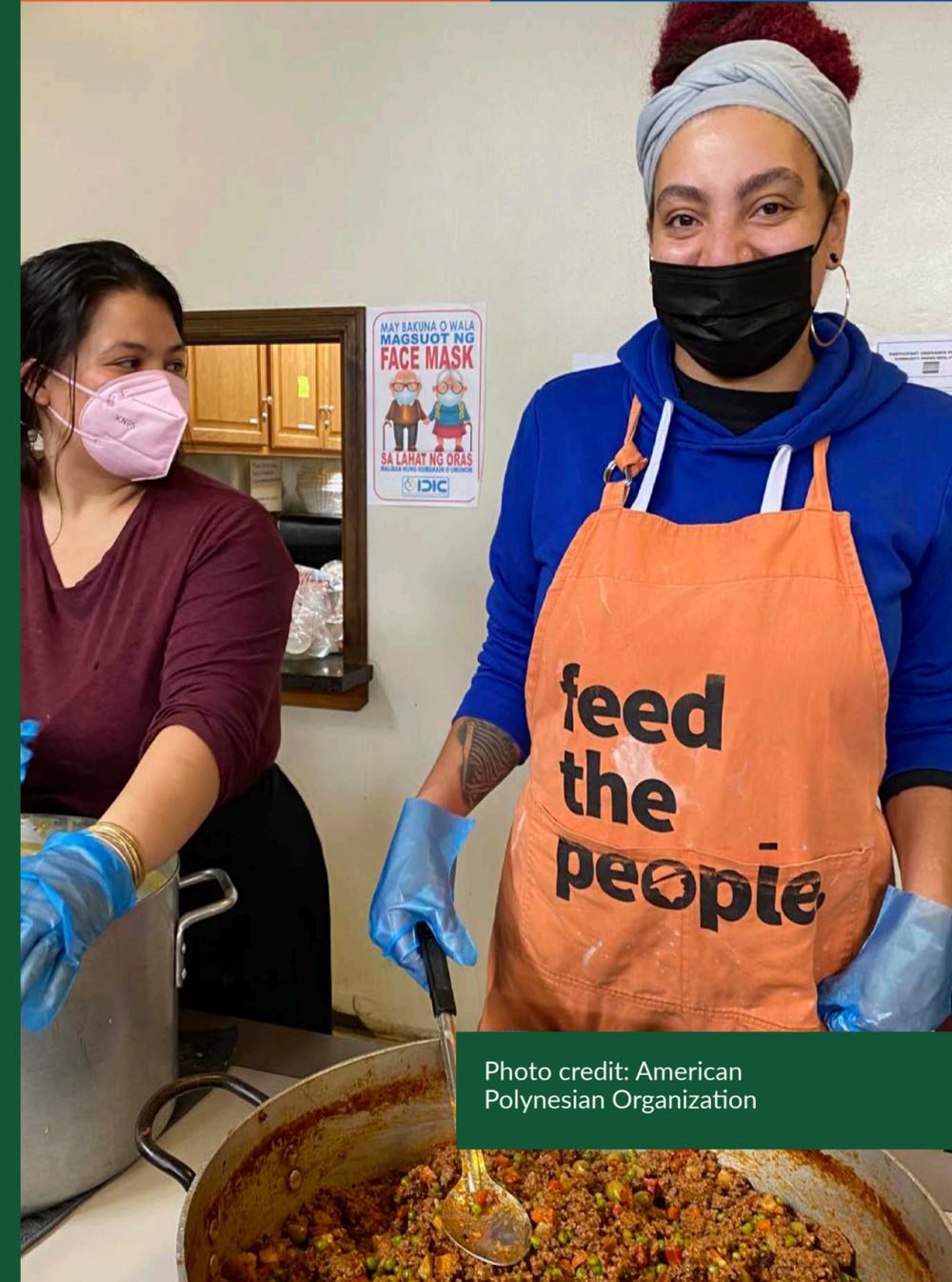
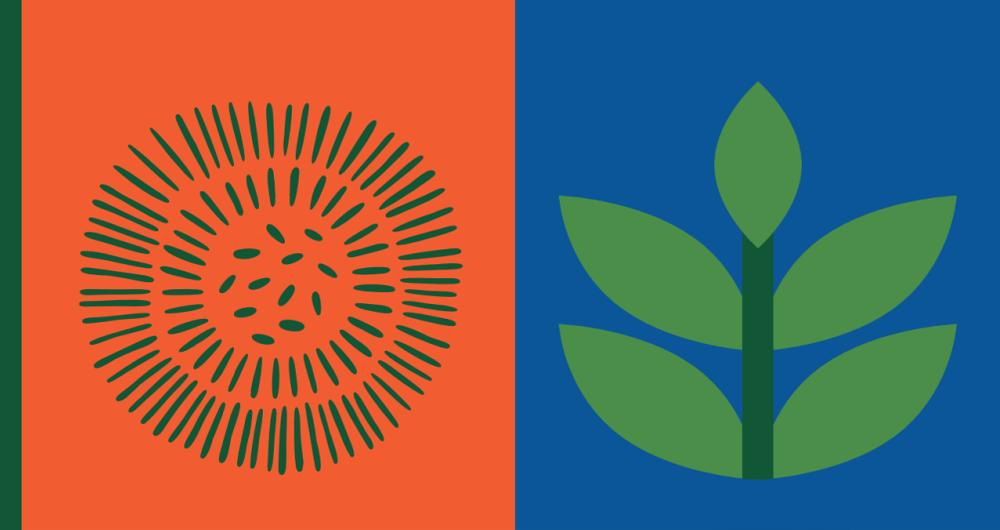


Photo credit: American Polynesian Organization

Introduction

The Food Action Plan (Plan) is the City of Seattle’s roadmap for an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system that supports healthy, vibrant communities.

The Plan outlines actions the City of Seattle can take to improve our local food system while advancing interrelated goals of racial and social justice, food security and food sovereignty, health, economic development, fair labor, environmental sustainability, climate action, and more. The Plan intends to reflect community priorities, and actions are implemented by an Interdepartmental Team (IDT) that includes advisors and staff from a dozen City of Seattle and King County departments that manage food programs.

The Food Action Plan 2024 Update (2024 Plan) is the first update since the original Plan was released in 2012. This 2024 Plan builds upon decades of work, action, and learning by government and Tribal policy advisors and program staff, community organizations and coalitions, food justice and food sovereignty leaders, and residents and participants of the many food programs across Seattle.

The updates in the 2024 Plan are rooted in the understanding that there are persistent economic, racial, and environmental inequities across our food system, from who experiences food insecurity to those exploited for labor in food industries to who can

What is meant by an equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system?

Equitable

Ensures equitable access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food, economic opportunities, and high-quality jobs and worker protections.

Sustainable

Produces food in ways that promote the health of ecosystems (soil, water, air, plants, animals) and communities now and in the future.

Resilient

Can withstand, adapt, and recover from major changes, disruptions, or shocks* in ways that ensure a sufficient supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.

**Climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, financial or political crises.*



access land and waterways for food. Too often, food traditions and knowledge center on white culture, norms, and values that benefit those with the greatest power and wealth.

The IDT used collaborative processes to develop the 2024 Plan to ensure it reflected the priorities and values of communities most impacted by economic, racial, and environmental injustices. Throughout 2021 and 2022, the IDT focused on deep listening and dialogue with community members across the food system, including Tribes and Tribal consultants, food business owners, workers, directors of community-based organizations, food and environmental justice leaders, advocates, government policy advisors, and philanthropists. Engagement centered on the voices of communities most affected by the lasting impacts of settler colonialism, systemic racism, and food system inequities revealed in the [Racial Equity Toolkits \(RETs\)](#).

The IDT synthesized initial community input into a draft set of goals, strategic priorities, and actions, then vetted and built upon them through a public comment period. The resulting Plan addresses a variety of food system issues, focusing on the priorities of communities most impacted by racism.



Access the 2021-2022 Racial Equity Toolkits (RETs) used in the Plan's development.

[GET THE RETS](#)



Access the reports from these community and public engagement efforts.

[GET THE REPORTS](#)



2024 UPDATE

What is New About the Food Action Plan

The 2024 Plan continues the City of Seattle’s focus on increasing food security, supporting local food and the regional economy, and preventing food waste. New content, priorities, and approaches in the updated Plan include:

Focus on Racial & Social Equity

Explicit focus on addressing racial and social equity to align with the City of Seattle’s [Race and Social Justice Initiative](#) (2004-present) and [Equity & Environment Initiative](#) (2015-present).

Actions related to Pandemic & Climate Change Challenges

Actions that respond to a variety of interrelated food system challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, including worsening food insecurity and food system inequities, supply chain disruptions, and how the food system contributes to and is impacted by environmental and climate pollution.

Food Justice Values

Guiding [Food Justice Values](#) developed by the Seattle Environmental Justice Committee.

New Framework to Organize the Plan’s Content

Actions in the 2024 Plan are organized by [eight strategic priorities](#) based on the major themes from the [2021-2022 community engagement](#).

Food Action Plan Goals

Increase Community Food Security

All Seattle residents have enough to eat and easy access to fresh, affordable, nutritious, and culturally relevant food, regardless of race, place, and income.

Support Locally Grown & Traditional Foods*

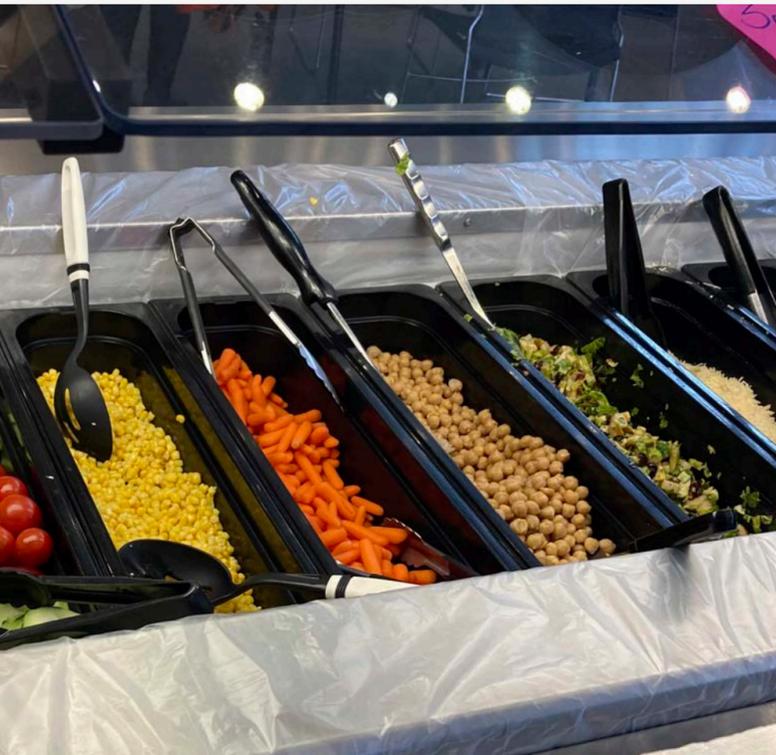
Seattle food policies and programs support Traditional Foods and regenerative practices, locally grown and harvested foods, and community food production, focusing on communities historically excluded from land and water access.

Advance an Equitable Local Economy

Seattle food policies and programs create economic opportunities for local food producers and a valued workforce, centering workers and communities most impacted by racism.

Prevent Food Waste & Climate Pollution

Seattle food policies and programs protect and improve the environment by preventing and reducing food-related waste and climate pollution.



* Traditional Foods are foods that Native people regularly ate pre-contact with settlers and before the forced introduction of the modern American diet. These foods would be familiar to Native American Ancestors and include various species such as wild game, fowl, fish, and many plants from both land and sea.



Strategic Priorities



1. Community Food Security

Build community food security through culturally relevant, equitable, nutritious food access.



2. Land Access & Use

Support Traditional Foods and regenerative practices, locally grown and harvested foods, and community food projects, focusing on communities historically excluded from land and water access and honoring Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.



3. Education & Training

Expand access to culturally relevant and empowering food and nutrition education for youth, adults, and older adults.



4. Economy & Labor

Create an equitable, fair, and healthy local food economy for workers, businesses, and residents.



5. Local Supply Chains

Foster equitable, environmentally sustainable, and strengthened local supply chains.



6. Food Waste

Prevent food waste, rescue (redistribute) surplus food for people who need it, and compost the rest.



7. Environment & Climate

Reduce climate pollution associated with Seattle's food system and support regenerative food production practices that improve the environment and honor Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.



8. Food Action Plan Stewardship

Create intentional structures and processes that enable effective coordination and implementation of the Food Action Plan in alignment with community and City values and priorities.

Actions by Strategic Priority

1. Community Food Security

- 1.A Prioritize Culturally Relevant & Equitably Purchased Foods in City Food Programs [READ MORE](#)

- 1.B Strengthen the Fresh Bucks Program [READ MORE](#)

- 1.C Strengthen the Capacity of Meal Programs & Food Banks [READ MORE](#)

- 1.D Prioritize Access to Nutritious and Locally Grown Food Served in Preschools [READ MORE](#)

- 1.E Improve Food Served in Schools [READ MORE](#)

- 1.F Strengthen Out-of-School Food Programs [READ MORE](#)

- 1.G Sustain & Strengthen Food & Meal Programming for Older Adults [READ MORE](#)

- 1.H Support “Food is Medicine” Programs [READ MORE](#)

- 1.I Support & Strengthen Transportation Services for Food Access [READ MORE](#)

- 1.J Prioritize Food Access for Unsheltered Populations [READ MORE](#)

- 1.K Strengthen Disaster Preparedness Efforts [READ MORE](#)

2. Land Access & Use

- 2.A Increase Equitable Community Land Access, Stewardship & Ownership of Food & Agricultural Projects [READ MORE](#)

- 2.B Support Land Access for Stewardship by Coast Salish & Urban Native Communities [READ MORE](#)

- 2.C Activate More Public Land for Community Food Production [READ MORE](#)

- 2.D Integrate Food Policies & Goals Into City Plans & Efforts [READ MORE](#)

- 2.E Support the P-Patch Community Gardening Program [READ MORE](#)

- 2.F Support Strategies that Improve Soil Health at Community Gardens & Urban Farms [READ MORE](#)

- 2.G Build Urban Agricultural Knowledge with Farmers & Gardeners [READ MORE](#)

- 2.H Work With Other Jurisdictions to Conserve Land Outside of Seattle for Equitable Food Production [READ MORE](#)



3. Education & Training

- 3.A Connect Young People to Food System Jobs & Job Training [READ MORE](#)
- 3.B Strengthen the Urban Food Systems Program [READ MORE](#)
- 3.C Invest in Culturally Relevant Food & Nutrition Programming for Youth [READ MORE](#)
- 3.D Support Community-Led Nutrition Education for Adults [READ MORE](#)

4. Economy & Labor

- 4.A Work with Community Partners to Co-Enforce Seattle’s Labor Laws [READ MORE](#)
- 4.B Support Strong Labor Protections for Farmworkers [READ MORE](#)
- 4.C Include Labor Standards in City Contracts & Agreements [READ MORE](#)
- 4.D Support Food Projects that Promote Equitable Economic Development [READ MORE](#)
- 4.E Support New & Existing Small Food Businesses [READ MORE](#)
- 4.F Streamline the Permitting Process for Farmers Markets [READ MORE](#)

5. Local Supply Chains

- 5.A Explore Development of a Sustainable, Equitable Food Purchasing Initiative [READ MORE](#)
- 5.B Strengthen Food Value Chain Coordination [READ MORE](#)
- 5.C Invest in Local Food System Infrastructure [READ MORE](#)

6. Food Waste

- 6.A Increase Public Awareness About Food Waste Prevention [READ MORE](#)
- 6.B Partner with Food Businesses to Prevent Food Waste [READ MORE](#)
- 6.C Strengthen Cross-Sector Food Rescue Operations [READ MORE](#)
- 6.D Implement Nutrition Policies for Rescued & Donated Food [READ MORE](#)
- 6.E Compost Inedible Food & “Compost Right” [READ MORE](#)
- 6.F Reduce Single-Use Food Service Ware in City Food Programs [READ MORE](#)

7. Environment & Climate

- 7.A Reduce Climate Pollution Associated with the Local Food System [READ MORE](#)
- 7.B Support Community-Led Education & Awareness Campaigns About Food Justice Issues [READ MORE](#)
- 7.C Support Regenerative Food & Agricultural Practices [READ MORE](#)

8. Food Action Plan Stewardship

- 8.A Invest in Community-Led Action [READ MORE](#)
- 8.B Report on Food Action Plan Implementation & Progress [READ MORE](#)
- 8.C Track State & Federal Legislation & Funding Opportunities [READ MORE](#)
- 8.D Strengthen Culturally Relevant, In-Language Outreach [READ MORE](#)
- 8.E Support Community Engagement & Cross-Sector Collaboration [READ MORE](#)
- 8.F Facilitate Cross-Department Collaboration [READ MORE](#)



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Photo credit: Rainier Beach
Action Coalition



About the Food Action Plan

The Food Action Plan (Plan) is the City of Seattle's (City) guide for an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system that supports healthy, vibrant communities. The Plan outlines strategies and actions the City can take to improve our local food system while advancing interrelated goals of racial and social justice, food security, food sovereignty, health, economic development, fair labor, environmental sustainability, climate action, and more. The Plan is also a framework to coordinate and align the many City departments that develop and implement food programs and policies.

In 2008, the Seattle City Council passed the Local Food Action Initiative, leading to the creation of the first City [Food Action Plan \(2012\)](#), a roadmap to increasing food security, reducing food waste, and strengthening urban agriculture and local food economies.

The City made progress on many of the original Plan's recommendations, including expansions of food access programs (Farm to Preschool, Fresh Bucks) and P-Patch community gardens, increased funding for community-led food work (Food Equity Fund), and enactment of citywide policies that prohibit food waste from the garbage by requiring residences and businesses to compost. However, the City knew there was still much work ahead to create a truly equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system.

THE FIRST FOOD ACTION PLAN (2012)



The Food Action Plan 2024 Update is the first update since the original Plan was released in 2012.

This 2024 Plan builds upon decades of work, action, and learning by government policy advisors and program staff, community organizations and coalitions, and food justice advocates.

In 2019, a Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team (IDT) began to update the Plan, beginning with community engagement, taking inventory of current City food programs, and conducting a literature review. The IDT paused the update process for 18 months during the COVID-19 pandemic while the City and community partners focused on **emergency response**. The pandemic created historic levels of food insecurity as people lost jobs and incomes resulting from lockdown measures. The pandemic disrupted food system supply chains and reinforced the essential role of grocery stores, food processing, and agricultural workers in keeping food on our tables. It also caused disproportionate harm to communities of color and individuals with disabilities. In King County, data shows that Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Blacks, and American Indian/Alaskan Natives experienced higher rates of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations compared to whites, a pattern of racial disparity that persisted across all key economic, social, and other health indicators associated with the pandemic.¹

The pandemic exacerbated inequities in communities already victimized by a long history of settler colonialism, structural racism, systemic oppression, discrimination, and violence.

Meanwhile, the summer of 2020 brought months of protests and demonstrations against police brutality and anti-Black racism in response to the murder of George Floyd, an African American who was murdered during an arrest by Minneapolis police. When the City restarted the process to update the Plan in the fall of 2021, it was against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, Seattle's summer of racial reckoning in 2020, and several extreme weather and climate change events in 2021, which disproportionately affected communities of color and lower income communities.



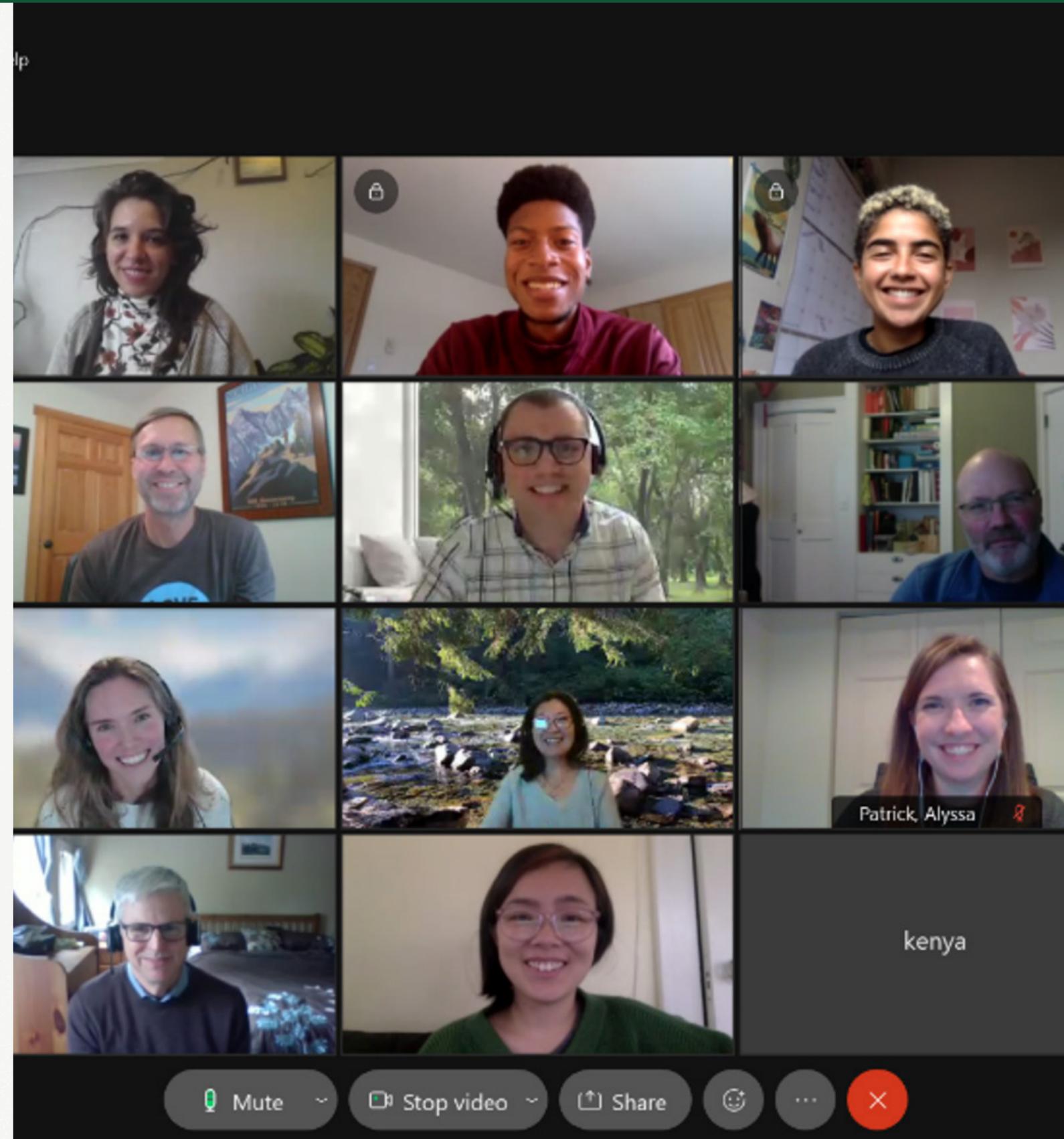
Throughout 2021 and 2022, the IDT focused on deep listening and conversation with community members representing different sectors of the food system. Community members included Tribes and Tribal consultants, food business owners, workers, program managers or directors at community-based organizations, food and environmental justice leaders, advocates, government policy advisors, and philanthropists. This engagement centered the voices of communities most affected by the combined and lasting impacts of settler colonialism, systemic racism, and food system inequities. By July 2022, the IDT synthesized initial community input into a draft set of goals, strategic priorities, and actions, then vetted and built upon them through a public comment period. The resulting plan addresses a range of food system issues, focusing on the priorities of communities most impacted by racism.

Structurally, the efforts to update the Food Action Plan followed the model from 2012: an IDT was formed, a community engagement plan was mapped, and key community leaders and experts were engaged. However, the content and focus of this updated Plan differ significantly in several major ways.

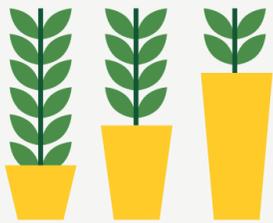


Access the reports from these community and public engagement efforts.

GET THE REPORTS



2024 Updates Include:



Focus on Racial & Social Equity

Community voices elevated the need to identify root causes of harms and inequities within the food system—particularly to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities—and to address and undo these harms. The IDT conducted two [Racial Equity Toolkits](#) and a root cause analysis to dive deep into food system disparities. Seattle’s [Environmental Justice Committee](#) provided advice throughout every major phase of the update process by creating [Food Justice Values](#) to guide the Plan’s development, consulting on community engagement strategies, and prioritizing actions for inclusion in the Plan to align with the priorities of communities most impacted by economic, racial, and environmental injustices.



Actions to Address Food System Resilience

The 2024 Plan reflects changing needs in a city affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The IDT heard recurring themes around worsening disparities in food security and access, economic hardship, disruptions throughout the supply chain, and the need for new and innovative climate change solutions. This updated Plan grapples with the interrelated issues of how climate change will impact food security, how the food system contributes to environmental and climate pollution, and how BIPOC communities are impacted first and worst by these issues.

City of Seattle Food Policies & Programs

Supporting an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system requires action and policy change at multiple levels of government. Increasingly, cities have been recognized for having an important voice in food policy, in part because cities are major population centers and, therefore, catalysts for change and innovation in economic, social, and public policy.²

Since at least 2008, the City has formally recognized its role in supporting a healthy food system.

The updated Food Action Plan builds off the policies, programs, and aligned initiatives outlined **in the following timeline**. It highlights the recent history of major food and food-related policy in Seattle.

TIMELINE

2008

Local Food Action Initiative

Resolution 31019

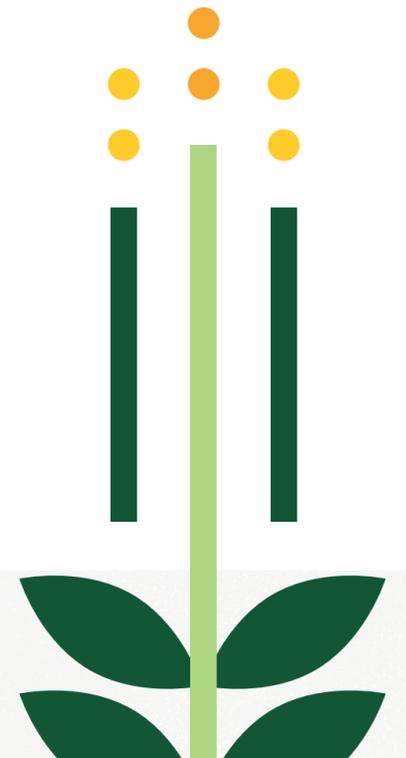
City Council passes the Local Food Action Initiative. This series of goals and actions provided guidance for analysis, program development, and policy development to 10 City departments to help the City better promote local food production and access.

2008

P-Patch Community Gardening Program

Seattle Parks and Green Spaces (Property Tax) Levy earmarks \$2 million to expand the P-Patch Community Gardening program.

\$2M
to expand
P-Patches



TIMELINE (CONT)

2009

Food Action Funding

City adds **new funding to support food actions**, including investments in food banks and home food delivery, P-Patch Community Gardens and the Market Garden program, the development of City-owned plots for food production (Seattle Pilot Farm program), and data collection about hunger.

2009

Compost Requirements

City requires all residential properties to either subscribe to **food and yard waste collection** or participate in backyard composting.



2010

Urban Agriculture Update

Ordinance 123378

City Council adopts the **Urban Agriculture Update** which modified the City's land use code to expand opportunities for urban agriculture.

2010

Food Service Items

City requires all food service businesses to find **reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging** and **service ware** alternatives to all disposable food service items.



2010-2011

Interdepartmental Team

City creates its first Interdepartmental Team (IDT) **focused on food policy and programs**. During this time, the City also commissioned several reports focused on how to support urban agriculture and the incorporation of food policy into comprehensive planning.

TIMELINE (CONT)

2012

Seattle Farm Bill

Resolution 31296

City Council adopts the **Seattle Farm Bill Principles** as policy guidance to the federal government in the renewal of the 2012 Farm Bill.

2012

Paid Sick & Safe Time

The **Paid Sick and Safe Time (PSST) Ordinance** goes into effect in Seattle. For most food service workers, it was the first time they had access to sick leave, which allows workers to heal and prevents the spread of illness to other workers and consumers.

2012-2013

First Food Action Plan

City develops and publishes the first Food Action Plan. The plan is adopted by City Council in 2013.



2013-2014

P-Patch Community Gardening Program

P-Patch Community Gardening program **grows by 28 new or expanded gardens** providing more than 700 garden plots, a result of \$2 million in funding from the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy and strong partnerships with neighborhood volunteers and community organizations.

700
garden plots 

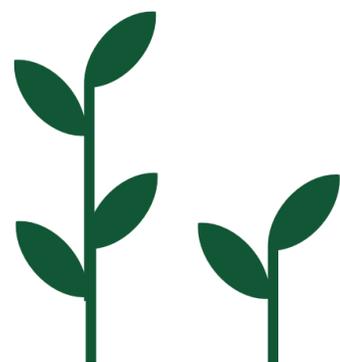
2015

Seattle's Minimum Wage Ordinance

SMC 14.19

The new law raised the City's minimum wage from the state's minimum wage of \$9.47 to \$15 per hour. The minimum wage increase is being phased in over several years, with incremental **increases every year** on January 1.

\$15/hour
minimum wage 



TIMELINE (CONT)

2015

Seattle Prohibits Food Waste from the Garbage

[SMC 21.36.082](#)

[SMC 21.36.083](#)

2015

Equity & Environment Initiative

Seattle's Equity and Environment Initiative is established, a partnership between the City and the community to deepen Seattle's commitment to race and social justice in environmental work, including food justice.

2016

Equity & Environment Agenda

Seattle's Equity and Environment Agenda is released, developed in deep partnership with the community. The Equity and Environment Agenda guides the City's work in advancing racial equity in Seattle's environmental programs and policies.

2017

Seattle's Secure Scheduling Ordinance

[SMC 14.19](#)

Provides several new worker protections, including 14-day notice of work schedule and time-and-a-half pay for any hours worked between closing and opening shifts that are separated by less than 10 hours. The Secure Scheduling Ordinance covers hourly employees at retail and food services establishments with 500 or more employees worldwide. Full-service restaurants also must have 40 or more full-service locations worldwide to be covered.



TIMELINE (CONT)

2018

Seattle’s Sweetened Beverage Tax

SMC 5.53

Seattle begins collecting tax on the distribution of sugar-sweetened beverages and reinvesting that revenue into food access and early childhood development programs. The **Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board** is established to advise the City on the use of the Sweetened Beverage Tax revenue.

2019

Seattle Enacts the Green New Deal Resolution

Resolution 31895

Seattle commits to a **climate pollution-free city, job creation, and an equitable transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy**. The Resolution (Section 8) names expanding access to healthy, affordable, locally produced, and culturally relevant foods as a priority.

2020

City Responds to the COVID-19 Pandemic

City launches an **Emergency Feeding Task Force**, legislating federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and local resources toward **hunger relief**. The City also starts offering streamlined, free, temporary permits to use the street and sidewalk for **outdoor cafes, food trucks, and retail businesses** to allow them to have more space to operate safely during the pandemic

These street activation permits became permanent in 2023.

\$57M
invested in COVID-19 food assistance

2020-2021

Residential Garbage & Recycling Study

Food waste prevention and recovery efforts are enhanced by a new Seattle Public Utilities residential garbage and recycling study that, for the first time, distinguishes between edible and inedible food waste.



TIMELINE (CONT)

2021-2022

Grocery Employee Hazard Pay

Grocery Employee Hazard Pay temporarily requires certain grocery businesses in Seattle to pay an additional \$4 per hour to their employees during the COVID-19 emergency.



2022

COVID-19 Recovery

City begins to shift its focus toward long-term recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The **American Rescue Plan Act** funds replace CARES Act funds, and the City resumes community engagement to update its Food Action Plan.

2023

Sick & Safe Time Off

SMC 8.39
City requires employers to provide a **Notice of Rights** to app-based food service delivery workers informing them of paid sick and safe time off.

2023

Year of Community Gardening

Seattle Mayor and Council proclaim 2023 the “Year of Community Gardening” in Seattle, commemorating the 50th year anniversary of the P-Patch Community Gardening program.

50th
anniversary
of the P-Patch
Community
Gardening
program



Today, nearly every City and County department interacts with the food system in some way.

Food-related issues are also peppered throughout major City plans and initiatives.

INCLUDING

[Aging and Disability Services Area Plan](#)

[Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#)

[Seattle Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Duwamish Valley Program](#)

[Equity & Environment Initiative](#)

[Race and Social Justice Initiative](#)

[2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste](#)

[Climate Action initiatives](#)

The following pages list major food-related programs and policies managed by City of Seattle and/or King County.



Photo credit: Black Farmers Collective

Food & Nutrition Security

[Afterschool Meals Program](#)

Human Services Department

[Child Care Nutrition Program](#)

Human Services Department

[Summer Food Service Program](#)

Human Services Department,
Seattle Parks & Recreation

[Emergency Preparedness & Response](#)

Human Services Department, Finance and
Administrative Services

[Farm to Preschool](#)

Human Services Department

[Food Banks & Meal Programs](#)

Human Services Department

[Food Insecurity Disparities Data & Research](#)

Office of Civil Rights, Public Health –
Seattle & King County

[Fresh Bucks](#)

Office of Sustainability & Environment

[Healthy Food in Schools](#)

Office of Sustainability & Environment

[Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#)

Human Services Department

[Senior Congregate Meals & Home Delivered Meals](#)

Human Services Department

[Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board](#)

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Urban Agriculture & Land Use

[Garden Hotline & Natural Yard Care Education Program](#)

Seattle Public Utilities

[Seattle Comprehensive Plan](#)

Office of Planning & Community Development

[P-Patch Community Gardening](#)

Department of Neighborhoods

[Urban Food Systems Program](#)

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Economic Development & Labor

[Business District Initiatives](#)

Office of Economic Development

[Food Business Supports](#)

Office of Economic Development

[Seattle Labor Standards](#)

Office of Labor Standards

[Food Protection Program](#)

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Food Waste Prevention, Rescue, & Composting

Prevent Food Waste at Home

Seattle Public Utilities

Food Rescue Innovation

Seattle Public Utilities

Food Waste Collection at Home (for compost)

Seattle Public Utilities

Food Waste Collection at Businesses (for compost)

Seattle Public Utilities

Food Waste Composting at Home

Seattle Public Utilities

Food Service Packaging Requirements

Seattle Public Utilities

2022 Solid Waste Plan Update: Moving Upstream to Zero Waste

(SEE CHAPTERS 4-5)

Seattle Public Utilities

City Grant Programs Focused on Food

Food Equity Fund

Department of Neighborhoods

Food & Nutrition

Human Services Department

Other City Grant Programs That Will Consider Proposals for Food-Related Work

Environmental Justice Fund

Office of Sustainability & Environment

King Conservation District Seattle Community Partnership Grant Program

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Neighborhood Matching Fund

Department of Neighborhoods

Duwamish River Opportunity Fund

Department of Neighborhoods, Office of Sustainability & Environment

Waste-Free Communities Matching Grant

Seattle Public Utilities

Equitable Development Initiative

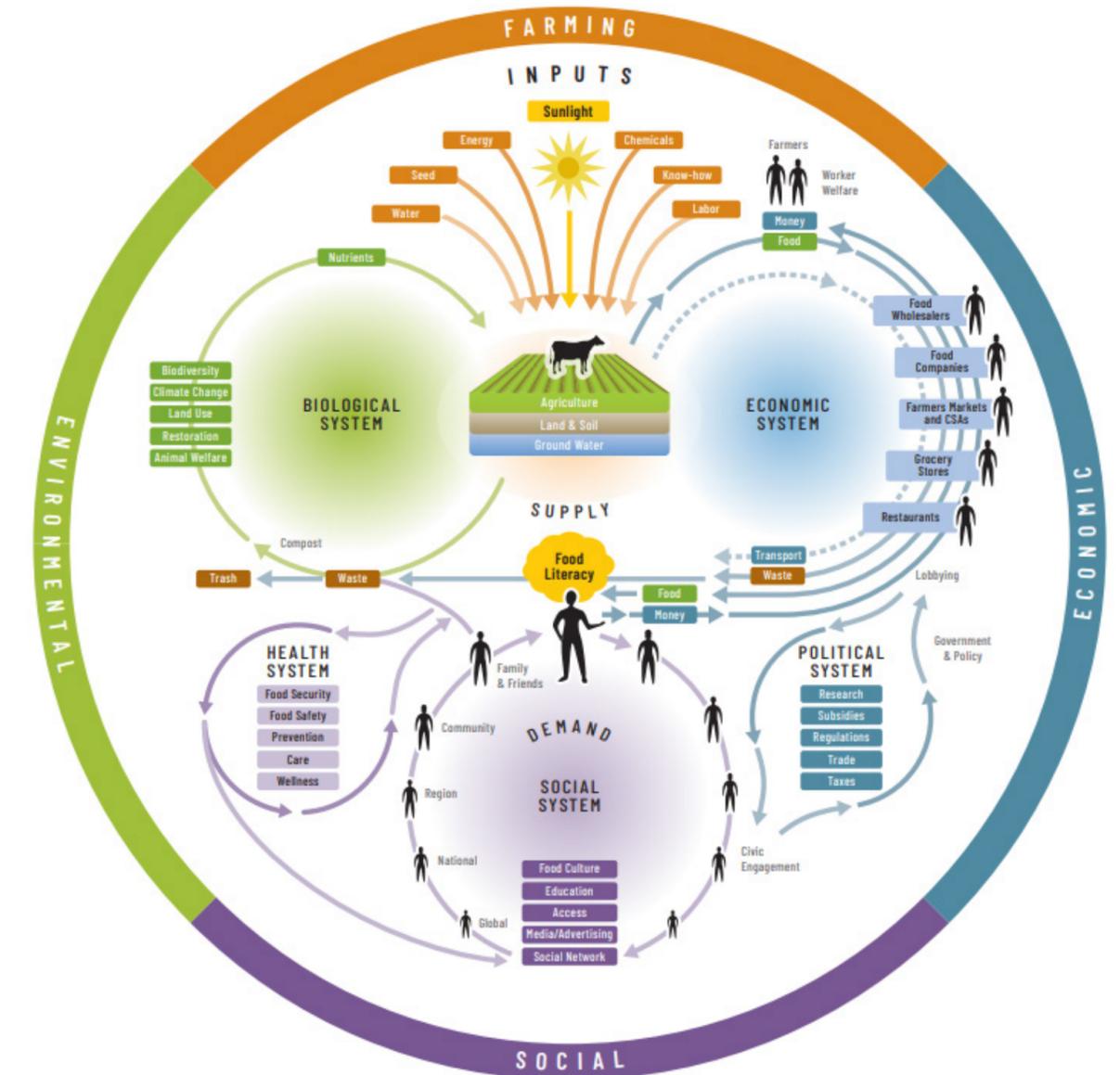
Office of Planning & Community Development

About the Food System

The food system includes all the activities involved in food production, processing and cooking, distribution and retail, consumption, and waste management. As implied by the term “system,” these activities are not separate but rather are strongly interconnected. Economics, politics, the natural environment, climate, health, religion, and culture all shape and are shaped by the food system—these are both drivers and outcomes of the food system. Because of this interconnectedness, when specific food policies or programs are implemented, all dimensions are affected in some way, directly or indirectly.

The food system has a significant influence on the health of our region’s economy, environment, and communities.

Figure 1: Food System Map³



A healthy food system has many benefits, including promoting physical health, increasing equity and opportunity for eaters, workers, and business owners, building shared prosperity in the region, protecting our environment, and strengthening our communities.

The City's Food Action Plan envisions an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system.

The food system exists on many scales, from personal and community food production to small- and medium-scale regional food production to global, industrial food production. Today in Seattle, most people likely rely on some combination of personal, local, regional, and global food production. The Plan is primarily focused on community, local, and regional food production since these are food systems our local governments and institutions can most directly influence. However, the impact that city- and county-level action can have on national and global policies and food systems should not be underestimated.

What is meant by an equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system?

Equitable

Ensures equitable access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food, economic opportunities, and high-quality jobs and worker protections.

Sustainable

Produces food in ways that promote the health of ecosystems (soil, water, air, plants, animals) and communities now and in the future.

Resilient

Can withstand, adapt, and recover from major changes, disruptions, or shocks* in ways that ensure a sufficient supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.

**Climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, financial or political crises.*

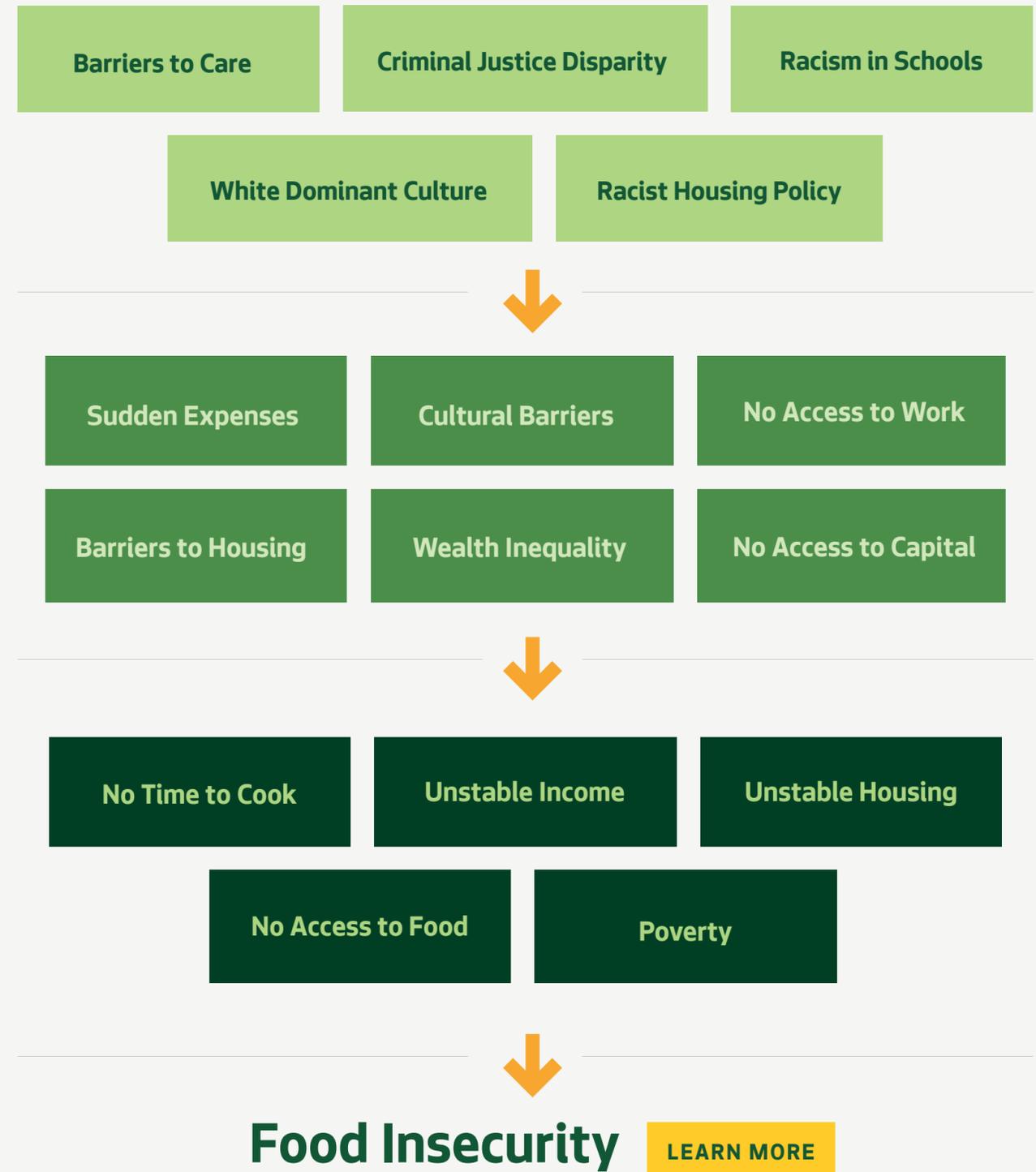


Strengths & Challenges in our Local Food System

This section provides essential context for the Plan. This background information is key to understanding the benefits and burdens of our local food system and was compiled as part of the [2021-2022 Racial Equity Toolkits](#) conducted by the Plan's IDT.

Racism in the Food System

The United States (U.S.) is a settler colonial society and former slave republic with laws, institutions, and systems of governance that perpetuate systems of oppression—Indigenous genocide and chronic underfunding of treaty obligations, anti-Black racism, and exploitation of immigrants of color.^{4,5,6} Racism and white supremacy affect all aspects of our society: where one can live, learn, and work; how one is viewed and treated by the criminal justice system; and who has access to social and economic opportunities like high-quality housing, education, employment, and wealth.⁷ These aspects are the root causes and drivers of poverty, loss of land and water access, hunger, malnutrition, and health inequities.⁸



Settler-colonialism, slavery, and racism have had a tremendous influence on our food and labor systems both locally and globally.⁹

Today, persistent racial and ethnic inequities across the food system harm people and communities of color—from who has access to land and waterways for food production to who is exploited for labor in agricultural industries to who experiences food insecurity and related health impacts.^{10,11,12,13,14} Often, valued food traditions and knowledge center on white culture, norms, and values without query or critique.^{15,16}

The ongoing structural impacts of oppression based on racial constructs of white supremacy are undeniable. A single, local policy framework like the City's Plan cannot make up for ongoing generations of harm, disinvestment, and injustice. But there are signs of hope and change for a more equitable future. Food and environmental justice movements across Seattle and the U.S. are growing, reflecting the rise in leadership from frontline communities most impacted by racial inequities who are developing solutions and building their capacity to lead change. In 2020, propelled by massive protests over police brutality, the pandemic, and related economic inequities, governments, philanthropy, and mainstream media discussed racism as a crisis holding back our country and the need for real change in our unjust systems. Building on this acknowledgment and momentum, the updated Plan acknowledges these past harms and present-day disparities and looks to advance racial and social justice through government policies, practices, and investments.



The City, County, and Tribes invest in a range of strategies to increase access to nutritious, safe, and culturally relevant food, increase food security, and reduce hunger. Partnerships with community organizations, Tribes, and other institutions are central to this work. Community organizations that are deeply and authentically connected to residents most burdened by food system inequities are essential to reach people of all ages and cultures, facilitating food assistance at grocery stores and markets, childcare, school, work, food banks, meal programs, mutual aid sites, and other community settings.

Root Causes of Food Insecurity

Poverty is a primary cause of food insecurity,⁸ resulting from lack of access to living wage jobs, community wealth and capital, and affordable housing—and racial inequities in poverty and food security are driven by systemic racism. Systemic racism affects where one can live, how one is viewed and treated by the criminal justice system, and how inequities influence access to social and economic opportunities like high-quality housing, education, healthcare, employment, a living wage, and wealth.^{7,22} Systemic racism and the conditions it creates are the root causes and drivers of poverty, hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, and health inequities.

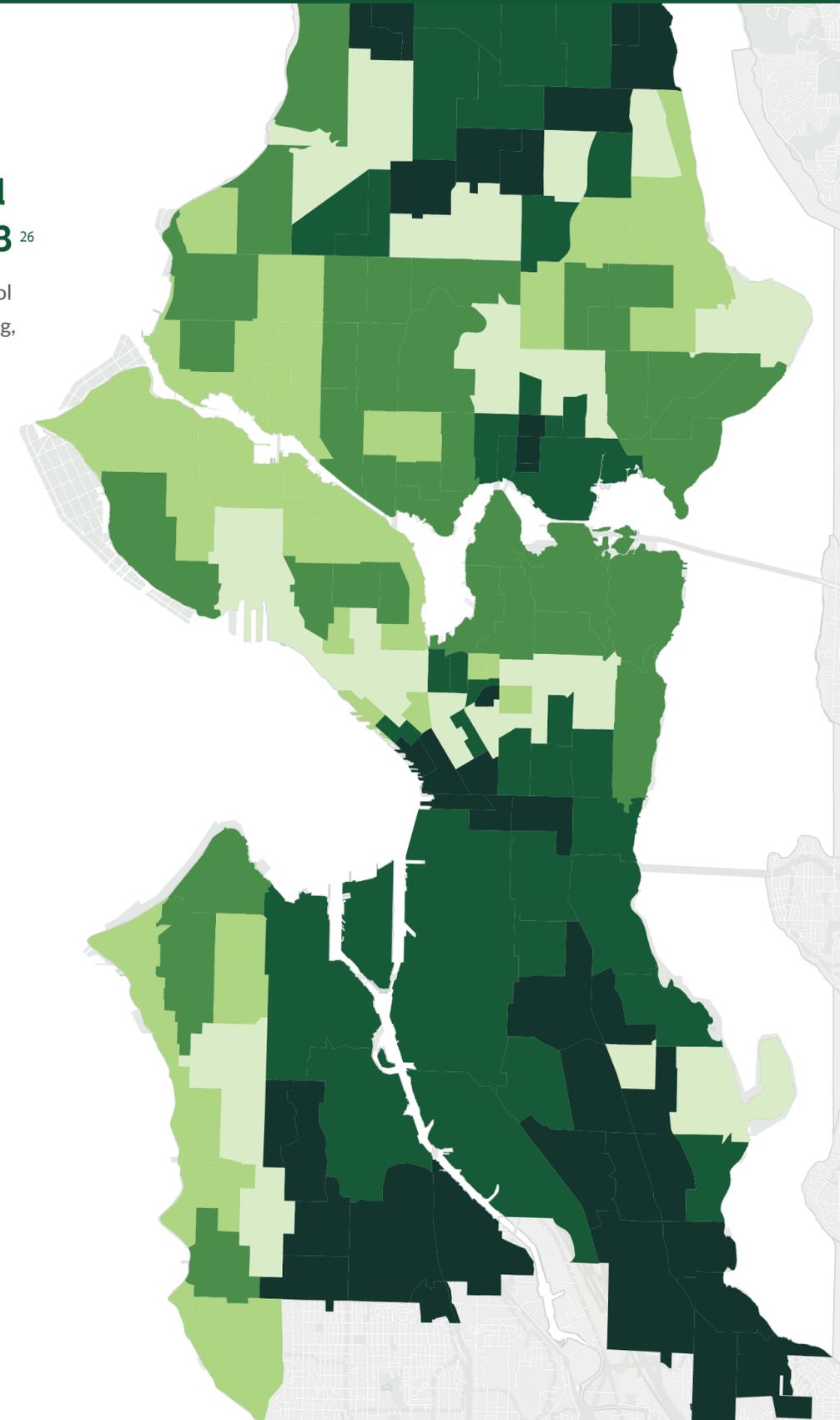
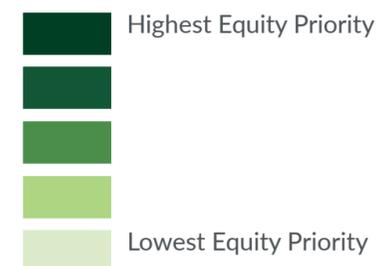
Colonialism has had lasting impacts on food security for Tribal and urban Native communities. It has disrupted traditional land ownership, cultivation practices, and access to natural resources, contributing to a cycle of food insecurity. Historical displacement and loss of self-sustaining systems have left many Native communities disconnected from their ancestral lands and traditional food sources, exacerbating the challenges they face in ensuring consistent access to nutritious food.

Figure 2: Racial & Social Equity (RSE) Index, 2023 ²⁶

The **RSE Index** is a census tract based tool to aid in the identification of City planning, program, and investment priorities. It combines information on race, ethnicity, and related demographics with data on socioeconomic and health disadvantages to identify where priority populations make up relatively large proportions of neighborhood residents.

25%
of households in
southeast Seattle
experienced
food insecurity

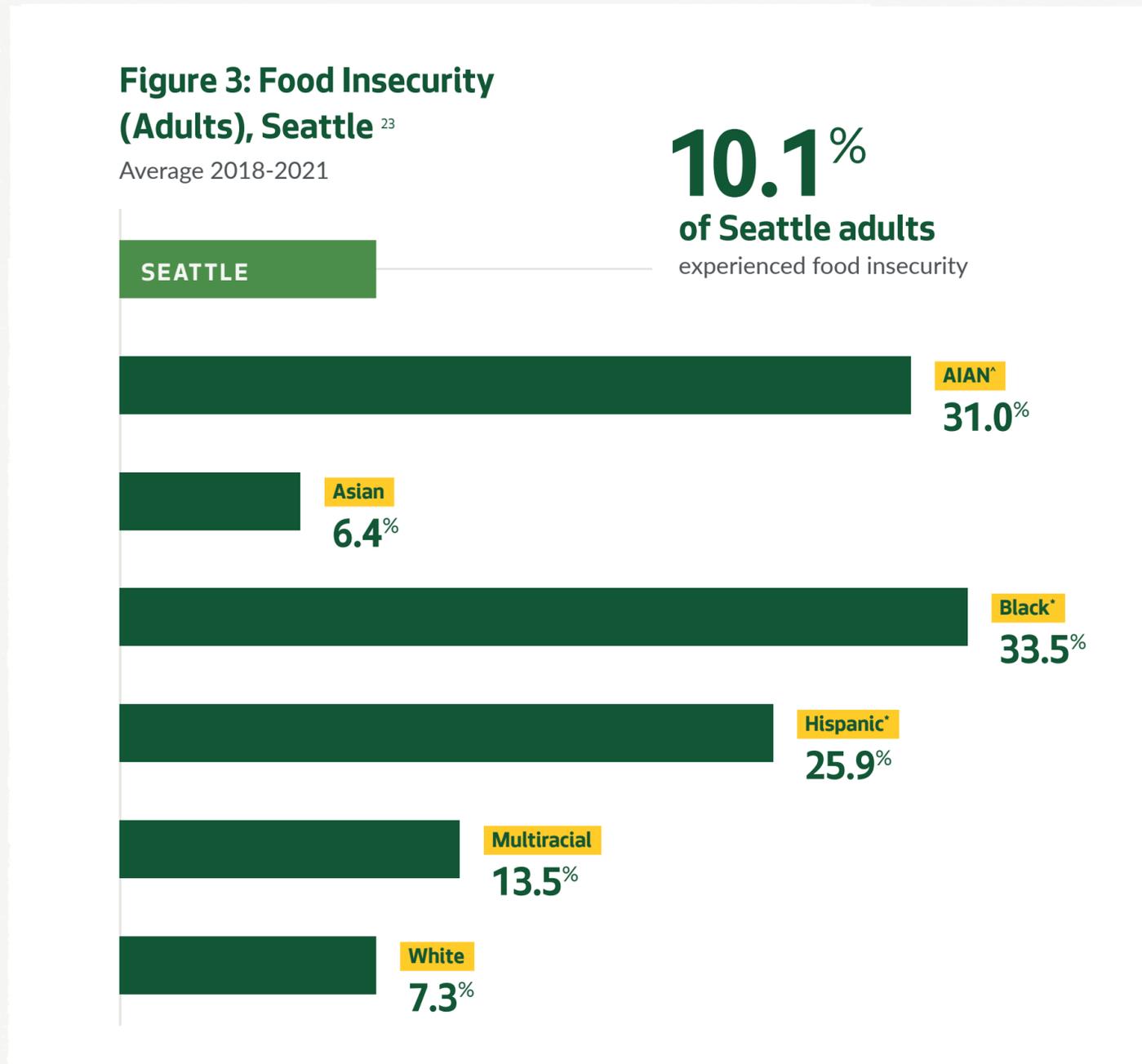
EQUITY PRIORITY



Far too many Seattle residents experience food insecurity and hunger. Between 2018-2021, 10.1% of Seattle adults experienced food insecurity, with rates much higher for households that were low-income, BIPOC, included children, or recently had or expected job loss. In Seattle, Black and Hispanic households were more than *four times* as likely to experience food insecurity between 2018-2021 (25.9-33.5%) than white and Asian households (6.4-7.3%) **SEE FIGURE 3.**²³

Population surveys in Seattle lack enough data to reliably report food insecurity rates among American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) households. However, a survey conducted in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties in 2020 combined the results for AIAN, NHPI, and people of multiple races. This group was the most likely to not have enough food (31%), followed by Black and Hispanic/Latinx respondents (both 13%).²⁴ In March/April 2021, the WA State Tribal Food Survey of WA state residents who identified as a member or descendant of a Tribe found that 67% of households were food insecure.²⁵

Southeast Seattle households have higher rates of food insecurity than the rest of the city—over one in four households in southeast Seattle experienced food insecurity between 2018-2020.¹ These are the same areas of the city where residents also experience disproportionately higher rates of socioeconomic and health disadvantages **SEE FIGURE 2.**²⁶



 **MORE ON THE ROOT CAUSES OF FOOD INSECURITY**
[Seattle’s Racial Equity Research Food Insecurity webpage ▶](#)

AIAN Alone or in combination. **NHPI** Not included: Too few to report reliable rates. *Significantly different from Seattle average

Health Impacts of Food Insecurity

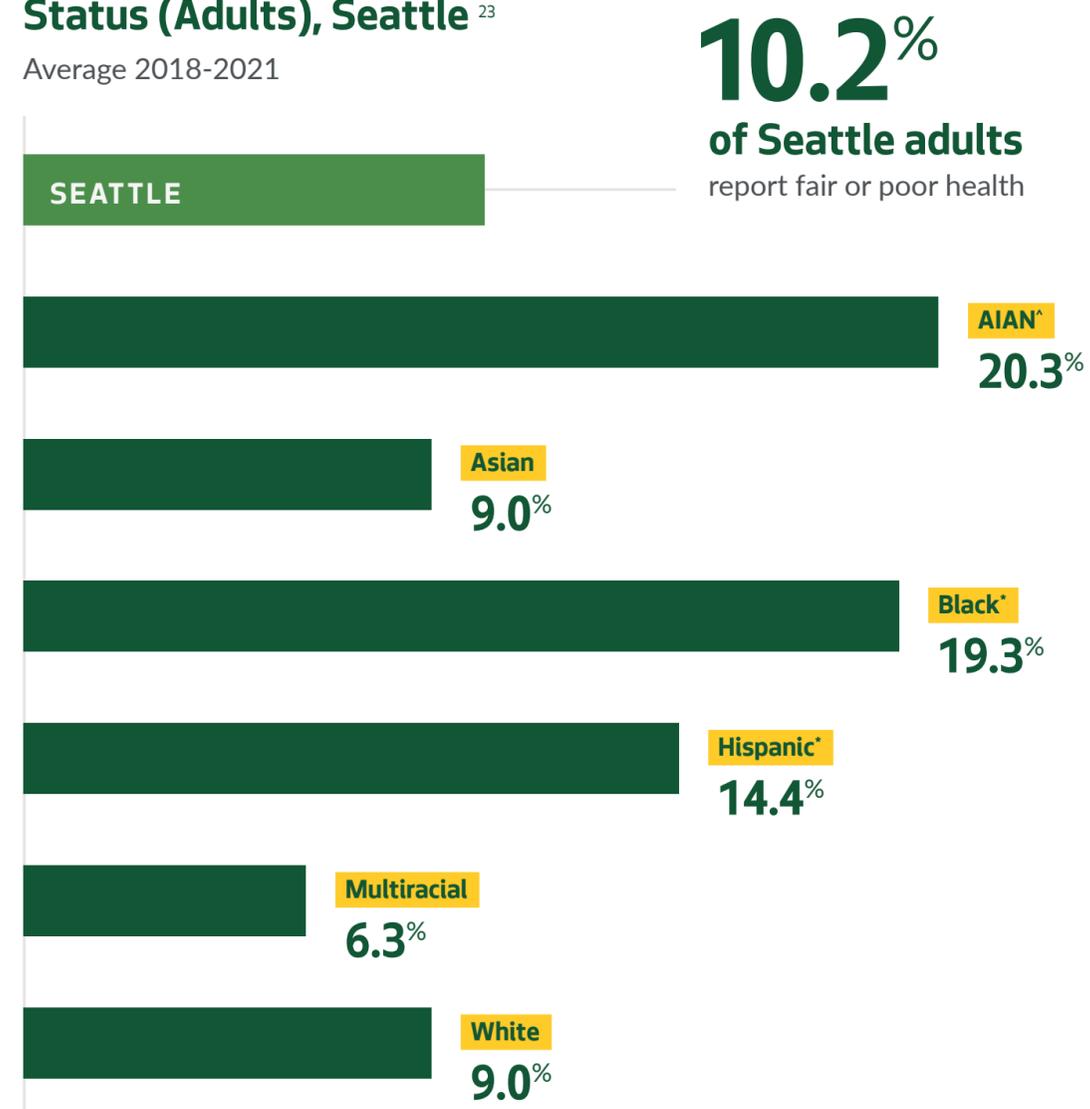
When people do not have enough food or must choose inexpensive foods that are not nutritious, it has a huge impact on their physical and mental health, including increased rates of depression, diabetes, and heart disease. For children, food insecurity impacts their health, behavior, and readiness to learn in school.²⁷

In Seattle, Black and Hispanic adults were *two to four times* more likely to have diabetes (8.4-19.7% between 2017-2021) than white and Asian households (3.4-4.5% between 2016-2020). American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN), Black, and Hispanic adults were also more than twice as likely to report fair or poor health status (14.4%-20.3% between 2017-2021) than white and Asian households (9.0% between 2017-2021).²³ **SEE FIGURE 4.**



Food insecurity impacts children's health, behavior, and readiness to learn in school.

Figure 4: Fair or Poor Health Status (Adults), Seattle ²³
Average 2018-2021



AIAN Alone or in combination. **NHPI** Not included: Too few to report reliable rates. *Significantly different from Seattle average

Food Access Disparities

Access to nutritious, affordable, convenient, and culturally relevant food is inequitable across Seattle, with some communities lacking physical access. Local mapping studies show that low-income and BIPOC neighborhoods have a higher percentage of unhealthy food retailers and longer travel times to healthy food retailers, especially in areas near the southern boundary around the Duwamish waterway (including Georgetown, South Park, Delridge, and High Point) and in small pockets in the north end **SEE FIGURE 5.**²¹ Even when food is available, it may not be culturally relevant or acceptable due to dietary restrictions, religious practices, knowledge or capacity to prepare food, and personal taste preferences.

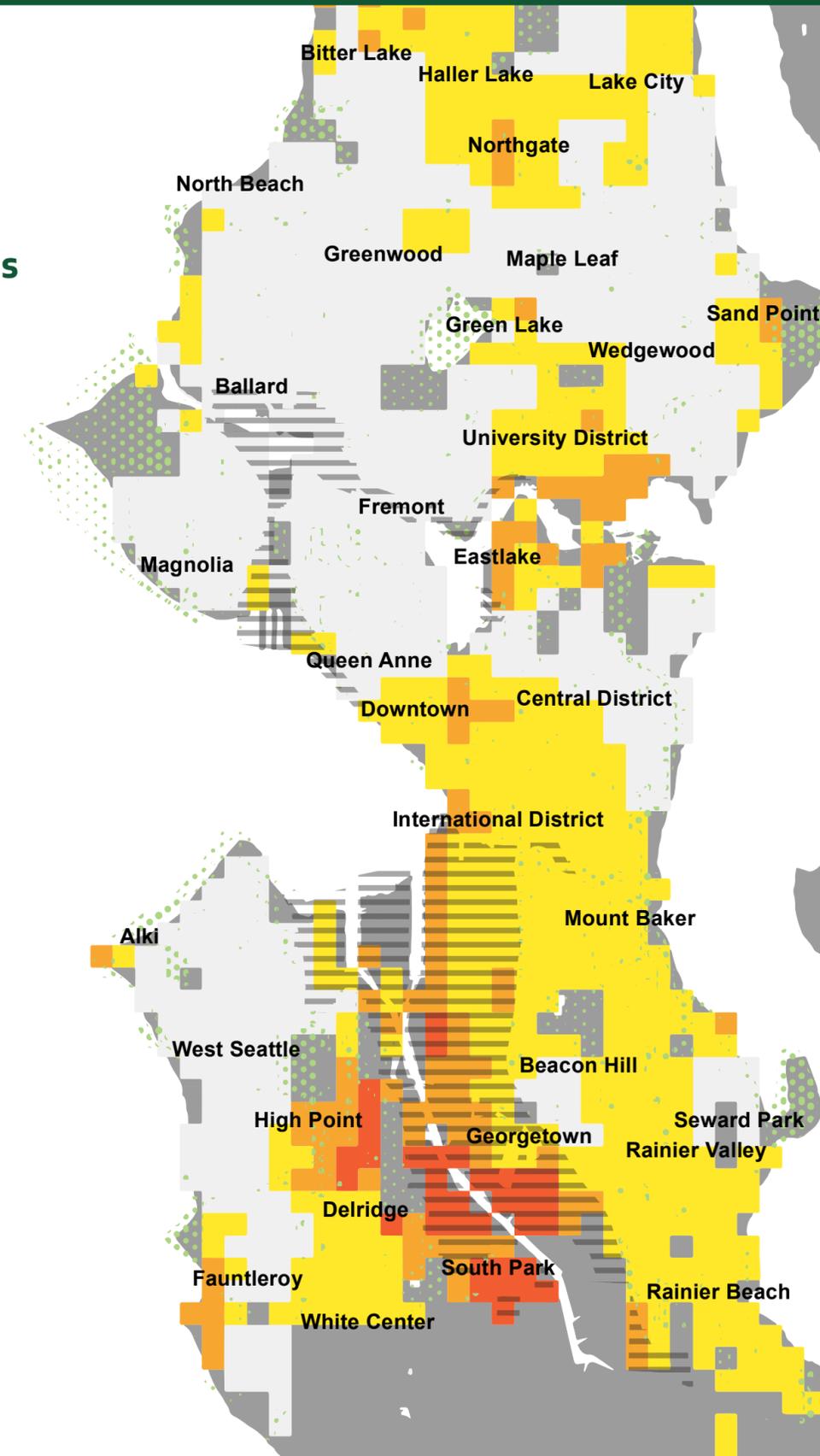
Transportation access is a critical factor in food access and food security.²⁸ Lack of transportation for individuals and households may include those who do not own a car, have no access to reliable, affordable, and convenient public transportation, or cannot easily leave their home due to health or disability.

Food marketing also impacts food access and negatively affects children and teen health. Comprehensive studies show that food, beverage, and restaurant companies target children, teens, Black Americans, and Latinxs with marketing for their least healthy products.²⁹ Predatory marketing of unhealthy food and beverages, like tobacco and alcohol, contributes to the unfair distribution of poor health and the higher burden of disease.³⁰

**Figure 5:
Healthy Food Priority Areas
(HPPA), Seattle**²¹

HPPA INDEX

-  Poverty + Two Factors
-  Poverty + One Factor
-  Poverty Threshold Only
-  Zero Factors
-  Parks
-  Industrial



Reframing Food Deserts

The term “food desert” is commonly used by researchers and policy makers to define areas where people have low incomes and low physical access to supermarkets. However, this term has fallen out of favor for many reasons.³¹ Deserts are natural ecosystems with thriving life and food systems, whereas “food deserts” are human-created environments resulting from classist and racist under-investment in lower income neighborhoods and “supermarket redlining.” Using the word “desert” also implies a neighborhood’s inferiority as a desolate place, disregards the people who live there, and obscures the presence of community gardens, food businesses, and food sharing activities.³²

Many food justice advocates prefer the term “food apartheid” to reflect how racist and oppressive systems create disparities in who has access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food.^{33,34}

The food desert concept (by any name) is an overly simplistic view of food access that focuses primarily on proximity to a nearby supermarket. Data shows that people routinely travel to preferred food stores based on other factors like food prices, hours of operation, types of payment accepted, availability of culturally relevant foods or foods that meet personal needs and preferences, customer service, and proximity to work, childcare, or other errands.²¹



Locally Grown & Harvested Foods

Locally grown and harvested food has long been a priority of our city and region, and “local” food can take many forms and geographies. For the purposes of the City’s Plan, local food is any food grown, harvested, or caught within Washington, western Washington, Puget Sound, King County, Seattle, specific Seattle neighborhoods, or residents’ backyards.

There are many benefits to buying and supporting local food.^{35,36,37}

Access to local land and natural resources for food production is highly limited in the state, with competing pressures from population growth, urban development, and the need for housing. The cost of land is prohibitive for most communities in the Puget Sound region, and settler colonialism and racism have displaced and excluded Tribes and BIPOC communities from accessing land and watersheds for food. Community members have raised concerns about the health of regional land and waters for growing and harvesting food, citing contamination from a variety of pollutants linked to urbanization, industrial activity, stormwater runoff, and waste disposal. Despite these barriers, ecosystem conservation, restoration, and stewardship can advance food system equity if practices are inclusive and respectful of local communities, Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights, cultural perspectives, and traditional knowledge.

BENEFITS TO BUYING & SUPPORTING LOCAL FOODS:

- ✓ **Supports the local economy**
- ✓ **Entails shorter food supply chains**, which means food does not have to travel as far, there is less handling, and fruits and vegetables can stay on the vine to ripen longer (leading to higher nutrients and better flavor)
- ✓ **Often uses fewer pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers** that are standard in large-scale, industrial operations
- ✓ **Often meets higher food quality, safety, and sustainability standards**
- ✓ **Preserves small farmland and promotes sustainable seafood practices**
- ✓ **Brings communities together**
- ✓ **Increases access to nutritious foods**
- ✓ **Empowers eaters to understand where their food comes from** and how it is produced. This awareness promotes accountability among growers, harvesters, and producers and encourages use of environmentally sustainable practices.



Land & Water Access Disparities

There are persistent racial and ethnic disparities in land access, stewardship, and ownership. Local Tribes, whose cultures are based on harvesting marine life, wildlife, and other natural resources in the region, have been systematically denied their treaty rights to the ancestral lands and watersheds of western Washington they inhabited for millennia.³⁸ Japanese farmers throughout the Puget Sound region were dispossessed of their land due to forced internment during World War II.³⁹ Farmers, farmworkers, and other food producers—particularly from immigrant, Black, Indigenous, Mexican, Latinx, Japanese, Hmong, South and Southeast Asian, and other farming communities of color—continue to be exploited, and struggle economically.^{40,41}

Property ownership in Seattle, as throughout the U.S., is rooted in many historical harms including colonization and theft of Indigenous lands, control of land and resources through redlining,⁴² displacement, disinvestment,⁴³ and other racist practices.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has historically prioritized investments and policies benefiting corporate, white-led, large-scale agriculture, building wealth and land access at the expense of Black farmers and farmers of color.^{44,45} Today, the failure to invest sufficiently and fairly is evident in the racial composition of “principal producers”. A principal producer is defined as the person who runs the farm, making day-to-day management decisions. It could be an owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, and/or a partner.⁴⁶ In Washington, white principal producers outnumber farm owners of color 10-to-1 **SEE TABLE 1.**⁴⁷ Data for King County show similar disparities by race, with white farm owners outnumbering farm owners of color 11-to-1.¹³ The same large-scale

Table 1: WA Farms & Land in Farms by Race of Principal Producers

2017 Census of Agriculture⁴⁷

	Farms	Land in acres
American Indian or Alaska Native	432	2,822,900
Asian	489	65,367
Black or African American	68	6,345
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	63	3,578
White	34,767	11,794,944
More than one race reported	628	109,608

agricultural investments and policies have damaged and polluted air, land, and water and contributed to climate change. Agriculture is responsible for 11% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, much of it from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, which take large amounts of fossil fuels to produce and then release nitrous oxide once used.⁴⁸

Farmland in the Puget Sound region, and King County in particular, continues to be rapidly developed into commercial and residential uses, with nearly 100,000 acres of farmland lost statewide during the 2001-2016 period.⁴⁹ Nationally, 45% of young farmers and 68% of young farmers of color characterize acquiring land for food production to be very or extremely challenging.⁵⁰

In addition to agriculture, fisheries are a vital industry and food source in western Washington. Today, the [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) and 21 federally recognized Tribes work together to co-manage fisheries statewide with the support of the [Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission](#) (NWIFC) and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). The NWIFC was created in 1974 following the United States vs. State of Washington ruling (also known as the [Boldt Decision](#)), which re-affirmed the Tribes' treaty-reserved rights to fish, hunt, and gather at usual and accustomed places and established them as natural resources co-managers with the State of Washington.⁵¹ The ruling—which has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court—entitles the Tribes to 50% of the harvestable catch for fish and shellfish. In 2018, United States vs. Washington (the Culverts Case) recognized the Tribes' right to enforce an implied duty on the part of the state and federal governments to refrain from damaging natural habitats that support treaty protected resources, including fish, water, and game.⁵²



Photo credit: Larry Dion, Seattle Times, 1966

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Tribes fought to protect their tribal sovereignty and treaty rights. This period of time is referred to as the "Fish Wars".⁵³

[LEARN MORE](#)

Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is a common theme brought up in [community conversations](#) about the food system, especially among food justice and Indigenous leaders. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to nutritious and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural systems.⁵⁴ Among Tribal and urban Native communities, Indigenous food sovereignty may include the revitalization of traditional food systems through the protection of Tribal treaty rights and the restoration of traditional knowledge and practices.

Even in the face of inequities and struggle, BIPOC communities and food producers are leading the way to a more just and resilient food system. The City can implement actions that redress past harms, building on and supporting City and community-led programs that focus on advancing equity in urban agriculture and community gardening, reducing financial barriers to start food businesses, making it easier for those interested to gain access to commercial kitchens and food hubs, and supporting Native foods and **subsistence**, land acquisition for community food production, and local BIPOC food businesses.

The City's [Equitable Development Implementation Plan](#) (2016) and linkages with other entities, such as King County's [Local Food Initiative](#) and King Conservation District, highlight the region's existing commitment to land access, local food, and preservation. Seattle has a rich variety of urban farms, food forests, and P-Patch community gardens in several neighborhoods, providing opportunities for residents to grow and access fresh and nutritious food. Through current City investments, fresh local produce is distributed in schools, farmers markets, preschools, and food security programs.

Subsistence

Subsistence is a cultural and traditional economic practice of gathering, processing, and distributing Traditional Foods and materials. [Native Coast Salish](#) Traditional Foods include hundreds of types of plants, birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, shellfish, and other marine life that Native people regularly ate pre-contact with settlers and before the forced introduction of the modern American diet.⁵⁵ Many Tribal members reserve treaty protected rights to practice subsistence in and around lands and waters in our region.

Many Indigenous, urban Native, and immigrant communities also practice subsistence. For example, many fishers from a wide range of cultural backgrounds fish in the Lower Duwamish Waterway for food, cultural connections, and fun. Members of these Duwamish Valley subsistence fishing communities and community health advocates have partnered with the City, Public Health—Seattle & King County, and the University of Washington to develop [effective health communications](#) about fishing in the Duwamish, which is a designated Superfund site.⁵⁶

Economy & Labor

Food sales, restaurants, food products, and food service are an important part of the local economy. In 2023, there were over 23,000 food-related jobs in Seattle alone.⁵⁷ In 2020-21, Seattle-area households spent 11.9% of their budget on food. Seattle-area households spent \$6,686 of their food dollars on food at home and \$3,568 on food away from home.⁵⁸ Seattle has a vibrant community of talented entrepreneurs, small-scale farmers, fishers, foodmakers, and chefs who have launched successful food businesses. Supporting new and emerging food businesses is critical for building a strong, local food economy.

Many of the conditions needed to increase spending in the local food economy already exist. There is high demand for local and culturally diverse foods through farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), restaurants, grocery stores, and food programs. Innovative food distribution models are under development and looking to aggregate local products to make it easier for smaller producers to access larger markets, such as school districts, grocery stores, universities, and bulk food sourcing programs in the hunger relief sector. Together, these types of advancements will make our local food economy stronger.

Focusing on a food system where Seattle's food is produced within the region supports jobs and keeps money in the local community. Local spending more than doubles the amount of money circulating among businesses in the community, and it strengthens a web of local relationships that can foster healthier communities and a more equitable, diverse, and resilient local food economy.⁵⁹



11.9%

**of household budgets
spent on food**



23,000

**food-related jobs
in Seattle**

Racial Disparities in Business Ownership

Building shared prosperity means keeping local food businesses successful while expanding equitable economic opportunity for underrepresented entrepreneurs. While BIPOC communities make up about a third of Seattle’s adult population, they own less than a quarter of the businesses here. The deepest disparities are in the ownership of businesses with employees. While Black Americans are roughly 7% of Seattle’s adult population, they own just 1.5% of firms with employees.⁶⁰

According to the most current Census data from the 2012 Survey of Business Owners, white-owned businesses in Seattle were valued at \$1,006,920, more than twice the national rate of \$440,343. Black-owned businesses were only worth \$81,777, Native American businesses at \$144,762, and Asian American businesses at \$372,280. Current Census data does not detail how much Hispanic businesses are worth.²²

Small, locally owned food businesses are a key sector of Seattle’s economy. They generate revenue and employment opportunities, create food access points, and use more environmentally sustainable business practices. Owning a business provides opportunities for upward mobility and can reduce income and wealth disparities between BIPOC and white Americans. Hiring employees extends economic opportunity to others in the community. Culturally relevant goods and services provided by entrepreneurs of color and immigrant businesses have a unique role in anchoring cultural communities and bolstering residents’ sense of belonging. BIPOC-owned businesses are underrepresented in Seattle due to disparities in opportunities for wealth accumulation. Increasing their presence would help to foster vibrant and healthy communities that effectively serve our diverse neighborhoods and communities.⁶⁰



Small, locally owned food businesses are a key sector of Seattle’s economy.

Multiple directories exist to highlight local food businesses in Seattle, including:

- [Eat Local First](#)
- [Intentionalist](#)
- [Native Grown and Gathered](#)
- [Seattle Eater](#)
- [Seattle Good Business Network](#)
- [Urban League Black Business Directory](#)

Food Industry Labor Practices

In a healthy, local food economy, farmers, business owners, and workers across the food system can earn a living wage and be treated fairly. Seattle is a national leader in labor practices that enhance equity, address wage gaps, and create a fair and healthy economy for workers, businesses, and residents. Unfortunately, food production and food services in the U.S. have long relied on an oppressed, disenfranchised, and underpaid workforce. Low wages within the food industry exacerbate poverty and food insecurity.

In Seattle, food services and retail are the top industries for Seattle Office of Labor Standards (OLS) complaints and investigations of unfair labor practices, including violations of Paid Sick and Safe Time, Wage Theft, Minimum Wage, Fair Chance Employment, and Secure Scheduling ordinances.⁶¹ COVID-19 exacerbated workplace inequities and increased labor standards violations in low-wage food industry jobs, which are most likely to be occupied by female workers, workers of color, immigrant and refugee workers, LGBTQ workers, workers with disabilities, veterans, and youth.

Food, Environment, & Climate

Food production and food waste have significant impacts on the environment and climate change. Meanwhile, climate change also has direct impacts on food production and food security. This section discusses how the food system, environment, and climate are deeply interconnected and related to environmental justice.



Food Waste

Food waste has serious environmental, climate, social, and economic impacts. Washington generates more than 1 million tons of food waste annually, which includes a large portion (about 35%) of edible food bound for landfills.⁶² When food is wasted, so are the resources and labor used to grow, harvest, process, and transport the food from farm to table.

Even though food is banned from the garbage, it is the single largest material in Seattle’s waste stream. Approximately 20% of residential garbage and 19% of business garbage is composed of food waste.^{63,64} When organic materials get sent to a landfill instead of being composted, they decompose and produce carbon emissions that harm the environment. According to Seattle’s greenhouse gas emissions inventory, food waste is responsible for a third of all emissions in the waste sector.⁶⁵

Food waste is an ethical issue even beyond wasted resources and environmental degradation. Food has intrinsic and cultural value—it nourishes us and is foundational for all cultures and traditions—and wasting it shows disrespect, especially when so many neighbors are experiencing food insecurity.⁶²

The City’s current residential and business strategies focus on preventing and reducing the amount of food that is wasted, as well as “rescuing” edible food that would otherwise be wasted and partnering with hunger relief agencies to ensure rescued food reaches those who need it.

Uneaten food consumes:⁶⁶

6% 

of U.S. GHG emissions

AND 8% OF GLOBAL EMISSIONS

22% 

of all fresh water use

16% 

of U.S. cropland use

(EPA ESTIMATE)

24% 

of landfill inputs

(EPA ESTIMATE)

Love Food, Stop Waste

Love Food, Stop Waste is the City's educational campaign focused on preventing food waste at home.

20%
of residential
garbage is
composed of
food waste



Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment

A public-private partnership in which food businesses are collaborating with city, county, and state governments and nonprofits to prevent food waste across the West Coast.

The City also supports productive uses of inedible food, such as food scraps, by providing **citywide weekly composting pick-up services for food and yard waste**. Composting keeps valuable resources out of the landfill and avoids methane emissions that contribute to climate change. When compost is returned to the soil, it adds nutrients, retains water, increases yields when growing food, and stores carbon. Using compost on lawns and gardens also reduces pesticide use and stormwater run-off and returns important nutrients to the soil so more fruits, vegetables, trees, grasses, and other plants can thrive.

Seattle provides citywide weekly composting pick-up services for food and yard waste.



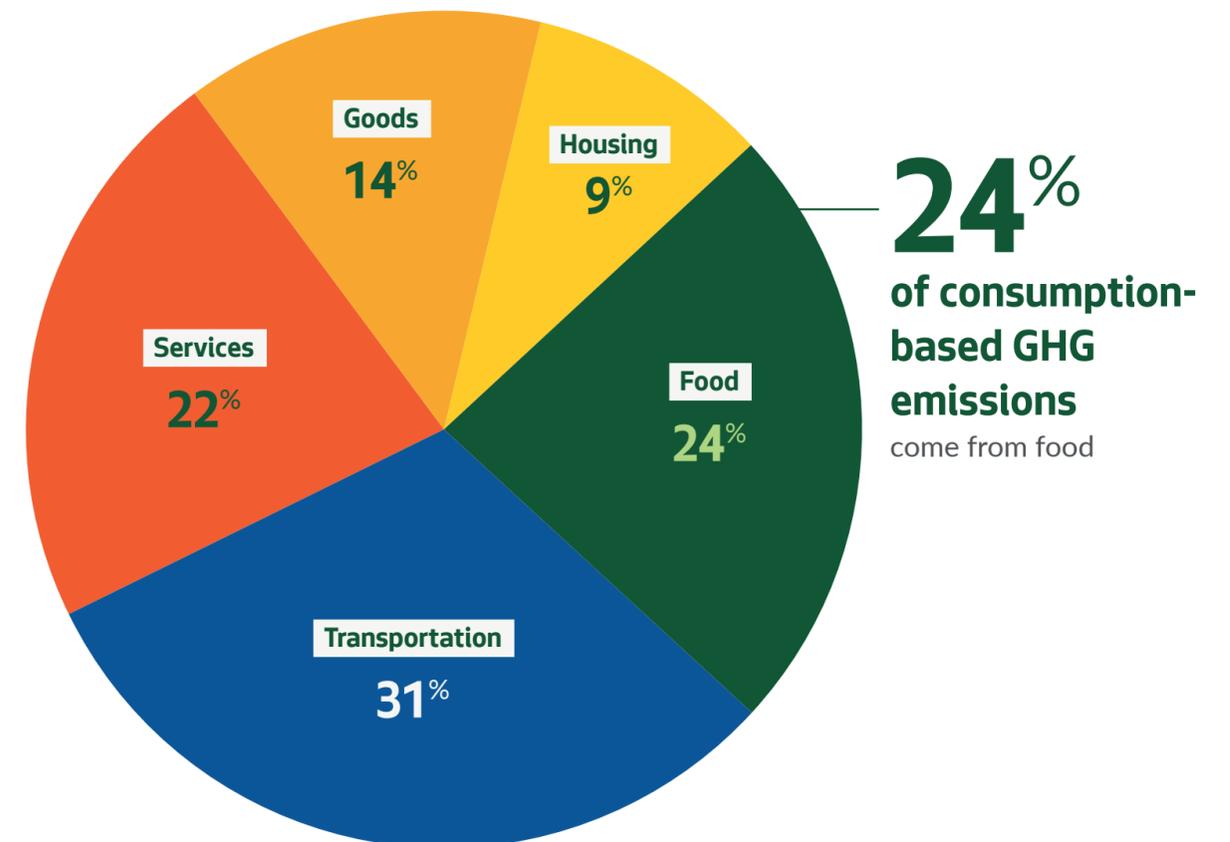
Reducing the Food System’s Impact on the Environment & Climate

There are other opportunities for Seattle to reduce climate and environmental pollution in the food system. Agriculture has a profound effect on the environment. In the U.S., agriculture is the main source of pollution in rivers and streams and one of the top three sources of pollution in lakes, reservoirs, ponds, and wetlands.⁶⁷ Animal-raising operations are major polluters—animal manure releases nitrogen, phosphorous, and methane that pollute air and waterways and produces antibiotic residues that contribute to antibiotic resistance.⁶⁸ Nitrogen-based fertilizers used for crop-growing produce nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas, and increased fertilizer use over the past 50 years is responsible for a dramatic rise in atmospheric nitrous oxide and nitrogen pollution of waterways.^{69,70}

Food emissions represent 24% of consumption-based GHG emissions in Seattle, accounting for 7.9 metric tons of carbon dioxide per household [SEE FIGURE 6](#).⁷¹ Consumption-based emissions are an estimate of the emissions associated with the food Seattle residents eat, the things we buy, how we travel, and the homes we live in, no matter where those emissions are produced. The food category includes all food consumed by residents of Seattle, broken down by meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables, and other foods consumed at home and while eating out [SEE FIGURE 7](#).

While nitrogen fertilizer is the largest source of food-related emissions nationally, meat and dairy have an outsized impact on the typical household emissions, since they include not only the animals’ methane emissions but also the nitrous oxide emissions from growing the crops necessary to feed those animals.

Figure 6: Overview of Seattle’s Consumption-Based GHG Emission Inventory, 2019⁷¹

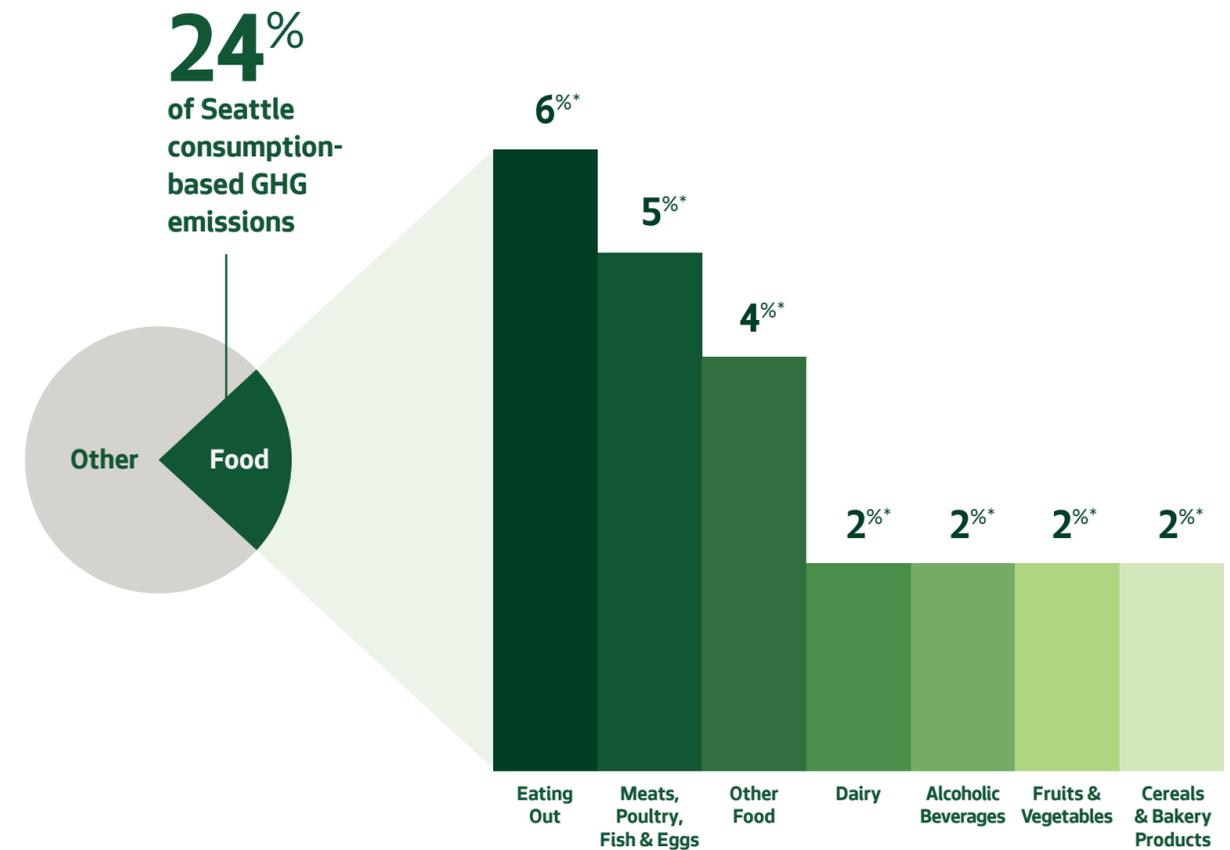


It takes a significant amount of feed crop—mostly corn⁷²—to produce one calorie of meat. For example, it can take as much as 33 calories of feed to produce just one calorie of beef.⁷³ As a result, producing a quarter pound of beef (284 calories) could require over 9,000 calories of corn.

Households reducing meat and dairy consumption and moving to a more plant-based diet would be a powerful demand-side shift in the food system.⁷⁴ Other strategies to reduce food-related emissions include ensuring a healthy calorie intake, reducing supply chain food waste, decarbonizing food production supply chains, reducing livestock methane emissions, and reducing agricultural nitrous oxide emissions.⁷⁵

Eating food from food producers who use environmentally sustainable and regenerative practices is another key mitigation strategy. There are many ways that farmers can reduce the environmental and climate impacts from their agricultural operations.^{76,77} Supporting smaller farms may contribute to reducing food-related emissions, as smaller farms are associated with more environmentally sustainable practices.⁷⁸ Increasing natural resources managed by Tribes and Native peoples promote traditional agricultural practices that have greater resilience to climate change, conserve and restore natural resources, and promote a more biodiverse and nutrient-dense diet. Tribal knowledge, expertise, experience, and understanding is critical for salmon recovery. As co-managers of the state’s salmon, Tribes are responsible for hundreds of successful salmon habitat restoration and protection projects on and off tribal lands that create a ripple of benefits for Traditional Food access and are a model of regenerative food systems.⁷⁹

Figure 7: Summary Results from Seattle’s Consumption-based GHG Emissions From Food, Inventory, 2019 ⁷¹



*Percentages in both the pie and bar chart are of total consumption-based emissions in Seattle.

Environmental Racism

Environmental pollution and climate change are racial justice issues. Environmental racism is unequal access to a clean environment and basic environmental resources based on race. For many Tribes, environmental pollution and climate change are among the top risks to protection of cultural resources and treaty rights. In the U.S. and around the world, BIPOC communities are far more likely to live in areas with polluted air, water, and soil.^{80,81,82} Air pollution is considered the world's largest environmental health threat and the largest contributor to disease from the environment.⁸³ The main substances in air pollution affecting health are nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, ozone, and tiny **particle pollution** (dust, dirt, soot, smoke, liquid droplets) that can penetrate deep into the lungs and affect the body's circulatory system.⁸⁴ Air pollution causes and worsens asthma, cancer, several lung illnesses, and heart disease and is linked to low birth weight, heart attacks, and premature death.⁸⁵ BIPOC communities experience disproportionate and cumulative exposures to harmful environmental pollution, resulting in racial disparities in these health outcomes in Seattle and across the U.S.¹⁰

In Seattle, BIPOC communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards such as large industrial facilities, major roadways, poor air quality, and hazardous sites including the Lower Duwamish Waterway, a **Superfund clean-up site** that flows between the Georgetown and South Park neighborhoods.⁸⁶ Many of the same sources of air pollutants that harm health also emit carbon dioxide and methane, major greenhouse gases that trap heat and contribute to climate change.



Climate Change & Food System Impacts

Reducing food waste and environmental pollution are essential to achieving the City's climate and environment goals. Climate change impacts our food system by causing rising temperatures and sea levels, changes in rainfall patterns and water temperatures, ocean acidification, and more frequent and intense extreme weather events.^{87,88} Climate change also shortens growing seasons, harms pollinators (e.g., bees and butterflies), increases weeds and pests, and heightens wildfire threats, influencing crop and agricultural yields. Heavier rains in the U.S. can erode soil, decrease soil nutrients, and increase agricultural runoff that pollutes oceans, lakes, and streams. Agricultural workers face climate-related health risks due to extreme weather, more pesticide exposure due to expanded pests, and poor air quality.⁸⁹ Climate change will negatively impact food security through production disruptions that limit local availability of food and increase food prices.⁸⁷



Climate and environmental pollution are racial justice issues at their core.



Photo credit: King County

The City currently works with Tribal and community partners, other government agencies, businesses, and non-governmental organizations on several initiatives to address climate and environmental pollution:

Duwamish Valley

The [Duwamish Valley Program](#) aligns City programs and investments to address environmental injustice through the implementation of the [Duwamish Valley Action Plan](#) and [related investments](#).

This program focuses on youth leadership and capacity building in the Duwamish Valley, funding essential improvements to community gathering spaces, improving mobility and access to greenspace and the Duwamish River, improving air and environmental quality, and supporting local businesses and workforce development.

Environmental Justice Funding

Community funding opportunities managed by the City, especially the [Environmental Justice Fund](#), [Duwamish River Opportunity Fund](#), and the [Community Connections](#) program, support community-led efforts related to environmental justice.

Green Economy

The City's [Climate Action Planning](#), [Seattle's Green New Deal](#) (GND), and related [investments](#) help to build a green economy in alignment with recommendations from the [GND Oversight Board](#).

Pollution Prevention & Control

The City is involved in clean up efforts of the [Lower Duwamish Waterway](#), a Superfund site regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency. These efforts include [pollution prevention](#) and the [Lower Duwamish Waterway Source Control Prevention Plan](#) focused on stormwater runoff, the biggest ongoing source of pollution for the Puget Sound. These are collaborative efforts involving Tribes, King County, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle, and the State Department of Ecology.

The City's [Pollution Control Program](#), part of the [Stormwater Management Plan](#), works to control the sources of stormwater pollution and reduce stormwater runoff volumes and concentrations.

Goals & Values

The Plan’s Interdepartmental Team (IDT) identified **four goals** for achieving this vision based on input from community experts, alignment with the types of work the City does, and the strengths and challenges of the local food system.

Along with these goals, the IDT used core values to guide its work to update and implement the Plan. One set of values was created by the IDT. The other set of values was created by the City’s **Environmental Justice Committee** (EJC) which advises the City on integrating the goals of the **Equity & Environment Agenda** into government policies and programs focused on environmental and food justice.

Seattle’s Food Action Plan envisions an equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system that supports the development of healthy and thriving communities.



FOOD ACTION PLAN GOALS

Increase Community Food Security

All Seattle residents have enough to eat and easy access to fresh, affordable, nutritious, and culturally relevant food, regardless of race, place, and income.

Support Local & Traditional Foods*

Seattle food policies and programs support Traditional Foods and regenerative practices, locally grown and harvested foods, and community food production, focusing on communities historically excluded from land and water access.

**Traditional Foods are foods that Native people regularly ate pre-contact with settlers and before the forced introduction of the modern American diet. These foods would be familiar to Native American Ancestors and include various species such as wild game, fowl, fish, and many plants from both land and sea.*

Advance an Equitable Local Economy

Seattle food policies and programs create economic opportunities for local food producers and a valued workforce, centering workers and communities most impacted by racism.

Prevent Food Waste & Climate Pollution

Seattle food policies and programs protect and improve the environment by preventing and reducing food-related waste and climate pollution.

Community Food Justice Values

The EJC’s Food Justice Values are bold, visionary principles that create a sense of urgency for change and for the City’s responsibility in moving the food system toward racial and social equity, environmental sustainability, and justice through our food programs and policies.

It will take time to live out the EJC’s Food Justice Values. But the IDT remains committed to collaborating with community partners and leaders to carry out the Plan in ways that lead us toward the transformational change envisioned by the EJC.



Environmental Justice Committee Food Justice Values

[FULL VERSION](#)

SUMMARY OF THE EJC’S FOOD JUSTICE VALUES:

- 1 **We must fundamentally shift how we relate to our food,** the people who grow it, and the land on which it is grown.
- 2 **Agricultural and food workers in the United States have long been among the most exploited laborers in the country.** Just food policies must center workers in the food system and ensure they have safety, the right to organize, dignity, healthcare, and livable wages in their workplaces.
- 3 **The City must address the historical disinvestment in BIPOC communities** that have exacerbated an ongoing lack of opportunities to acquire land for housing and growing food.
- 4 **Our food system is part of the climate crisis.** Food policies and programs need to be led by and prioritize those harmed first and worst including low-income, BIPOC, Queer, disabled, unhoused and undocumented people.
- 5 **We must ensure that all people have a choice to nourishing, culturally relevant food.**

City Stewardship Values

The EJC Food Justice Values represent *what* we are trying to achieve and *why* transformational change is needed. The City values are *how* we will get there.

Racial Justice & Equity

We recognize that systemic racism through the investments and policies by government and the private sector have caused generational harm and resulted in disinvestments in BIPOC communities. We commit to undoing racism, eliminating racial, social, and environmental disparities, and achieving racial equity within the City's food work by focusing investments and shifting decision-making power to those most impacted by inequity.

Community Collaboration

We recognize that the programs and policies that will create a just, equitable, and sustainable future require effective collaboration with a variety of Tribal and community leaders and experts working on food systems solutions that center on racial and social justice. We commit to investing the time and resources for inclusive ongoing engagement, trusting relationships, and clear and transparent processes.

Accountability & Stewardship

Our work as individuals is connected to the collective work of all City departments, and we commit to working across institutional silos to align our efforts and find bold, creative solutions. We are accountable to the people we work with and serve through clear, shared processes for developing policies and programs and by taking responsibility for our decisions, actions, and outcomes. We commit to collaborative relationships, good communication, and government-to-government relations with local Tribes, recognizing the vital knowledge and expertise Washington's first people have of ecosystems and food systems and the sovereign rights and authorities of the Tribes. We take responsibility for our work by being data-informed, consistently tracking and reporting on progress, course correcting when we do not meet goals, and using measures of success that are meaningful and important to the communities most impacted by this work.

Whole System Approach

The food system is interconnected to other complex social, environmental, economic, and agricultural systems that impact environmental and human health. We examine the root causes of the food system issues we work to address, and our responses and solutions assess the interaction the City's food policies and programs have with other systems. We test our assumptions about the benefits and burdens of programs and policies, develop creative opportunities to make positive change across systems and sectors, and contribute to solutions that address racial and social injustices in the broader local and global food system.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

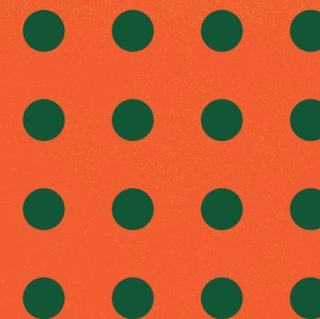
Background

Strategies & Actions

References



Photo credit: Rainier Beach
Action Coalition



Strategic Priorities

The Food Action Plan includes 47 actions organized by the following 8 strategic priorities.



1. Community Food Security →

Build community food security through culturally relevant, equitable, nutritious food access.



2. Land Access & Use →

Support Traditional Foods and regenerative practices, locally grown and harvested foods, and community food projects, focusing on communities historically excluded from land and water access and honoring Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.



3. Education & Training →

Expand access to culturally relevant and empowering food and nutrition education for youth, adults, and older adults.



4. Economy & Labor →

Create an equitable, fair, and healthy local food economy for workers, businesses, and residents.



5. Local Supply Chains →

Foster equitable, environmentally sustainable, and strengthened local supply chains.



6. Food Waste →

Prevent food waste, rescue (redistribute) surplus food for people who need it, and compost the rest.



7. Environment & Climate →

Reduce climate pollution associated with Seattle's food system and support regenerative food production practices that improve the environment and honor Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.



8. Food Action Plan Stewardship →

Create intentional structures and processes that enable effective coordination and implementation of the Food Action Plan in alignment with community and City values and priorities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1



Community Food Security

Build community food security through culturally relevant, equitable, nutritious food access.

Actions

- 1.A [Prioritize Culturally Relevant & Equitably Purchased Foods →](#)
- 1.B [Strengthen the Fresh Bucks Program →](#)
- 1.C [Strengthen the Capacity of Meal Programs & Food Banks →](#)
- 1.D [Prioritize Access to Nutritious and Locally Grown Food Served in Preschools →](#)
- 1.E [Improve Food Served in Schools →](#)
- 1.F [Strengthen Out-of-School Food Programs →](#)
- 1.G [Sustain & Strengthen Food & Meal Programming for Older Adults →](#)
- 1.H [Support “Food is Medicine” Programs →](#)
- 1.I [Support & Strengthen Transportation Services for Food Access →](#)
- 1.J [Prioritize Food Access for Unsheltered Populations →](#)
- 1.K [Strengthen Disaster Preparedness Efforts →](#)

ACTION 1.A

Prioritize Culturally Relevant & Equitably Purchased Foods in City Food Programs

Continue increasing access to culturally relevant and local food, focusing on women- and minority-owned businesses (WMBE), BIPOC businesses, and Tribal enterprises.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Food assistance programs that buy from local producers create community benefits across the food system: increased food access for people experiencing hunger, market opportunities for smaller producers, and economic stability for local businesses and their employees. Purchasing local also strengthens our supply chains. The City has an Executive Order (2023-07) to expand equity and opportunity in City contracting, focusing on women- and minority-owned businesses (WMBEs). Economic partnerships with WMBE and businesses owned by BIPOC, immigrants, and Tribes can reduce income and wealth disparities. These partnerships also help food assistance programs provide culturally relevant foods and increase residents' sense of belonging.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

City departments partner with food assistance programs to increase food and meal purchases from WMBE and BIPOC food producers through programs such as Healthy Food in Schools, congregate meal programs, and Farm to Preschool. These efforts can be strengthened by providing technical support on seasonal menu planning and helping food assistance organizations find local producers and suppliers.



Photo credit: Public Health - Seattle & King County

ACTION 1.B

Strengthen the Fresh Bucks Program

Continue the Fresh Bucks program for income-qualified households and incorporate additional retailers who sell culturally specific, sustainably produced, and/or locally grown fruits and vegetables. Serve more residents if local or external funding is available.

Departments

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Fresh Bucks helps over 10,000 Seattle households afford fruits and vegetables. Income-eligible and enrolled households receive \$40 each month to buy produce at any participating retailer. Demand consistently exceeds available enrollment spots, and the program has an active waitlist. By increasing the purchasing power of lower-income households, Fresh Bucks

directly reduces the cost of buying nutritious food. Additionally, Fresh Bucks spending is good for the local economy: every \$1 spent through Fresh Bucks is estimated to generate \$1.54 in the local economy, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's estimate for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).⁹⁰

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Fresh Bucks benefits are currently accepted at **a variety of retailers**, including supermarkets, neighborhood grocers, farmers markets, and farm stands. The City is continuously working to expand the Fresh Bucks retail network to include more local, BIPOC-owned businesses and businesses that sell culturally specific foods. Future work could include tailored support to partners and program participants still adapting to the program's new e-benefit technology (introduced in 2021). The City could also partner with community health systems to offer Fresh Bucks as part of a "Food is Medicine" strategy.



Photo credit: Office of Sustainability & Environment

ACTION 1.C

Strengthen the Capacity of Meal Programs & Food Banks

Strengthen meal program and food bank capacity to provide person-centered and culturally responsive services and food.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Why this Action?

Meal programs and food banks are the foundation of the hunger relief system, providing free food to people in need or crisis. Clients want healthy, fresh, and culturally relevant food at food banks and meal programs. Programs are strained by supply chain disruptions, food and fuel price increases, staffing shortages, and limited in-language resources, and require additional capacity to meet community need.

If foods and services are not person-centered, clients will not eat the food offered, which creates food waste and causes clients to expend additional time, money, and fuel to seek out other resources.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City funds dozens of meal programs, food banks, and other city-wide food access points that provide healthy and culturally relevant food for residents. The City also supports bulk food purchase and local collaborations such as the [Meals Partnership Coalition](#) and the [Seattle Food Committee](#), which provide needed food transportation and distribution, staff training, and service coordination. Future capacity building could support culturally competent staff hiring and retention, increased purchasing power to withstand price fluctuations, infrastructure to buy, aggregate, and distribute food and meals, standardized nutrition policies, and more. Increased capacity could lead to extending hours, expanding home or hub delivery and pop-up services, creating restaurant partnerships for meal distribution, sourcing culturally relevant food from local producers, and strengthening linkages with other social services.



Photo credit: Northwest Harvest

ACTION 1.D

Prioritize Access to Nutritious, Locally Grown Food Served in Preschools

Support programs that increase access to nutritious, local, and sustainably grown foods in childcare and preschool programs and provide hands-on educational opportunities around food, nutrition, and agriculture. Enhance access in underserved communities.

Departments

Department of Education and Early Learning

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Why this Action?

Early childhood development is an ideal time to learn about healthy food, explore gardening and cooking, try new foods, and understand where food comes from. Childcare and preschool programs provide spaces where children can explore food and learn in a supportive, supervised setting. This action helps ensure that programs have capacity, knowledge, and resources to deliver quality instruction on nutritious and locally grown and gathered food.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Programs like [Farm to Preschool](#) and the [Child Care Nutrition Program](#) (serving in-home family childcare programs) provide farm-fresh food to children at approximately 170 program sites in income-qualified areas. These programs also increase opportunities for children to choose and prepare nutritious food and meals. Future work should build staff capacity, address service gaps within underserved communities, support on-site small-scale farming and scratch cooking, and improve the quantity and quality of local, seasonal, culturally relevant food and meals. Best practices show the value of incorporating farming, gardening, gathering, cooking, and nutrition education practices at participating programs.



Photo credit: Seattle Farm to Preschool program

ACTION 1.E

Improve Food Served in Schools

Expand work with Seattle Public Schools to increase student access to fresh, nutritious, sustainable, local, scratch-cooked, and culturally relevant meals and snacks.

Departments

Department of Education and Early Learning

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**
in partnership with Seattle Public Schools

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

School meals are a crucial food access point, especially for low-income and food-insecure families, and are critical to students' well-being and readiness to learn. Across the district, Seattle Public Schools' Culinary Services provides over 25,000 meals

per day to students, including at least 32% of students eligible for Free & Reduced-Price School Meals. For years, Seattle's school community has asked for higher quality and culturally relevant menu items in Seattle Public Schools. School food service also presents a prime opportunity to increase equitable procurement and environmental sustainability through targeted ingredient sourcing.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City's current work with Seattle Public Schools includes a Healthy Food in Schools initiative which funds a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, subsidizes purchases of farm-to-school ingredients from local and BIPOC food producers, and works alongside community partners to make systemic change in school food. Future work should strengthen values-based purchasing, support Seattle Public Schools capacity to offer more freshly prepared and culturally relevant meals, increase student engagement, expand access to universal meals and the Community Eligibility Provision, improve cafeteria environments, and integrate nutrition education into Seattle Public Schools food programs.



Photo credit: Seattle Public Schools

ACTION 1.F

Strengthen Out-of-School Food Programs

Connect food insecure children and families to quality, nutritious food and meals outside of school hours, such as after school, weekends, holiday breaks, and during the summer.

Departments

Department of Education and Early Learning

Human Services Department **LEAD**

in partnership with Seattle Public Schools

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Parks and Recreation **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Local data show Seattle families with children experience higher rates of food insecurity.²¹ Children who lack consistent access to nutritious, culturally relevant food are especially vulnerable outside of school hours and on summer break, when school meals are not available. Summer meal programs

in Washington lags the rest of the country. According to a 2019 report, Washington summer nutrition programs only served a fraction of the low-income children who participate in Free & Reduced-Price School Meals during the school year, ranking 35th in the nation.⁹¹

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Programs like Seattle Afterschool Meals Program, the Weekend Backpack Program, and Summer Food Service Program offer food to children and families experiencing food insecurity. Existing work also includes efforts to provide food boxes or other resources during school holiday breaks. Future work should focus on determining the best locations and hours for families, offering enrichment activities at summer meal sites, and increasing access to food that is fresh and culturally relevant.

Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is also an effective program to reduce food insecurity and improve diet quality and was a key federal COVID-19 response strategy.⁹² Summer EBT provides families with children who qualify for Free or Reduced-Price School Meals with grocery benefits on a debit card during the summer. The City could support state and federal efforts to create a permanent nationwide summer EBT program.



Photo credit: Naomi Ishisaka, for Fresh Bucks

ACTION 1.G

Sustain & Strengthen Food & Meal Programming for Older Adults

Increase access to nutritious culturally relevant food and programming for older adults (ages 60+) in community and home settings.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Local data show older adults are more at risk of food insecurity due to living on a fixed income while raising grandchildren, social isolation, chronic illness, mobility challenges, and more.²¹ Community meal programs for older adults provide free, nutritious, culturally relevant, and well-balanced meals in communal and care settings. These programs deliver much more than just a meal to their clients; offerings also include nutrition services, social companionship, and other services to promote health, safety, food security, and independence as they age.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City provides ongoing investments for approximately 50 congregate meal and home delivery programs for older adults, while offering additional relief funding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Program sites are community anchor organizations that offer culturally relevant foods and in-language services. Future work could strengthen food access and social connectivity through nutrition education, farm field trips, cooking classes, and other community-building activities. Work should include a continued focus on increasing access to culturally relevant food and activities and increasing food sourced from local farmers and BIPOC-led and local businesses.



Photo credit: Filipino Community of Seattle

ACTION 1.H

Support “Food is Medicine” Programs

Partner with community health systems to pilot new (and enhance existing) “Food is Medicine” programs, focusing on individuals living with or at risk for chronic illness.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Lack of reliable access to nutritious food is a key driver of health outcomes and healthcare costs. “Food is Medicine” interventions provide healthy foods tailored to meet the specific needs of individuals living with or at risk for serious health conditions affected by diet. Addressing nutritional

needs is an important strategy to prevent or manage chronic illnesses. A growing number of local community health clinics and insurers are exploring how to integrate “Food is Medicine” interventions into patient-centered models of care. Recognizing the critical link between nutrition and chronic illness, the White House included an “Integrate Nutrition and Health” strategy at the [2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health](#).

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Public Health – Seattle & King County and the City’s Fresh Bucks program have a history of partnering with community health systems on “Food is Medicine” services. Healthcare providers have offered food, Fresh Bucks, and “food prescriptions” for free or discounted nutritious foods to individuals living with or at risk for chronic illness. Future work could focus on encouraging more local health systems to pilot or scale “Food is Medicine” services, assessing program impact on patient health outcomes and encouraging insurers to reimburse “Food is Medicine” interventions.



Photo credit: InterIm CDA

ACTION 1.1

Support & Strengthen Transportation Services for Food Access

Ensure strong transportation systems for individual food access and distribution. Support transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and EV fleets.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Seattle Department of Transportation

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Why this Action?

Transportation has a vital role in the food system. There is a direct link between food insecurity and transportation access—especially for those without a car or access to reliable, affordable, and convenient public transportation. Improving transportation options to grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, and meal programs increases access to nutritious

foods. Home delivery services that bring meals and groceries to people also increase food access. Individuals with health or mobility challenges, older adults, and households without car or bus access are among those who benefit most from transportation assistance.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the City and its partners expanded strategies to bring mobility-impaired residents to food access sites and increase home delivery of groceries and meals. Future work can further address barriers due to age, mobility, medical conditions, and home location, and can further increase land and water access for Native peoples. Potential solutions include improved service hours and locations, siting of bus stops or other transportation programs near food access points, increased home or hub delivery, timely transit shuttles, carshare programs, and affordable online grocery shopping and delivery. To align with the City's climate goals, food system transportation must prioritize electric vehicles wherever possible.



Photo credit: Sound Generations

ACTION 1.J

Prioritize Food Access for Unsheltered Populations

Develop a comprehensive, integrated response across City departments and community partners to improve food access for unsheltered populations.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

King County Regional Homelessness Authority **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Seattle Police Department

Why this Action?

People experiencing homelessness have unique food access needs, due in part to location (sometimes changing), lack of transportation, absence of safe cooking facilities, medical needs, and dietary restrictions. The City’s current food

investments for people experiencing homelessness focus on sheltered populations. People living unsheltered are reluctant to leave their possessions unprotected for long periods while they seek out food. They receive limited food (often snacks and water) from homeless outreach workers, and donations do not always meet people’s needs and may be wasted.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City and its partners provide ongoing meal funding at local homeless shelters, “tiny house villages,” and permanent supportive housing programs. People with the lived experience of homelessness desire healthy, culturally responsive, accessible food. Future work should include nutritious food and meals for unsheltered people that is easy to consume and does not produce excessive waste. Food distribution should be coupled with trauma-informed homeless outreach and include hygiene, food safety, and food waste removal services. Innovative strategies could include permitted mobile food units, community kitchens, food-related gift cards, and mutual aid group engagement. Donor education could result in more relevant food, better food safety practices, and reduced waste.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1 : COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY > ACTIONS

ACTION 1.K

Strengthen Disaster Preparedness Efforts

Support coordinated disaster preparedness planning to ensure communities have access to food in an emergency.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Finance and Administrative Services

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Office of Emergency Management **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Why this Action?

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how Seattle communities can innovate and adapt in emergencies; it also exposed risks of unexpected food system disruptions. The City conducts ongoing disaster preparation for earthquakes, extreme weather events, and more. The [Emergency Operations](#)

Plan describes how coordination will be managed by the many City departments and organizations that may be involved in a response. Food assistance is addressed in Emergency Response Function #6. Additional planning is needed to prepare an even stronger food response during future pandemics, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City formed an interdepartmental Emergency Feeding Task Force to guide the COVID-19 pandemic response, [investing millions](#) in critical, one-time relief dollars for food and meal programs.⁹³ City support prioritized vulnerable populations including low-income students and families, older adults, people with disabilities, and people experiencing homelessness. Future work should include contingencies to address disruptions in supply chain, production, distribution, transportation, and personnel. The City will provide training and experiential tabletop exercises for partners. Planning will be rooted in equity, ensure support for underserved neighborhoods and populations, and align with regional response efforts. Developing a centralized system to catalogue available commercial kitchens and their capabilities is also important for emergency planning.



Photo credit: OSLServes

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2



Land Access & Use

Support Traditional Foods and regenerative practices, locally grown and harvested foods, and community food projects, focusing on communities historically excluded from land and water access and honoring Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.

Actions

- 2.A Increase Equitable Community Land Access, Stewardship, & Ownership of Food & Agricultural Projects →
- 2.B Support Land Access for Stewardship by Coast Salish & Urban Native Communities →
- 2.C Activate More Public Land for Community Food Production →
- 2.D Integrate Food Policies & Goals into City Plans & Efforts →
- 2.E Support the P-Patch Community Gardening Program →
- 2.F Support Strategies that Improve Soil Health at Community Gardens & Urban Farms →
- 2.G Build Urban Agricultural Knowledge with Farmers & Gardeners →
- 2.H Work with Other Jurisdictions to Conserve Land Outside of Seattle for Equitable Food Production →

ACTION 2.A

Increase Equitable Community Land Access, Stewardship, & Ownership of Food & Agricultural Projects

Develop and pilot avenues to increase community land access, stewardship, and ownership of food and agricultural projects on private land.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Office of Planning & Community Development **LEAD**

City Attorney's Office

Why this Action?

Land ownership and land access to grow food are frequently raised as priorities during community engagement sessions.

Land ownership and access strategies should focus on self-determination and equitable food access for historically marginalized communities disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. Land access and property ownership in Seattle, as throughout the U.S., is rooted in many historical harms including colonization and theft of Indigenous lands, and control of land and resources by not upholding treaties, redlining, displacement, and other racist policies and practices. Supporting private land ownership by BIPOC communities would address displacement and lack of access to opportunities to build healthy neighborhoods.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City's Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) is one potential avenue to advance this action. EDI is a competitive grant program available to organizations working on anti-displacement efforts, with a continued emphasis on serving BIPOC communities impacted by institutional racism. EDI grants can be used for organizational capacity building, property acquisition, and capital expenses. EDI Advisory Board members and staff could identify opportunities to expand funding support for food-related projects that advance EDI's Equity Drivers. Other strategies could include leasing surplus public property for community food production and public benefit.



Photo credit: Black Farmers Collective

ACTION 2.B

Support Land Access for Stewardship by Coast Salish & Urban Native Communities

Increase land access for stewardship by Coast Salish and urban Native communities to retain, restore, and develop Native food systems.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods **LEAD**

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Office of Planning & Community Development **LEAD**

Seattle City Light

Seattle Parks and Recreation **LEAD**

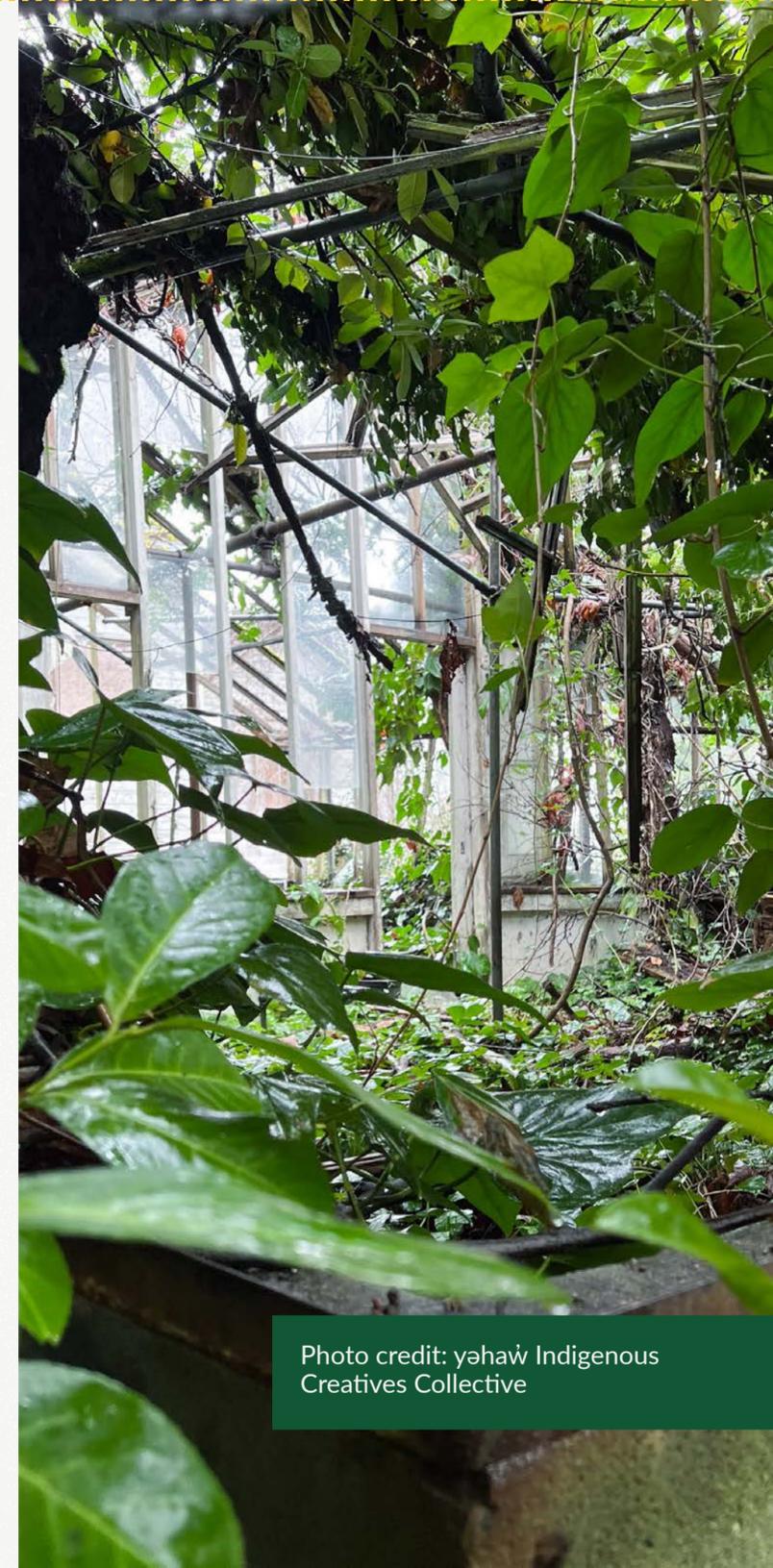
Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Through settler colonization, institutional racism, and chronic underfunding of trust and treaty obligations, Coast Salish and urban Native communities face significant barriers to exercising food sovereignty and addressing pervasive food insecurity. Culture, traditional knowledge, language revitalization, and self-determination are central to addressing the disparities and trauma resulting from systemic oppression. This action would support Coast Salish and urban Native communities efforts to retain, restore, and develop Native food systems.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Native-led organizations are converting areas around [Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center](#) and within Discovery Park into a foraging forest for community access. Native-led organizations are also stewarding public land at the [Beacon Food Forest](#), in transmission corridors, and at the Port of Seattle. Future strategies could include working with Tribes and urban Native communities to identify public land to co-manage using traditional ecological practices, and supporting land acquisition and financing for Tribal/community stewardship, food production, and public benefit. Scoping of this action should include consultation with Tribes and [Seattle's Indigenous Advisory Council](#).



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 : LAND ACCESS & USE > ACTIONS

ACTION 2.C

Activate More Public Land for Community Food Production

Activate more city parkland and under-utilized open space for Tribes and community groups who want to grow and cultivate food for community benefit.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Finance and Administrative Services Department

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Seattle City Light

Seattle Public Utilities

Seattle Department of Transportation

Why this Action?

The City offers several opportunities to grow food on public and private land, but demand exceeds available space to garden and farm. Many [P-Patch gardens](#) located in densely populated

areas have an average waitlist of over five years, and the [Urban Food System Program](#) handles high interest from the public for space to grow food. Food justice activists and community groups throughout Seattle want more access to land to grow food, cultivate “food forests” (forest ecosystems that produce edible plants), and steward public spaces for community food production and reconnection to cultural and traditional practices.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Community groups already grow and gather food in public spaces at [Marra Farm](#), [Rainier Beach Farm and Wetlands](#), [Beacon Food Forest](#), [Yes Farm](#), [P-Patch Community Gardens](#), Seattle Community Farm, community centers, garden and orchard sites managed by the [Urban Food System Program](#), and in the transmission corridor in upper Rainier Beach. Additional spaces could include school gardens, community centers, parklands, the space under transmission lines, and along right-of ways (ROWs) and multi-use paths. Converting more public space into community gardens and food forests requires planning, resources, community engagement, interdepartmental coordination, and a thorough assessment of site suitability. Interested community groups may need support and funding to effectively develop and steward the land for food production.



Photo credit: Sharon H. Chang,
South Seattle Emerald

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 : LAND ACCESS & USE > ACTIONS

ACTION 2.D

Integrate Food Policies & Goals into City Plans & Efforts

Integrate policies and goals supportive of the local food system into City plans and efforts.

Departments

Office of Planning & Community Development **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

in collaboration with the Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team and relevant City departments that lead various planning efforts

Why this Action?

City, neighborhood, and department plans can influence land use decisions and services available in neighborhoods. Continued integration of food policies into City plans and efforts helps reinforce the Plan's goals and priorities by aligning City and local food system planning.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Food is featured throughout [Seattle's Comprehensive Plan](#) with policies that support access to culturally relevant, nutritious, and affordable food, urban agriculture and community gardening, local food production, processing, distribution, and more. Food is also mentioned in many [neighborhood plans](#) and City policy documents. Future work at the nexus of food and urban planning should include consultation and engagement with federally recognized Tribes and prioritize projects that advance racial and social justice and community priorities. Projects could include supporting new sites that encourage local food production, processing, aggregation, distribution, and sales, activating more City-managed land for community gardening and urban agriculture, devising transportation strategies to increase food access for vulnerable populations, and co-locating food access projects with affordable housing development.



Photo credit: Sharon H. Chang,
South Seattle Emerald

ACTION 2.E

Support the P-Patch Community Gardening Program

Support the P-Patch Community Gardening Program by investing in infrastructure, materials, and supplies for existing sites, exploring the activation of more public land for new collective garden plots, and increasing program staff capacity depending on funding availability.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods **LEAD**

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

P-Patch is the City’s community gardening program, with over 90 P-Patches located throughout Seattle. P-Patches are gathering places where neighbors come together to plan, plant,

and maintain some of the City’s open space. Community gardens create strong social ties and foster the health and wellbeing of neighborhoods. Community gardens also strengthen cooperative networks, become a source of pride among residents, and serve as a visible product of land stewardship. P-Patches are very popular with residents; most gardens have a waitlist of at least several months and up to five years in densely populated areas. The 2008 Parks Levy provided the last significant funding for P-Patch development, and the program has limited and restricted ongoing resources for capital improvements.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

P-Patch community gardeners grow food on 14.9 acres and provide stewardship for an additional 18.8 acres of public land, totaling 33.7 acres. In 2020, the program began prioritizing plots for demographic populations underserved by the program, resulting in 46% of new gardeners identifying as BIPOC and/or low-income. That same year, the waitlist for interested gardeners nearly doubled. City parklands, Seattle Housing Authority properties, community centers, and under-utilized land near utility properties could be considered for additional P-Patches to meet high demand, if new funding is made available for operations, maintenance, and staff.



Photo credit: Global Wisdom Collective

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2 : LAND ACCESS & USE > ACTIONS

ACTION 2.F

Support Strategies that Improve Soil Health at Community Gardens & Urban Farms

Work with community partners to identify opportunities and pursue effective strategies to address and improve soil health at urban agriculture sites supported by City programs.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods
Office of Sustainability & Environment

Public Health – Seattle & King County
Seattle Parks & Recreation
Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Community gardens and urban farms can help build a more equitable and sustainable food system. However, urban agriculture requires soil conditions that support healthy plant growth. Community members have highlighted the need to

increase access to soil health and safety information and resources to improve community garden soil health, such as raised beds and soil amendments (compost, mulch, worm bins, mycoremediation).

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City and County offer the following resources:

- > The Department of Neighborhood’s P-Patch Community Gardening Program provides online [Organic Gardening Tip Sheets](#), including one on [soil health strategies](#).
- > Public Health – Seattle & King County and Washington Department of Ecology provide soil contamination assistance and tools through the [Dirt Alert program](#).
- > King Conservation District provides [basic soil nutrient tests](#) free of charge. Soil contaminant testing is available for an additional cost.
- > Seattle Public Utilities provides [gardening education and resources](#) for residents, including how to improve soil health.

Future work could include collaboration between these groups to support gardeners and urban farmers to adopt common techniques that improve soil health and reduce potential exposure to soil contaminants such as building raised beds, using soil amendments, and choosing crops that are appropriate for soil conditions.



ACTION 2.G

Build Urban Agricultural Knowledge with Farmers & Gardeners

Support toolkits and training for both new and experienced urban farmers and gardeners, including resources developed by the City and by local urban agricultural leaders.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods, King Conservation District, King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Toolkits and training opportunities can build the capacity of gardeners and community farmers to integrate practices for growing, harvesting, and distributing crops that are more sustainable, regenerative, and productive. Peer-to-peer learning is a preferred way to share best practices and foster

relationships among urban growers and land stewards. A wealth of local expertise can develop and deliver technical training and toolkits for culturally and linguistically diverse communities that are growing food in community gardens and urban farms.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Multiple City departments support community gardening and urban farms. The P-Patch Community Gardening program offers many online tools [for gardeners](#). Seattle Public Utilities' [Garden Hotline Natural Yard Care education program](#) offers classes, technical assistance, and other tools to support backyard composting, community gardens, and urban farms. Implementation of this action should include a City or County resource hub where toolkits, trainings, and other resources are centralized and available in different languages. Future strategies could also support partnerships with Tribal and local urban agricultural leaders to host webinars, offer on-site trainings, and develop resources for local growers. Partnerships could include the City's [P-Patch Community Gardening Program](#), the [Urban Food Systems Program](#), local tool libraries, seed libraries, and nurseries.



Photo credit: Department of Neighborhoods

ACTION 2.H

Work with Other Jurisdictions to Conserve Land Outside of Seattle for Equitable Food Production

Help preserve, protect, and restore farmland and waterways outside of Seattle city limits through partnerships that support equitable access to land for local, sustainable food production. Facilitate access for historically marginalized farmers and respect Tribal treaty rights.

Departments

King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks **LEAD**

King Conservation District

Office of Planning & Community Development

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seattle Parks and Recreation

Why this Action?

Historically, King County has been a productive agricultural region owing to its mild climate and prime soil. It also contains waterways and lands that sustain Tribal food enterprises and places where many Tribes reserve treaty rights to fish, harvest, hunt, and gather traditional foods. While farming has a major presence in King County and the surrounding region, increased land prices, regulations, urban pressures, and drainage problems have all significantly contributed to the challenge of continued farming. The land between urban and rural areas (“peri-urban” land) is at major risk of residential and commercial development, which contributes to farmland loss. Preserving and protecting farmland, watersheds, and salmon habitat while connecting urban BIPOC growers to farmland all contribute to a vibrant and equitable local food system.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Key agencies supporting land and natural resource preservation and increased access to land to produce food include King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, King County Farmland Leasing Program, Washington Farmland Trust, and the Working Farmland Partnership. The City could support the work of regional public-private partnerships, provide start-up and capacity funds for community land trusts and farming organizations, and lease or transfer public land and development rights to Tribes or community land trusts. Community priorities include long-term and low cost leasing of public land to BIPOC farmers, combining affordable housing development with space to grow food, regenerative farming practices, protecting waterways and salmon habitat, partnering with Tribes, and integrating food production efforts with local food access initiatives.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3



Education & Training

Expand access to culturally relevant and empowering food and nutrition education for youth, adults, and older adults.

Actions

- 3.A [Connect Young People to Food System Jobs & Job Training →](#)
- 3.B [Strengthen the Urban Food Systems Program →](#)
- 3.C [Invest in Culturally Relevant Food & Nutrition Programming for Youth →](#)
- 3.D [Support Community-Led Nutrition Education for Adults →](#)

ACTION 3.A

Connect Young People to Food System Jobs & Job Training

Support young people to gain paid job training opportunities in a variety of food-related policies and programs.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Why this Action?

Due to persistent systemic racism, BIPOC leadership is underrepresented throughout the food system. Agricultural census data for the [nation](#) and [Washington](#) show there are racial disparities in who owns farmland.^{47,97} In Seattle's restaurant industry, [local research shows](#) 46% of the industry's workforce are workers of color but concentrated in less visible,

lower-wage jobs and underrepresented in the coveted, highest-paid positions.¹² A [2021 Washington State University report](#) found BIPOC leadership is underrepresented in government food policy jobs and public benefit programs throughout Seattle and Washington, even though BIPOC leaders are on the frontlines of community food justice organizing.⁹⁴ In addition to advancing workforce equity, engaging young BIPOC people in food systems work has multiple co-benefits: job training and professional development for a new pipeline of leaders, diversity and new ideas, and capacity-building for community-based organizations.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Seattle has a strong history of creating internships, apprenticeships, and jobs in other sectors that can translate to the food system. Mentorship and coaching could enhance career opportunities throughout the food system. Future work could include new programming and scaling of existing programs, such as the [Seattle Youth Employment Program](#) (SYEP), and partnerships in the public, private, education, and nonprofit sectors to develop a food systems track.



Photo credit: Human Services Department

ACTION 3.B

Strengthen the Urban Food Systems Program

Continue the Urban Food Systems Program for young adults to gain valuable work experience via an urban agriculture platform of social justice and skill building opportunities. Explore opportunities for expansion with local or outside funding.

Departments

Seattle Parks and Recreation **LEAD**

Seattle Public Library

a partner on the BLOOM fellowship

Why this Action?

The Urban Food Systems (UFS) Program provides activities for BIPOC young adults to build community through outdoor recreation, urban agriculture, and other learning opportunities focused on the local food system. The program increases access

to healthy food, encourages active lifestyles, promotes equitable and sustainable environmental practices, and provides opportunities for recreation and cultural place-making. These experiences are designed around community priorities to promote food sovereignty, social justice, health, and wellness. Demand for the UFS Program has increased beyond current resource capacity.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The UFS Program works with a variety of partners to steward dozens of community garden sites and fruit orchards. The program also offers the BLOOM (Beginning Leadership for Organizing and Orchard Management) fellowship program for BIPOC young adults to gain valuable work experience in urban agriculture and social justice skill building. Other programming includes community kitchens and cooking classes, food pantries located at community centers, Teen Top Chef, and the Lifelong Recreation Food and Fitness Program. With additional resources, future work could include creating new community gardens and food forests on City-managed land and funding community groups with expertise in sustainable, restorative, and Native land management practices to steward the sites.



Photo credit: Dancing in the Rain

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 : EDUCATION & TRAINING > ACTIONS

ACTION 3.C

Invest in Culturally Relevant Food & Nutrition Programming for Youth

Invest in holistic, culturally relevant food and nutrition programming and education by and for youth, empowering young people to also lead on the design, development, and delivery of curricula.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

in partnership with Seattle Public Schools

Seattle Parks and Recreation **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Childhood and teenage years are a critical time to build awareness of the many ways food choices impact our lives. Yet, a nationwide [2020 School Health Survey](#) found that Seattle students have some of the country's lowest rates of traditional classroom-based food and nutrition education.⁹⁵ This action would deepen youth understanding of the relationship between food and culture, where food comes from and how to prepare it, and how food choices (often inequitably) impact our individual and community health and the environment.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Future work could include investments in youth-focused food justice organizations and Tribes to design and deliver holistic, culturally relevant curricula for youth audiences in a variety of formats and settings, particularly within Seattle Public Schools, summer camps, afterschool programs, farmers markets, events, and youth-oriented community sites. Potential topics raised in [Food Action Plan community engagement](#) include nutrition, sustainable agriculture, food waste, food justice, community organizing, traditional and first foods of Native peoples, food budgeting, and the relationship between food, culture, language, and history.



Photo credit: Seattle Farm to Preschool program

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3 : EDUCATION & TRAINING > ACTIONS

ACTION 3.D

Support Community-Led Nutrition Education for Adults.

Support health promotion and nutrition education programs led by communities most impacted by food and health inequities. Programs should be culturally relevant, empowering, and action oriented.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Seattle Parks and Recreation **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Through [Food Action Plan community engagement](#), BIPOC communities most impacted by health disparities have called for empowering, culturally relevant, in-language health promotion and nutrition education that addresses systemic barriers to equitable

health. The historic harms of settler colonialism, racism, and systemic oppression continue to strongly influence health outcomes, limiting access to education, housing, employment, nutritious food, and healthcare. In Seattle and across the U.S., race, place (geographic location), and income are strong predictors of chronic illness like obesity, cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease/hypertension, and stroke—all of which are associated with poor nutrition and are leading causes of death.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City’s current nutrition education portfolio focuses predominantly on low-income, BIPOC, young children ([Farm to Preschool](#), [Child Care Nutrition Program](#)), and older adults ([Nutrition Services for Older Adults](#), [Lifelong Recreation Food and Fitness Program](#)). Future work with any population must continue to meet the needs of people most impacted by racism and health disparities. Community-based organizations have tools to design and lead culturally relevant health promotion and nutrition education programs, as seen in grantees of the City’s Food Equity Fund.



Photo credit: InterIm CDA

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4



Economy & Labor

Create an equitable, fair, and healthy local food economy for workers, businesses, and residents.

Actions

- 4.A [Work with Community Partners to Co-Enforce Seattle's Labor Laws →](#)
- 4.B [Support Strong Labor Protections for Farmworkers →](#)
- 4.C [Include Labor Standards in City Contracts & Agreements →](#)
- 4.D [Support Food Projects that Promote Equitable Economic Development →](#)
- 4.E [Support New & Existing Small Food Businesses →](#)
- 4.F [Streamline the Permitting Process for Farmers Markets →](#)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 : ECONOMY & LABOR > ACTIONS

ACTION 4.A

Work with Community Partners to Co-Enforce Seattle's Labor Laws

Support the capacity of community-based organizations to co-enforce the City's labor laws for food system workers, focusing on people working low-wage jobs.

Departments

Office of Labor Standards **LEAD**

Why this Action?

The City works with community-based organizations embedded in low-wage worker communities and high-violation sectors to co-enforce the City's labor laws via the [Community Outreach and Education Fund](#) (COEF). According to Office of Labor Standards (OLS) [data dashboards](#), food services and retail are the top industries for complaints and investigations of

unfair labor practices, including violations of Paid Sick and Safe Time, Wage Theft, Minimum Wage, Fair Chance Employment, and Secure Scheduling ordinances. Populations most likely to occupy low-wage jobs and experience workplace violations include female, BIPOC, immigrant and refugee, LGBTQ, veteran, youth workers, and workers with disabilities.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

COEF partners are community organizations with deep ties to workers who are most vulnerable to City labor violations. Proactive worker engagement is critical to identifying and resolving workplace violations. Supporting the COEF builds the capacity of community partners to provide low-wage Seattle workers information about their rights and pathways to address and resolve labor standard violations.



ACTION 4.B

Support Strong Labor Protections for Farmworkers

Support stronger labor protections, worker safety, and dignity for farmworkers.

Departments

Office of Labor Standards

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Why this Action?

Seattle is connected to some of the most productive agricultural regions in the world, and agricultural production, food processing, and trade are a significant part of Washington's economy.⁹⁶ Farmworkers are essential in ensuring Seattle's foodshed is stocked with fresh food, yet they are among the country's most exploited laborers, facing displacement, human rights abuses, race-based exclusions,

and inadequate labor protections. Immigrant and migrant farm workers make up 73% of agriculture workers in the U.S., with most from Mexico and Central America.⁹⁷ In 2019-2020, 10% of farmworkers identified as Indigenous.⁹⁸ Indigenous agricultural workers face similar or worse abuses as other agricultural workers. Non-Spanish speaking Indigenous peoples may be more isolated and face greater barriers to filing complaints about workplace safety or labor rights abuse.⁹⁹ The City can work with state agencies and community partners to undo discriminatory farm labor practices and ensure equal rights for farmworkers.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The 2021 Washington State Legislature passed SB 5172, a bill expanding overtime protections to all agricultural employees. Under the State Minimum Wage Act, agricultural employees have historically been exempt from receiving overtime pay, but that exemption expired Jan. 1, 2022. Starting 2024, agricultural laborers, like most hourly workers, will receive time-and-a-half wages for hours worked beyond 40 per week. Looking ahead, the City could engage with farmworker advocates, labor unions, and policymakers to support policy recommendations such as farmworker protections from heat stress, improvements in field sanitation, housing conditions, workers' compensation, pesticide safety, and health and disability insurance.



Photo credit: Elaine Thompson, Associated Press

ACTION 4.C

Include Labor Standards in City Contracts & Agreements

Increase outreach and education about the City's labor laws to food businesses by including strong labor standards and workforce equity provisions into relevant City contracts and small business programs.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Finance and Administrative Services

Human Services Department

Office of Economic Development

Office of Labor Standards **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Why this Action?

For successful implementation of the City's labor standards, workers must understand their rights, and businesses must understand and comply with their responsibilities under the laws. Businesses are critical in achieving labor equity and need to be equipped with information and educational resources to be successful. Incorporating labor standards and workforce equity provisions into City food service and retail contracts and agreements can increase awareness of and compliance with the City's labor standards.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City currently offers the Business Outreach and Education Fund for small businesses owned by low-income and historically disenfranchised communities—who typically are not served by traditional outreach—to increase awareness and compliance with the City's labor standards. These efforts could be furthered by educating small businesses about labor protections through the City's Small Business Support program. The City could also include strong purpose statements about labor standards in all food program contracts and agreements.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 : ECONOMY & LABOR > ACTIONS

ACTION 4.D

Support Food Projects that Promote Equitable Economic Development

Develop and implement community and economic development initiatives that expand access to fresh, local, affordable, culturally relevant food and create economic opportunities in underserved communities.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department

Office of Economic Development **LEAD**

Office of Planning & Community Development **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Why this Action?

Increasing neighborhood availability of fresh, culturally diverse foods through a variety of small businesses has been a community priority for years, especially in southwest and southeast Seattle

and pockets in the north end. [Local research](#) shows there are still underserved areas lacking convenient access to nutritious food, especially in Georgetown, South Park, Delridge, and High Point.²¹ Meanwhile, small food businesses are an important part of the local economy—they generate jobs with low barriers to entry and give individuals opportunities to climb the “wage ladder.” Economic development can increase equitable access to nutritious and culturally relevant food, community development, cultural expression, and community building.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Examples of City-supported economic development projects focused on food include the Rainier Beach Food Innovation District, Good Food Kitchens, and new farmers markets established in underserved neighborhoods. Future work could include partnering with Tribes, community organizations, technical assistance providers, and capital access organizations to support small business development in underserved areas. Priority should be given to projects that prevent displacement, advance equitable development, build on local cultural assets, and increase access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 : ECONOMY & LABOR > ACTIONS

ACTION 4.E

Support New & Existing Small Food Businesses

Work with regional partners to increase access to capital and financing and provide technical assistance to small food and farm businesses, particularly those owned by BIPOC, women, and other underrepresented entrepreneurs.

Departments

King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks **LEAD**

Office of Economic Development **LEAD**

Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

Why this Action?

Small food and farm businesses are vital to the local and regional economy. They generate revenue and employment opportunities, create fresh and culturally relevant food access points, and use environmentally sustainable business practices. Small businesses that offer traditional and culturally relevant foods help anchor

cultural communities and increase residents' sense of belonging. Many small food businesses and farms need access to capital and financing to support startup costs and assistance navigating the technical requirements to develop a viable, thriving business. Support should focus on BIPOC-owned businesses which are underrepresented in the region due to race-based disparities in opportunities for wealth accumulation.⁶⁰

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City should continue comprehensive support for food businesses through its Small Business Program and increase equitable access to grants and financing, low- or no-cost consulting services, marketing support, and training. Services should prioritize small and micro fresh food businesses located in underserved communities and increased access to culturally relevant, in-language, and community-led outreach to priority communities. This action should build on recent efforts led by King County to develop a strategic financing plan for the local food system. Future work could also include support for a cooperative marketplace for BIPOC food producers to sell their goods and services.



Photo credit: Naomi Ishisaka, for Fresh Bucks

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4 : ECONOMY & LABOR > ACTIONS

ACTION 4.F

Streamline the Permitting Process for Farmers Markets

Streamline the permitting process and regulatory experience for new and existing farmers markets, farm stands, mobile food businesses, and temporary events.

Departments

Office of Economic Development **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County (Food Protection Program)

Seattle Fire Department

Why this Action?

Farmers markets and farm stands help locally grown produce reach families and communities across Seattle. They provide opportunities for local farmers and small food businesses to sell their products, create public awareness of local food, and foster connections with local growers, producers, and

consumers. Farmers markets contribute to growing demand for food that tastes good, is fresh, promotes food sovereignty, and is grown using ethical and sustainable production and labor practices. They also serve as incubators, providing low-risk, low-cost opportunities for small entrepreneurs to expand or test new businesses and products. Mobile food operations, catering businesses, and food processing businesses are additional ways for entrepreneurs to expand or diversify revenue. Farmers market organizations and small food businesses have shared that the City's permitting processes is burdensome, requiring coordination with up to eight or more City, County, and State agencies responsible for permitting, traffic planning, neighborhood outreach, and food policy.¹⁰⁰

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City's [webpage for food businesses](#) includes comprehensive information on the various permits required for farmers markets, mobile food businesses, and temporary events. Future work would include updating the 2009 definition of allowable farmers market vendor activity and developing an annual or multi-year master permit for longstanding markets operating in public spaces, with a goal of meeting current farmers market needs and reducing permitting burdens for applicants.



Photo credit: Neighborhood Farmers Market Association

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5



Local Supply Chains

Foster equitable, environmentally sustainable, and strengthened local supply chains.

Actions

- 5.A Explore Development of a Sustainable, Equitable Food Purchasing Initiative →
- 5.B Strengthen Food Value Chain Coordination →
- 5.C Invest in Local Food System Infrastructure →

ACTION 5.A

Explore Development of a Sustainable, Equitable Food Purchasing Initiative

Develop values-based food purchasing standards that advance equity and sustainability goals through food procurement within key City food programs and large food service institutions, such as corporate campuses, hospitals, schools, and universities.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Finance & Administrative Services

Office of Labor Standards

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Human Services Department

King Conservation District

King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks

Public Health - Seattle & King County

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Why this Action?

Procurement and purchasing standards influence how public dollars support an equitable and sustainable food system. Values-based food purchasing aligns spending with core values such as equity, health, local economy, fair labor, cultural relevance, and environmental sustainability. There is a national effort for public institutions to adopt [Good Food Purchasing Standards](#) and policies have already been adopted in major cities throughout the U.S.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

This action would build on existing work to integrate values-based purchasing into City contracts. For example, the City already has a [Sustainable Purchasing Policy](#) to guide purchases of goods and services in a manner that integrates environmental stewardship, racial and social equity, and fiscal responsibility.¹⁰¹ Implementation of this action will require consultation with contract and procurement specialists, decision makers from food service organizations, and food producers and suppliers. Guidelines will address core values including equity, health, local economy, fair labor, cultural relevance, and environmental sustainability. Work should also include aligning guidelines with procurement strategies and developing meaningful metrics to track progress.



Photo credit: Carmen Hom, International Examiner

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5 : LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS > ACTIONS

ACTION 5.B

Strengthen Food Value Chain Coordination

Strengthen value chain coordination between City-supported food programs and vendors to increase food sourcing from sustainable, local, and BIPOC-owned food producers and farms.

Departments

Facilities and Administrative Services

King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks **LEAD**

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Value chain coordination strengthens connections across the food system through technical assistance, market matchmaking, relationship building, and other strategies.¹⁰²

Connecting City food programs and partners with local food producers—especially BIPOC-owned, Tribal food enterprises, and those using environmentally sustainable practices—supports the local economy and fosters a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food system. Local purchasing can be challenging for new buyers, especially those who have relied heavily on one distributor. Technical assistance helps identify available foods, find vendors, and conduct procurement of more local items. Purchases made through City food programs can increase these community benefits.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Current work includes prioritizing and aligning local, equitable, and sustainable purchasing across City-supported food programs such as childcare programs, Seattle Public Schools, Fresh Bucks retailers, food banks, and congregate meal programs. Future work could include expanded investments to support staffing and food costs in programs that implement values-aligned food purchasing. Beyond City food programs, increasing value chain coordination with other major institutional food services, such as hospitals and universities, would have the largest impact in building a resilient local food supply chain.



Photo credit: Rainier Beach Action Coalition

ACTION 5.C

Invest in Local Food System Infrastructure

Invest in a range of hard-asset infrastructure that is energy efficient, sustainably built, and designed to equitably support a diverse pool of local food system projects.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Human Services Department

King County Department of Natural Resources & Parks **LEAD**

King County Metro

Office of Economic Development **LEAD**

Office of Planning & Community Development **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**

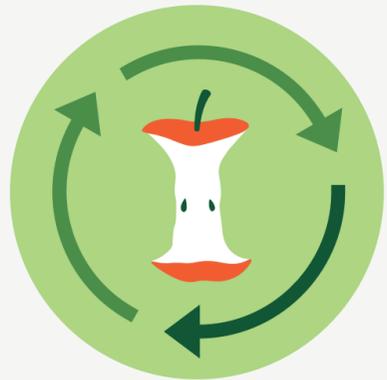
Why this Action?

Local research has clarified the need for improved food system infrastructure in Seattle and the region to support robust local supply chains and a vibrant food economy.¹⁰³ Examples include single- and multi-purpose facilities with dry and cold storage; fish tenders for collecting fresh caught salmon; commercial kitchens; processing, aggregation, and distribution under the same roof; delivery trucks and refrigerated transportation; greenhouses; washing and distribution infrastructure to facilitate the use of reusable food packaging and service ware; and collaborative meeting space. Multi-functional facilities can foster collaboration and innovation across a broad array of food system projects. Public investment, coordination, and support can ensure infrastructure access by small-scale, BIPOC-owned farms and food businesses, food access programs, and other suppliers.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Several efforts are underway to develop multi-purpose food hubs in South Seattle, led by community-based food justice and hunger relief organizations. The City should continue to support these developments. Additional infrastructure priorities should be coordinated with small- and medium-sized food producers, food access providers, small food businesses, mutual aid groups, and others to identify needs and opportunities, centering BIPOC-led projects. Opportunities might include external funding for capital investments, infrastructure buildout, and operating costs and supporting capacity-building for community organizations. Existing City grant programs also help support small and micro food system infrastructure, and the City could also consider how to activate its own facilities (such as community centers and kitchens) for infrastructure needs.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6



Food Waste

Prevent food waste, rescue (redistribute) surplus food for people who need it, and compost the rest.

Actions

- 6.A Increase Public Awareness About Food Waste Prevention →
- 6.B Partner with Food Businesses to Prevent Food Waste →
- 6.C Strengthen Cross-Sector Food Rescue Operations →
- 6.D Implement Nutrition Policies for Rescued & Donated Food →
- 6.E Compost Inedible Food & “Compost Right” →
- 6.F Reduce Single-Use Food Service Ware in City Food Programs →

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.A

Increase Public Awareness About Food Waste Prevention

Amplify consumer food waste prevention campaigns to raise awareness about the environmental, financial, and social impacts of food waste and highlight actions to take to avoid waste in the first place.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Food is the single largest material in Seattle’s waste stream despite being banned from the garbage. Approximately 20% of residential garbage and 19% of business garbage is composed of food waste.^{63,64} The cost of wasted food on an individual household is substantial, equaling \$1,365 to \$2,275 annually. Wasting food also wastes valuable resources, such as fresh water, land, and energy and contributes to climate change. Food waste produces 6% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making prevention a significant opportunity to reduce climate pollution in the food system.⁶⁶

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Methods for reducing food waste at home are relatively simple—creating meal plans, identifying food storage needs, and understanding expiration dates—but public awareness of these methods has varied. In 2021, Seattle Public Utilities developed a [Love Food Stop Waste](#) media campaign to help Seattle residents to better understand the financial savings in reducing food waste. Future work could increase consumer awareness about the environmental impacts of food waste and how consumers can make meaningful changes.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.B

Partner with Food Businesses to Prevent Food waste

Partner with food business, such as institutional food services, grocers, restaurants, caterers, and hospitality businesses, to prevent food waste by using a “target-measure-act” approach to set food waste reduction targets, measure waste, identify food waste reduction opportunities, and act on these opportunities.

Departments

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Food waste comprises approximately 19% of all garbage coming from Seattle businesses.⁶⁴ Beyond reducing their own waste, businesses can influence consumers to waste less food.

A growing number of businesses are committing to waste reduction goals, but more can be done to support standardized measurement and effective action. A “target-measure-act” plan gives food businesses a structure to commit to a reduction goal (“target”), measure waste over time, and take action to reduce waste. Measurement identifies where, why, and to what extent food waste is occurring. Action can mean applying inventory technology to reduce surplus, using dynamic pricing to decrease unsold food, adjusting portion sizes and serving practices to avoid waste from customers, and repurposing food into new edible products (“upcycling”).

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Seattle Public Utilities is part of the [Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment](#), a public-private partnership committed to working alongside large food businesses to track and measure food waste, take action on waste hotspots, and report results. Future work could include partnering with technology and technical assistance providers to support “target-measure-act approaches” in hospitality food services (hotels and convention centers), food distributors, schools, universities, hospitals, and corporate cafeterias. Food waste prevention technical assistance could be integrated into [Seattle’s Green Business Program](#).



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.C

Strengthen Cross-Sector Food Rescue Operations

Work with hunger relief organizations and food businesses to design, test, and adopt innovative changes that reduce wasted food and packaging while increasing the rescue and redistribution of high-quality, nutritious food to people experiencing food insecurity.

Departments

Human Services Department

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**

Why this Action?

Food rescue is the process of collecting unsold, edible food from food businesses and redistributing it to people who need it most. This is a critical tool for increasing food security efforts while keeping valuable food out of the garbage or compost. Seattle's 2022 Commercial Waste Composition Study estimated that 72% of food waste coming from Seattle businesses was edible (intended to be consumed by people).⁶⁴ Increasing the effectiveness of food rescue could keep unsold food at its intended purpose, which is to feed people.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Food rescue requires partnerships between businesses, non-profits, and public agencies to address complex problems like transportation, logistics, food safety, communication, storage, and redistribution. Seattle Public Utilities' [Food Rescue Innovation](#) work supports cross-sector collaboration to design and test new strategies informed by current food waste prevention research. Future food rescue work could include food donation nutrition policies and guidance to help ensure the best health impacts from rescued food [SEE ACTION 6.D](#).



Photo credit: OSL Food in Motion program

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.D

Implement Nutrition Policies for Rescued & Donated Food

Streamline and strengthen policies for high-quality, nutritious, and culturally relevant rescued and donated food at food banks and meal programs while avoiding donations that do not meet nutrition or food safety guidelines.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

People experiencing recurring food insecurity face a higher risk of chronic illness and poorer diets due to inadequate access to nutritious food. Clients who visit food banks and meal programs depend on these regular sources of nutrition and appreciate efforts to offer fresh and culturally relevant foods. Client feedback consistently reflects a desire for more of these foods. Nutrition policies can convey responsiveness to client needs and preferences, communicate to donors the types of foods accepted, reduce food waste, and support client health through nutritious food access.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Current human services contracts include general language about expectations for nutritious food. The City could support member food and meal coalitions to develop and/or strengthen specific nutrition policies based on client health needs and food (including cultural) preferences, program inventory data, and any existing program-level policies. Once nutrition policies are in place, they can be strengthened based on program outcomes and feedback from organizations, clients, and donors. Food retail donors can use these policies to train retail employees and tailor their food donations as needed.



Photo credit: Food Lifeline

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.E

Compost Inedible Food & “Compost Right”

Continue to increase composting of inedible food from businesses and consumers, emphasizing how to “compost right” (food in, plastic out).

Departments

Seattle Department of Construction & Inspections

Seattle Parks & Recreation

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**



Why this Action?

When all strategies to prevent food waste and rescue edible surplus food have been exhausted (see Actions 6.A, 6.B, 6.C), the remainder (inedible, unsafe food) must go to compost. Even though food is banned from City garbage, food waste still makes up an estimated 20% of Seattle’s residential garbage and 19% of Seattle’s commercial garbage.^{63,64} Organic waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change. Composting keeps resources out of the landfill and reduces methane emissions. When compost is returned to the soil, it adds nutrients, retains water, increases yields when growing food, and stores carbon. While diverting more food scraps to the compost system is key to helping us reach our sustainability goals, we need to do it right; contamination in the food and yard waste stream, such as plastic and glass, is the greatest threat to food waste composting programs throughout the United States.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City Municipal Code ([21.36.082](#) and [21.36.083](#)) requires that residents and businesses do not put food scraps, compostable paper, yard waste, and recyclables in their garbage. Food and yard waste must be composted, and it is important to “compost right”, which means plastics and other contaminants must be kept out of compost. Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and the County are reinforcing how to “compost right” by using positive, solutions-based messages and outreach in multiple languages. SPU provides tools for food scrap collection, onsite training, customized signage, educational materials, and bins to residents and businesses, including through its [Green Business Program](#).

Future work could include messaging in more detail how composting impacts the environment and climate, reducing barriers to composting in multifamily properties, and updating City land use code to require that new multifamily construction provides convenient access to food and yard waste collection.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6 : FOOD WASTE > ACTIONS

ACTION 6.F

Reduce Single-Use Food Service Ware in City Food Programs

Reduce single-use food service packaging and plastics (e.g., utensils, straws, cup lids, sauce packets) in City food programs. Where possible, support and facilitate the use of reusable food packaging and service ware.

Departments

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Single-use food service ware and other single-use plastics contribute significantly to food-related waste. Hunger relief organizations that provide food and meals may lack the access or resources to provide compostable food service packaging and service ware, particularly at large volumes. Some organizations may not be aware of evolving packaging requirements or lack the infrastructure to support reusable food packaging and service ware.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

City Municipal Code section [21.36.086](#) requires food service businesses to find reusable, recyclable, or compostable packaging and service ware alternatives to all disposable food service items such as containers, cups, straws, utensils, and other products. This applies to all food service businesses, including restaurants, grocery stores, delis, coffee shops, food trucks, and institutional cafeterias. The City provides a [variety of resources](#) in multiple languages to help businesses comply with packaging requirements. Because nonprofit organizations are not required to comply, this action would focus on supporting nonprofit food access partners to increase use of reusable, recyclable, and/or compostable packaging and service ware solutions.



Photo credit: Katherine
Chew Hamilton

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 7



Environment & Climate

Reduce climate pollution associated with Seattle’s food system and support regenerative food production practices that improve the environment and honor Tribal sovereignty and treaty rights.

Actions

- 7.A [Reduce Climate Pollution Associated with the Local Food System →](#)
- 7.B [Support Community-Led Education & Awareness Campaigns About Food Justice Issues →](#)
- 7.C [Support Regenerative Food & Agricultural Practices →](#)

ACTION 7.A

Reduce Climate Pollution Associated with the Local Food System

Identify and develop high-impact strategies the City and County can use to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with food production and consumption within Seattle in coordination with community, institutional, and other governmental partners.

Departments

Office of Sustainability and Environment LEAD
in coordination with departments involved in the City's [climate action work](#).

Seattle Public Utilities LEAD

Why this Action?

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are the primary cause of [climate change](#), especially in urban areas.¹⁰⁴ The City, County, and other jurisdictions developed a [Consumption-Based Emissions Inventory](#) to analyze emissions from products and services bought and consumed in Seattle. Food-related emissions represent 24% of Seattle's Consumption-Based Emissions, which includes all food consumed by Seattle residents, broken down by food type.⁷¹

Seattle and other cities can have a significant impact on GHG emissions beyond their geographic borders by influencing global supply chains.¹⁰⁵

FOOD-RELATED CONSUMPTION INTERVENTIONS:⁷¹

- ✓ Prevent waste in households, businesses, and the global food supply chain
- ✓ Promote dietary changes such as healthy caloric intake and reduced meat and dairy consumption
- ✓ Decarbonize food production supply chains
- ✓ Reduce emissions associated with crop production

- ✓ Reduce livestock methane emissions
- ✓ Reducing nitrous oxide emissions from agriculture

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Many programs supporting sustainable and values-based food purchasing (Strategies 1 and 5), local supply chains (Strategy 5), food waste prevention (Strategy 6), and regenerative agriculture (Action 7.B) can reduce food-related emissions. Leveraging the insights from the City's [Consumption-Based emissions Inventory](#)—and a broad base of research on how food systems contribute to climate change—the City and County can identify additional high-impact strategies to reduce emissions. Seattle's consumption patterns and GHG emissions especially harm BIPOC communities who unequally bear the burden of climate change, air pollution, and environmental degradation. The City will partner with BIPOC communities to shape equitable climate-related food policy.

ACTION 7.B

Support Community-Led Education & Awareness Campaigns About Food Justice Issues

Invest in positive, innovative, culturally relevant, community-led education and awareness campaigns about food justice issues.

Departments

To be determined.

Why this Action?

Seattle residents make daily choices that affect the food system, from what food to purchase to what companies to support to what to do with unused food. This action would increase awareness about the benefits and harms of individual and institutional food choices on a range of food and environmental justice issues, including individual and community health, the

environment, the local economy, fair labor, animal welfare, and more. For meaningful behavior change, solutions should be led by communities, avoiding top-down directives.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City has experience providing effective education through the [Love Food Stop Waste campaign](#), which amplifies the harmful impacts of food waste. The City funded [Be Ready](#), [Be Hydrated](#), a public awareness campaign—developed in partnership with BIPOC youth targeted by sugary beverage marketing—that illustrates the value of community driven peer education. Future work should further support strategies and actions led by communities, especially youth, most impacted by food system injustices. The City offers programs that could fund this work ([Food Equity Fund](#), [Environmental Justice Fund](#), [Duwamish River Opportunity Fund](#), [Waste-Free Matching Community Grant](#)). Campaign planning should use participatory and mixed-method research to inform campaign messages and strategies while building on the strengths of community, such as youth expertise in social media and digital education. Campaigns should also be specific about actions that increase access to foods that benefit people and the planet.



Photo credit: Mel Ponder,
International Examiner

ACTION 7.C

Support Regenerative Food & Agricultural Practices

Develop new City action(s) that support local food producers' use of regenerative agricultural practices, promote a circular food economy, and slow climate change.

Departments

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability and Environment

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Many common U.S. food production practices harm the environment and people. Using regenerative practices, food can be produced in ways that not only prevent harm to the environment but also *improve* it. Regenerative practices can make soil stable and healthy, improve biodiversity, and improve air and water quality—resulting in land and water that

more closely resembles nature. Meanwhile, a circular food economy prevents food waste, redistributes high-quality surplus food to those who need it, and turns inedible food by-products and food waste into new products.

Native and Indigenous peoples are leaders in regenerative practices and for millennia have produced food in harmony with nature. Communities most impacted by climate change are innovating ways to foster a regenerative and circular local food system and need support to test their solutions and bring them to scale. Supporting sustainable and regenerative practices is also a priority of several state and regional government partners, including Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State Conservation Commission, Washington State Department of Ecology, Washington State University, and the King Conservation District.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

This new action should be scoped in collaboration with diverse food system partners (i.e., production, processing, distribution, retail, consumers, and waste management sectors). The City could support local food producers who practice environmental sustainability, focusing on cattle and dairy producers. Further work could include measuring (and reducing) environmental and climate impacts in food production and manufacturing. Any actions should be integrated with food access programs and other community-led food system innovations.

Currently, Seattle Public Utilities works collaboratively with the County to develop compost markets—including expanding from landscaping practices into agriculture—and support circular economy initiatives. As part of this work, Seattle Public Utilities works with policy makers and other State agencies (e.g., Washington State Conservation Commission, Washington State University, and Washington State Department of Agriculture) to reduce barriers and incentivize growers to use regenerative practices (e.g., the [Sustainable Farms and Fields](#) program).

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 8



Food Action Plan Stewardship

Create intentional structures and processes that enable effective coordination and implementation of the Food Action Plan in alignment with community and City values and priorities.

Actions

- 8.A Invest in Community-Led Action →
- 8.B Report on Food Action Plan Implementation & Progress →
- 8.C Track State & Federal Legislation & Funding Opportunities →
- 8.D Strengthen Culturally Relevant, In-Language Outreach →
- 8.E Support Community Engagement & Cross-Sector Collaboration →
- 8.F Facilitate Cross-Department Collaboration →

ACTION 8.A

Invest in Community-Led Action

Invest in community-led innovations and actions that support equitable, sustainable, and resilient local food systems, focusing on communities most impacted by race and social inequities.

Departments

Department of Neighborhoods **LEAD**

Human Services Department

Office of Sustainability & Environment

Seattle Public Utilities

Why this Action?

Investments in community-led initiatives through grants, contracts, and other funding supports community wellbeing and resilience. Community-led solutions can be especially effective because leaders have established trusting relationships with community members and hold intimate knowledge of and respect for their cultures and languages.

Equitable funding practices are essential to reverse decades of underfunding of BIPOC-led organizations and disinvestment in BIPOC communities.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City offers several ongoing grant programs focused on food and food systems, such as Department of Neighborhoods' [Food Equity Fund](#) and [Human Services Department's](#) funding for Farm to Preschool, Food and Meals, Culturally Nourishing Foods for Older Adults, and more. Requests to these competitive grant programs consistently exceed available funding.

Other City grant programs that do not *focus* on food but have historically funded food-related projects include [Neighborhood Matching Fund](#), [Equitable Development Initiative](#), [Environmental Justice Fund](#), [Duwamish River Opportunity Fund](#), [King Conservation District's \(KCD\) Seattle Community Partnership Grant Program](#), [Waste-Free Communities Matching Grant](#); and the [Cultural Space Agency](#).

Future work should continue cross-departmental coordination to enhance funding processes in ways that ensure equitable investments, center community priorities, and reduce access barriers for community partners.



Photo credit: Young Women Empowered (Y-WE) Grow program

ACTION 8.B

Report on Food Action Plan Implementation & Progress

Develop and implement approaches to monitor and report regularly on Plan progress, focusing on outcomes most important to communities impacted by food system inequities.

Departments

Human Services Department LEAD

in coordination with the City's Food Action Plan IDT

Office of Sustainability & Environment LEAD

in coordination with the City's Food Action Plan IDT

Why this Action?

The importance of monitoring and communicating progress toward Plan goals were common themes that came up in [Food Action Plan community engagement](#). Regular and transparent progress reporting across the City's many food policies and programs will help to keep community members, the public, Tribes, and City leadership informed about successes, challenges, and opportunities for future planning and work.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

City departments already report on key outcomes for specific food programs and services. This action will focus on summarizing progress across the Plan and making information on program performance accessible to the public such as through an online dashboard or other reporting tools. Continued engagement with partners across the food system will be needed to identify important measures of success. This work will also require holistic, cross-departmental thinking about how actions in the Plan are interrelated and can accomplish multiple objectives.



Photo credit: Naomi Ishisaka, for Fresh Bucks

ACTION 8.C

Track State & Federal Legislation & Funding Opportunities

Support a coordinated City response to regional and federal legislative issues and funding opportunities that advance Plan priorities.

Departments

Human Services Department (HSD)

in coordination with OSE and the City's Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team

Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) **LEAD**

Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) **LEAD**

in coordination with HSD and the City's Food Action Plan Interdepartmental Team

Seattle Public Utilities **LEAD**

Leads on food waste issues in coordination with OIR

Why this Action?

Federal food, agriculture, and nutrition policies have a major impact on Seattle's local food system and our broader foodshed. For example, the U.S. Farm Bill affects the livelihoods of state and local farmers, how food is grown, what food is produced, and how accessible that food is to low-income families through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act authorizes all federal school meal and child nutrition programs, including the School Breakfast Program, the National School Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In 2019, the Washington State Legislature declared statewide food waste reduction goals (**RCW 70A.205.715**) and enacted legislation (**HB 1587**) to establish a fruit and vegetable prescription program for individuals with low incomes.

State and federal policy development opportunities can create positive change in the local food system and can help scale successful projects and pilot new programs to better respond to the community priorities identified in the Plan.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

The City's Office of Intergovernmental Relations leads state, federal, and Tribal legislative monitoring and communication, with other departments providing subject matter expertise and coordination. Many City departments participate in national workgroups tracking state and federal policy on civic issues, including the food system. Future work should reflect the spectrum of strategic priorities in the Plan, and interdepartmental coordination should regularly include legislative and funding discussions. City staff should continue to participate in broader local, national, and global food system networks to stay informed on key issues.

ACTION 8.D

Strengthen Culturally Relevant, In-Language Outreach

Ensure outreach for community food-related programs is culturally relevant and linguistically accessible.

Departments

All city departments

Why this Action?

Approximately 22% of Seattle residents speak a language other than English at home, and 8% have “limited English proficiency”.¹⁰⁶ In King County, over 500,000 residents are immigrants. [Local data shows](#) that households where the primary language spoken is not English are more likely to experience food insecurity than English-speaking households (the exception is Chinese-speaking households),²¹ making language accessibility a critical factor in food assistance programs. People experiencing food insecurity need culturally and linguistically accessible programs. Without

this, they may experience access barriers due to unclear eligibility requirements, burdensome application procedures, government distrust, lack of in-language materials, and outreach that lacks in cultural relevance.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Through its [Language Access program](#), the City’s Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) collaborates with other departments to ensure that residents speaking languages other than English can access the information and services they need and that departments can effectively serve them. City-managed and City-contracted food programs should have an inclusive outreach strategy and language access plan. The [City of Seattle Top Tier Languages](#) and other resources should continue to inform language access strategies.

City staff should develop strategies and standards to ensure language access is included in every touch point with community members and to assess whether information is written in [plain language](#).¹⁰⁷ Programs should also increase audience research and use “[transcreation](#)” (adapting a message from one language to another) to tailor information for different communities using their preferred communication method. Programs should track and increase program participation from immigrant and refugee community members, a key measure of language access.



Photo credit: Office of Sustainability & Environment

ACTION 8.E

Support Community Engagement & Cross-Sector Collaboration

Support inclusive community engagement and cross-sector collaboration on the Plan implementation, focusing on communities most impacted by racial and social inequities.

Departments

Human Services Department **LEAD**
in coordination with the City's Food Action Plan IDT

Office of Sustainability & Environment **LEAD**
in coordination with the City's Food Action Plan IDT

Why this Action?

The priorities and actions outlined in the Plan were co-created with a variety of community partners, businesses, Tribes and Tribal consultants, and government agencies working across the food system on solutions that center on race and social justice. Making meaningful progress on the Plan will require deep, long-term, relational engagement. The City can use its leadership, capacity, and resources to provide backbone support and funding for inclusive engagement and collaborative action.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

Community engagement is already a core activity in how City departments design and implement food policies and programs. This action builds upon, aligns, and cross-pollinates engagement efforts that support collaborative action across the food system. This work must lead with equitable, inclusive approaches (including compensation for time and participation costs) to ensure the people historically most affected by economic, racial, and environmental injustices in the food system and most excluded from policy development have a say in decisions that affect their lives.



Photo credit: Department of Neighborhoods

ACTION 8.F

Facilitate Cross-Department Collaboration

Maintain an active Food Action Plan IDT to facilitate collaboration, coordination, and internal alignment across the City’s food work and to lead ongoing strategic food systems planning.

Departments

Human Services Department LEAD
in coordination with the City’s Food Action Plan IDT

Office of Sustainability & Environment LEAD
in coordination with the City’s Food Action Plan IDT

Why this Action?

Seattle’s food system work is distributed across more than nine City departments and several County agencies. Realizing the full potential and benefits of the Plan will require continued interdepartmental partnership, Tribal consultation and engagement, and government-to-government work, with a commitment to working across institutional silos to align efforts and implement bold solutions.

Existing Work & Future Considerations

In 2009, the City formally convened an IDT to coordinate food system work across departments and take advantage of synergies between programs. Since then, cross departmental collaboration has been a core feature of the City’s food work and will continue to be essential to truly make a transformation impact on the food system. In addition to researching, planning, and coordinating the City’s food work, the IDT will identify emerging food system trends and advise City officials on future opportunities to support the vision and goals outlined in the Food Action Plan.

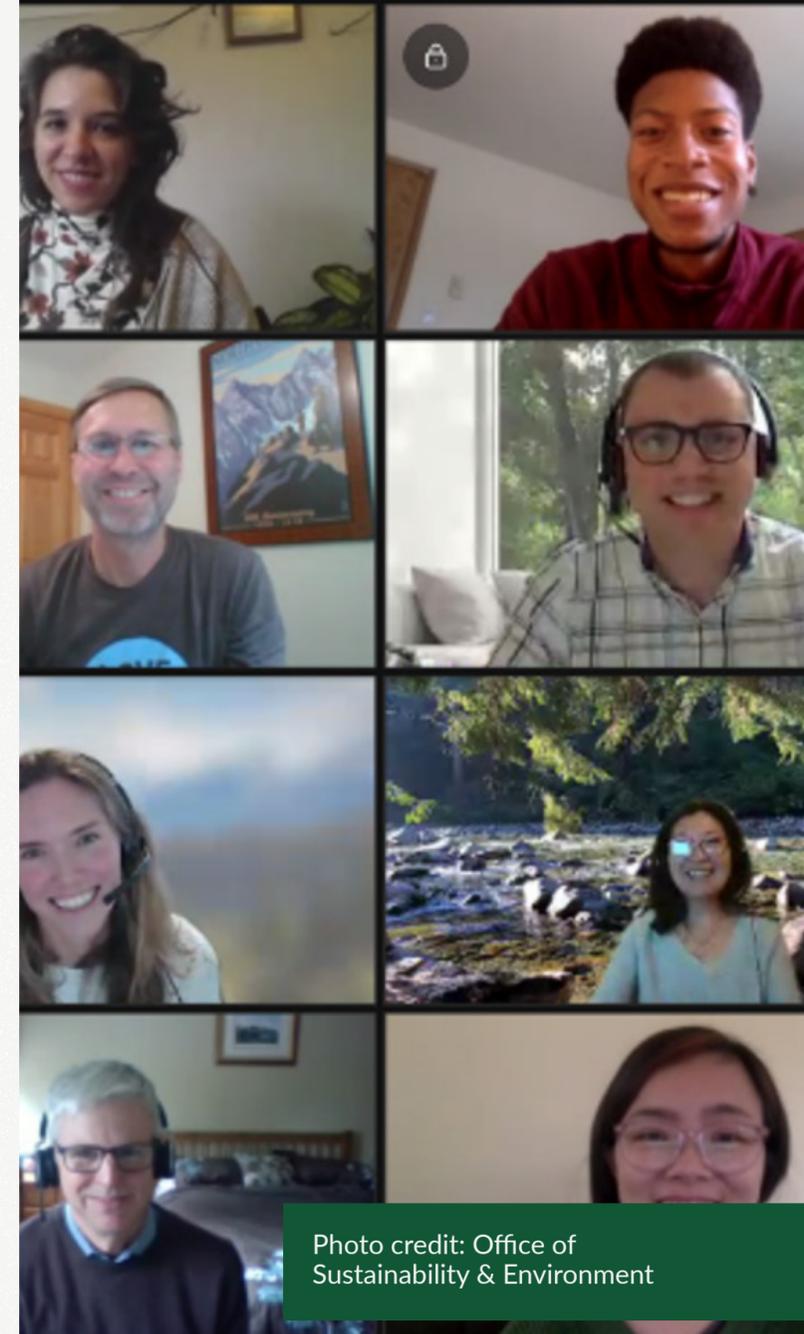


Photo credit: Office of Sustainability & Environment

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Photo credit: Department
of Neighborhoods





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