



LOCAL FOOD ACTION PLAN
CITY OF COLUMBUS & FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO

2023 Annual Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

April 2024

The resounding theme of the Local Food Action Plan in 2023 is a supportive and growing local food ecosystem. We planted deep roots of racial equity in 2020, watered tender shoots of resilient collaboration in 2021 and 2022, and in 2023 we began harvesting the first fruits of our collective efforts. These fruits came in the form of new financial food system investments, stronger and more equitable collaborations, and expanded local food supply chain infrastructure.

New financial investments by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the City of Columbus, and other key community partners have infused vitality into our local food system, fortifying the roots for future growth. Deeper collaborations with key partners continue to center inclusivity and equity in local food system leadership and governance, emphasizing collective decision-making by uplifting diverse voices. Finally, expanded local food supply chain infrastructure has changed the landscape, creating a more flourishing, resilient, and accessible network that branches out to support the entire community.

The Local Food Action Plan continues to guide and coordinate this work, thanks to the leadership of Franklin County Commissioner John O'Grady and Columbus City Councilmember Shayla Favor and the dedication of the Columbus & Franklin County Local Food Board and the Franklin County Local Food Council.

OUR VISION • A fair and sustainable food system that benefits our economy, our environment and all people.

Goals

A: Enhance coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies to create a greater impact through collaboration.

B: Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food and local food for everyone in our community.

C: Increase the role of food in economic development to strengthen small businesses and ensure the supply of healthy and locally produced food for our community.

D: Prevent food related waste and recover edible food before it is wasted.

“Addressing the food security gap requires collective action across all sectors - community organizations, local businesses, and local government. Columbus City Council is committed to working with Local Food Action Plan partners across the city and county to ensure all people have access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. In order to live happy and fulfilling lives, we must ensure all people, especially those from our most marginalized communities, have access to food.”

- Columbus City Councilmember Shayla Favor

Key Highlights

The City of Columbus, Franklin County Board of Commissioners, Local Food Board, and key community partners built on the foundation of collaborative strategic planning in 2022 and activated new local food infrastructure, funding and resources for Franklin County residents.

The **Franklin County Board of Commissioners** acted on American Rescue Plan Act funding recommendations and provided funding to **Mid-Ohio Food Collective** for the **Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4** and to the **Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District** for the **Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant**.

The Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 will increase access to locally grown produce by combining traditional and modern agricultural techniques and will incorporate food processing and storage capabilities for the benefit of many OSU students and a growing New American community. The Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant is an innovative approach to support small scale urban agriculture that will provide funding to scale up and produce, process and distribute more local food.

The **City of Columbus** unveiled the first **Waste and Reuse Convenience Center**, a new one-stop facility designed to collect a variety of disposed materials, including food scraps. Additionally, the City of Columbus, in partnership with the **Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio** (SWACO), opened three food scrap drop-off sites across the city that provide residents with a convenient way to divert food scraps from the landfill. Thanks to efforts from SWACO and multiple jurisdictions, Franklin County is now home to 22 food scrap drop-off locations.

Finally, **Osteopathic Heritage Foundations'** groundbreaking 2022 local food system investment, totaling more than \$887,000 in Franklin County, began to produce a rich harvest in 2023. As of October 2023, the four funded organizations had served nearly 9,000 Franklin County residents and grown and/or distributed approximately 129,000 pounds of fresh, healthy food for the benefit of vulnerable Franklin County residents.

"The Franklin County Board of Commissioners is proud of the extensive new investments we made in 2023 to strengthen our local food system. The new Franklin County Urban Agriculture Critical Infrastructure Grant and the Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4 demonstrate that Franklin County is committed, alongside our partners at the City of Columbus, to expanding food access, building a resilient local food economy, ensuring racial and health equity, and creating opportunities for those most in need."

- Commissioner John O'Grady, Franklin County Board of Commissioners

Goal Areas At-A-Glance

Goal A: Enhance coordination and communication

The **City-County Local Food Board** and the **Franklin County Local Food Council**, a grassroots advisory group, collaborated throughout 2023 to develop strategies to further implement the 2021 Racial Equity Study, ensuring equity in all of the Board's decision-making processes. This collaboration led to the development of a proposal, recommended to the City of Columbus and Franklin County, that would expand the Local Food Board by three seats. Further discussions on this proposal and a path forward will occur in 2024.

Franklinton Farms launched the **Community Growers Network**, a two-year initiative funded by the USDA and Osteopathic Heritage Foundations to convene, support and empower eight minority urban growers in central Ohio who grow fresh produce in low-income neighborhoods. Participating growers include **Franklinton Farms**, **South Side Family Farms**, **Highland Youth Garden**, **Mamie Mack Community Garden/Bronzeville Growers Market**, **Four Seasons City Farm**, **Kimball Farms Community Garden**, **SE Urban Farm**, and the **Garden Club Project**.

In Fall 2023, two different local and regional food system groups met and brought over 175 total advocates, professionals and practitioners together to strategize for the future. The **Ohio Food Policy Network's** annual Ohio Food Summit met on Ohio State's campus and convened over 125 Ohio food systems professionals to discuss innovative statewide, regional and local food policies and programs. SWACO hosted over 50 food waste partners at Scioto Audubon Park for the 2023 **Central Ohio Food Waste Initiative** convening. The convening celebrated five years of SWACO's Central Ohio Food Waste Action Plan, which builds on the food waste objectives of the Local Food Action Plan.

Goal B: Improve access to and education about healthy food, affordable food, and local food

Many community partners continued expanding their excellent work to address food access and education needs. **Mid-Ohio Food Collective** fed more than half a million Ohioans, expanding their network of Mid-Ohio Markets, and deploying refrigerated lockers. **LifeCare Alliance** marked its 125th anniversary by delivering nearly 1.1 million meals to 6,175 Franklin County residents.

Neighborhood produce markets saw a record year of distribution with **All People's Fresh Market**, providing 83,655 baskets of fresh produce to 15,756 unique families (15% increase from 2022). **Lutheran Social Services'** Champion Community Garden produced and donated 1,301 lbs of fresh food to our Champion Food Pantry in partnership with Garden District and South Side Family Farms. **Growing & Growth Collective** provided 58 new raised beds to organizations on the Near East Side. The **Linden Fresh Market** served over 43,700 households and distributed over 1.1 million pounds of food.

Food and agriculture education enlightened minds through the **Columbus City Schools Farm to School** program, which expanded its experiential learning model to over 300 classrooms and 210 gardens across the district. The **Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Garden's Growing to Green** program connected with 7,909 individuals and 372 gardens, while Highland Youth Garden hosted 4,100 school children to explore STEM learning and gardening. The **Urban ROOTS** program, a collaboration between **OSU Extension** and the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, increased youth engagement by 70% in 2023.

Goal C: Increase the role of food in economic development

Many public, private and nonprofit partners expanded their investments and built new infrastructure that benefits our local food system. In addition to previously mentioned ARPA investments, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners provided \$847,000 to fund capital cost construction of commercial kitchens and incubator space for both **Service!** and **Impact Community Action**. Franklin County's **Café Overlook** has provided workforce and job readiness training to 150 employees, many of whom have moved to higher paying jobs in the food industry.

The Mid-Ohio Food Collective continued expanding its innovative local growing operation in Franklin County. In addition to Mid-Ohio Farm at NBC4, the **Mid-Ohio Farm on the Hilltop** is slated for completion in the near future, bringing education, community engagement, and farming methods that will expand both local food economy and food access. Elsewhere, **What Chefs Want!** purchased more than \$2.5 million in local food from 24 central/northern Ohio vendors and expanded distribution out of its Columbus site.

Several local food distribution operations also sought to expand the purchase of locally grown food to vulnerable communities. **Broad Street Food Pantry's** Fresh For All program purchased over \$50,000 in locally grown food from 11 local farmers to distribute through its pantry and farmers' market. The Community Growers Network grew and distributed \$214,342.90 of local food within communities. Growing & Growth Collective worked with partners on the Near East Side to develop a closed-loop food system in which commercial farmers will produce and sell food at affordable rates for local residents.

Goal D: Prevent food related waste

Food rescue, recovery and composting had a lot of forward momentum in 2023. This renewed energy is propelled by intentional alignment between the Local Food Action Plan (Goal Area D), and the City of Columbus Climate Action Plan (Action 12.1).

The City of Columbus, Franklin County and SWACO partnered with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to administer the **Central Ohio Food Waste Reduction Capacity Grant**. The total grant amount of \$36,800 was awarded to eight organizations. The SWACO **Save More Than Food** campaign received national recognition with features in The New York Times and NBC Nightly News.

Ohio State University's branch of the **Food Recovery Network** diverted over 10,000 pounds of food from landfills and piloted a campus compost program in a residence hall.

Columbus Food Rescue completed 9,300+ individual food rescues, recovering over 1 million pounds of food. It was accepted into the Accelerator program facilitated by **La Soupe** and **Second Helpings** to develop a "transformation" kitchen, where recovered food will be transformed into prepared meals and delivered to receiving agency collaborators. The kitchen will be named in memory of food waste champion **Roshelle "Food Soldier" Pate**.

Local Food Action Plan Partners

2023 Local Food Board Members

The Local Food Board consists of 12 members appointed by the city and county who oversee, prioritize and guide implementation of the plan.

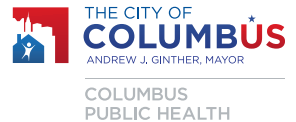
- **Susan Beaudry** • Vice President, Osteopathic Heritage Foundations
- **Dr. Jill K. Clark** • Associate Professor, John Glenn College of Public Affairs, The Ohio State University
- **Renee Dawson-Pilat** • Regional Business Leader, Giant Eagle
- **Mike Hochron** • Senior Vice President of Communications, Mid-Ohio Food Collective
- **Minister Aaron Hopkins** • Chief Executive Officer, South Side Family Farms
- **Tony Logan** • Managing Partner, The Renewables Space LLC
- **Joe Lombardi** • Executive Director, SWACO
- **Charles Nabrit** • **Vice Chair** • Advanced Manufacturing Instructor, NCUS TEC; Principal, Penn Nabrit & Associates; President, Greater Columbus Growing Coalition
- **Yolanda Owens** • Pathways and Partnerships Strategist, CFAES, The Ohio State University
- **Dr. Desiree Polk-Bland** • Vice President of Student Affairs, Columbus State Community College
- **Randy Sokol** • **Chair** • Owner, Sokol & Associates; Co-Owner, Tee Jaye's Country Place; Representative, Ohio Restaurant Association
- **Adam K. Troy** • Chief Engagement Officer, Community of Caring DF; Director of Missions, New Salem Baptist Church

City-County Local Food Team

A team of city and county staff works with the Local Food Board to implement the Local Food Action Plan.

Brian Estabrook • Franklin County Economic Development & Planning
brianestabrook@franklincountyohio.gov/614-525-7303

Karima Samadi, MPH, CHES • Columbus Public Health
krsamadi@columbus.gov/614-645-3958



Get Involved

The Local Food Action Plan has always been a community plan — and with the help of the Franklin County local Food Council, the community remains at the heart of its efforts. Find out how you can get involved and sign up for email updates at fclocalfoodcouncil.org or find them on Facebook at facebook.com/groups/fcolfc.



Special Thanks

We extend our deepest gratitude to Matthew Brown, who served as Planning Administrator at Franklin County Economic Development & Planning for 17 years before moving to the Franklin County Engineer's Office in early 2024. Matthew played a critical role in the creation and implementation of the Local Food Action Plan and tirelessly advocated for ensuring a rigorously strategic approach to local food planning, policy and infrastructure. All the best, Matthew!

Get the Full Story

The 2023 Annual Report includes this executive summary, along with crowdsourced community updates and an interactive [StoryMap](#) with videos, photos and interviews. Scan the QR Code to see our stories come alive in the StoryMap and visit columbus.gov/LocalFoodActionPlan to download our reports and other resources.

