



Kent County, Michigan

Food System Plan

January 2025



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Foreword: Get ready to transform Kent County's food system!

After nearly a decade of passion, perseverance, and collaboration, we're thrilled to unveil the Kent County Food System Plan. This journey began with a small group of dedicated visionaries who believed that our food system could be more than just functional—it could be vibrant, equitable, and thriving for everyone in our county and beyond.

Imagine a Food System that is accessible to all, healthy for our families, fair and sustainable for our planet, diverse and equitable in every bite. We formed the Kent County Food Policy Council to make this vision a reality. Our mission: to advocate for and promote a GOOD food system that uplifts everyone in Kent County. But this isn't just our plan—it's YOUR plan! Together, we can shape the policies and practices that influence how our community interacts with food.

Throughout this process, we engaged in lively discussions with Council members, advisors, stakeholders, elected representatives, and the residents of Kent County. Your voices, backgrounds, and experiences have been at the heart of this development. We've listened to your insights, and through our Food System Assessment and extensive research, we've gained valuable understanding of our community's needs. Now, it's time to take action.

This plan is not just a roadmap; it's a call to action. We need you to step up and play your part—whether you're an advocate, a community member, business or someone with the power to influence change. Together, we can tackle power dynamics, strengthen relationships, and shift the culture of our food system for the better.

Your passion and determination will drive this change. Let's work hand-in-hand to create a food system that everyone in Kent County can savor today and for generations to come.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wende Randall". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Wende Randall,
Director,
Kent County Essential Needs Task Force

Acknowledgments

We extend our deepest gratitude to all those who played a vital role in the development of our food system plan.

The development of this food system plan has underscored the importance of engaging everyone involved in our food ecosystem. By actively seeking out and incorporating diverse voices, we have been able to create a plan that truly reflects the needs, aspirations, and experiences of our community. Community input has been invaluable, ensuring that the plan not only addresses current challenges but also leverages local knowledge and strengths.

We recognize that a successful food system relies on the collective wisdom and active participation of all stakeholders. Your contributions have not only enriched this plan but have also demonstrated the power and value of community-driven change. Together, we are building a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient food system. Thank you for your dedication, partnership, and commitment to this shared vision!

Community Participants

We are profoundly grateful to the thousands of community members who engaged with us through surveys, community meetings, and interviews. Your feedback and perspectives have provided essential guidance and have been a cornerstone of our planning process.

Food Policy Council (FPC) Members and Subcommittees

Our sincere thanks go to the members of the Kent County Food Policy Council, as well as the dedicated subcommittees, including the key partners committee (KPC) and the stakeholder advisory committee (SAC). Your tireless efforts, valuable insights, and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in shaping this plan.

ENTF and KCFPC Staff

This work would not be possible without the dedication and commitment of the staff who guided the process and supported the creation of the Food System Plan. Special thanks to Tamara Bailey, Nick Dobkowski, Emily Madsen, Eleanor Moreno and Janelle Vandergrift. Additional thanks to Emma Garcia for fund development support.

The Kent County FPC members who contributed to this plan include

Miles Wood	Gricelda Mata	Ally I Beshouri
Crystal Scott-Tunstall - Co-chair	Gratia Lee - Co-chair	Sarah Chatterley
Katelyn Kikstra	Ann Reynolds	Terra Osman
Eric Freeman	Julie Brunson	Mick Rickert
Samika Douglas	Bree Bode	Wende Randall (ENTF)
Melanie Wong Tran - Co-Chair	Karrie Brown	

New Venture Advisors (NVA) and Public Agency

A special thank you to New Venture Advisors and Public Agency, consultants on this project. Your commitment to enhancing community connections has been crucial in driving forward our food system initiatives.

Community Partners and Organizations

We also wish to acknowledge our community partners and organizations whose support and involvement have been integral to the success of this project. Your dedication and expertise have enriched our efforts and broadened our impact.

Access of West Michigan	Grand Valley State University's Sustainable Agriculture Project	Our Kitchen Table
Community Coalition on Climate Change (C4)	Grand Valley State's Environmental and Sustainability Studies Program	People First Economy
Community Food Club	Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities	South East Market GR
Corewell Health	H.O.P.E. Gardens	Trinity Health Michigan
Farmish	Jade Rabbit	West Michigan Environmental Action Council - WMEAC
Feeding America West Michigan	Kent ISD	West Michigan Hispanic Chamber
First Steps Kent	Mindset Meals	West Michigan Sustainable Business Forum
Fulton Street Farmers Market	MSU Extension	West Michigan Works!
Grand Rapids Climate Coalition	NAACP	Wormies
Grand Rapids Food Co-op	New City Neighbors	
Grand Rapids Public Schools		
Grand Valley Metro Council		

Elected Officials, Municipal Staff and Partners

We are grateful to the elected officials, municipal staff and our various partners whose support and advocacy have been vital. Your leadership and collaboration have helped steer this project toward meaningful outcomes.

Grand Rapids City Commissioners:

AliciaMarie Belchak
Drew Robbins
Milinda Ysasi
Kelsey Perdue
Marshall Kilgore
Lisa Knight

Kent County Commissioners:

Ben Greene	Dan Burrill	Lisa Oliver-King
Elizabeth Morse	Matt Kallman	Melissa LaGrand
Jenn Merchant	Robin Halsted	Robert Womack
Katie DeBoer	Lindsey Thiel	Steve Faber
Dave Hildenbrand	Monica Sparks	Kris Pachla
Stan Stek	Michelle McCloud	Nancy Morales
Stan Ponstein	Carol Hennessy	Walter Bujak

City and County Staff

Adam London, Kent County	Jill Myer, Kent County
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Katelyn Kikstra, Kent County	Annabelle Wilkinson, City of Grand Rapids
Micah Herrboldt, Kent County	Connie Bohatch, City of Grand Rapids
Matthew Channing, Kent County	

Funding Partners

The Kent County Food System Plan was generously funded by the Michigan Health Endowment Fund with additional support from the Wege Foundation. Thanks to MSU Center for Regional Food System for their support and assistance and to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for contributing to the Kent County Food Policy Council's operations.



Acknowledging the land

As members of the Kent County Food Policy Council, we honor and acknowledge that Kent County occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabeg -- Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples.

It is important for each of us to acknowledge, understand and seek to repair the harm that has brought us to this moment as both colonizers/settlers and Indigenous people.

We recognize that land acknowledgment is only a starting point. We have a history of genocide, broken treaties, and colonialism that has been concealed through history. We acknowledge the impacts of this history on the generations of the past and are committed



to working toward a future where all people can live in right and just relationship with the land and with each other.

While we cannot undo the wrongs and disguise the past, we must be forthright about the journey to today and take restorative action. We commit to continued action and partnership with the people of the Anishinaabeg, Black, and other marginalized identities who have been exploited to generate wealth for the few.

Through this acknowledgment, we commit to examining what action needs to be taken to reverse the long-standing practices to erase Indigenous people's history, language, culture, and existence. We commit to appreciating and celebrating Indigenous ways of life, especially relating to food. By making these commitments and acting upon them, we work toward a future of right and just relationship in our food system and beyond.

Who is the Kent County Food Policy Council?

In 2016, community members in Kent County began discussing the need for a food policy council. They noted the absence of a clear voice to inform local policy and decision makers on the current and future issues that will impact local food production, consumption, and access. This Kent County FPC formation team noted that greater public awareness was needed to understand the impact the local food system has on the area's environmental, social, and economic health and what policies are necessary to ensure future sustainability of the region.

The Kent County Food Policy Council was born in 2021, to serve Kent County and local municipalities, bringing together community members, organizations, agencies, and businesses that are currently working to strengthen and grow the local food system. Since its genesis, the Kent County Food Policy Council has worked toward a thriving good food system for Kent County residents, rooted in local communities and centered on food that is accessible, equitable, fair, healthy, diverse, and sustainable.

The Kent County Food Policy Council is made up of eighteen council seats with two members each from agriculture, business, education, government, health, and non-profit sectors, five community/at large seats, and the Essential Needs Task Force Director (ex-officio).

To learn more about the council, visit our website at kentfoodpolicy.org.



Council Members missing from this photo: Julie Brunson, Eric Freeman, Miles Wood, Sarah Chatterley, Mick Rickert & Wende Randall

Call for Collaboration

We understand that our journey toward success is a collective effort that requires the commitment and collaboration of all involved. Our current partners play a crucial role in shaping our vision and driving our initiatives forward. Their diverse strengths, insights, and resources enhance our capabilities and broaden our impact.

As we look to the future, we are eager to expand our network and invite new partners to join us on this journey. If you are passionate about collaboration and want to make a meaningful difference, we would love to hear from you. Together, we can tackle challenges, celebrate milestones, and create a thriving community dedicated to excellence.

This is a call to all individuals and organizations who share our vision. Whether you bring expertise, innovative ideas, or simply a desire to collaborate, your contributions can help us achieve even greater things. Let's join forces to create a brighter future and deepen our collective impact.

Thank you to our existing partners for your unwavering support, and to potential partners, we look forward to exploring new possibilities with you.

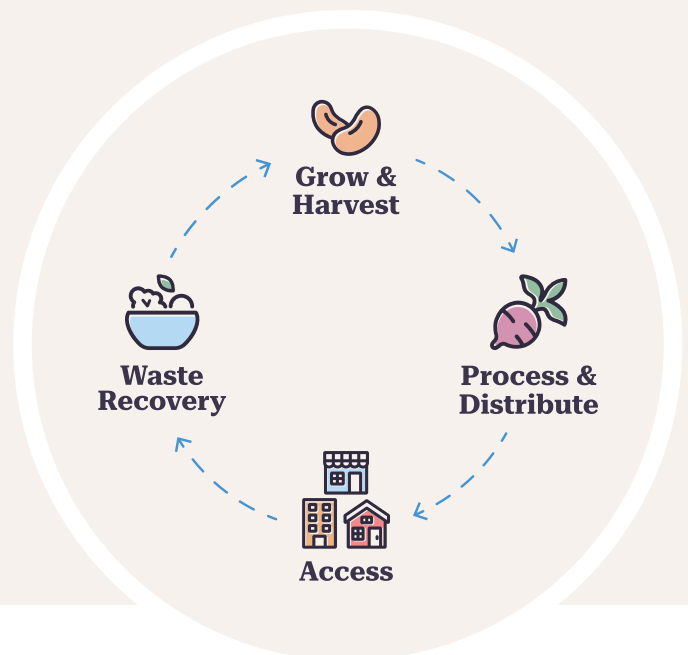
Let's continue to grow this list and our collaborative spirit!

What is the food system?

How we produce, buy, eat, and dispose of our food makes up our “food system.”

The Kent County Food Policy Council utilizes this framework to define four main sectors within the food system, and to understand how the food in Kent County flows through the system:

- **Grow and harvest:** parts of the food system related to land, soil, water, equipment, energy, labor, and more
- **Process and distribute:** parts of the food system related to value-added products, packaging, marketing, transporting, wholesale, labor, and more
- **Food access:** parts of the food system related to schools, grocers, hospitals, restaurants, food pantries, homes, labor, and more
- **Food waste and recovery:** parts of the food system related to food rescue, energy, recycling, landfills, compost, labor, and more



Often this system is invisible to us, perhaps we experience the food on our plate apart from the complexity that allows it to exist. But every one of us is a co-creator of this system in our own way. The problems we experience in one part of the food system are inevitably tied to other parts of the system. For many of us, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the complex chains that are at risk in crisis and opened our eyes to the urgency of food systems change.

Through this plan, you'll find key data points about our local food system. For a comprehensive look at our regional food system, please review the [2023 Kent County Food System Assessment](#).

What is a food system plan?

A food system plan is a long-range planning document that is driven by community needs and aspirations. It is defined by the American Planning Association as “a set of interconnected, forward-thinking activities that strengthen a community and regional food system through the creation and implementation of plans and policies.” It identifies concrete actions to improve the policies, programs, and investments that shape how food moves throughout our community.

A food system plan is modeled after other city and county strategic plans, like those for land use, economic development, or recreation. However, unlike a department of parks and recreation, there is no city or county-level “department of food” tasked with planning for and implementing food system change. However, local governments are uniquely positioned to support food system planning because the food system overlaps with many of the issues that policymakers are working on—for example, land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, food access, and equity.

The Kent County Food System Plan sets a ten-year vision for the county’s food system. It is aligned with the Michigan Good Food Charter, which has defined a “good food system” as accessible, healthy, equitable, diverse, fair, and sustainable.

The main audience for this plan are the local governments of the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County, Michigan. Therefore, the objectives and actions highlighted in the plan are the areas where local government can have the most impact. Recommendations in this plan may also be relevant to many of our community partners working on our local food system.

The Kent County Food Policy Council would like to partner with our local governments and community partners to build an accessible, healthy, diverse, fair, and sustainable food system together!



Why do we need a food system plan in Kent County?

In 2023, the Kent County Food Policy Council undertook a Food System Assessment to build knowledge in the community about the Kent County Food System, to create a baseline of key food system metrics that the food policy council can track over time, and to lay the foundation for the policy recommendations that follow in this plan.

We learned that our Kent County food system faces many challenges and in most cases, isn't resilient enough to weather the types of shocks we've seen in recent years. We learned that:

- small and mid-size farms are consolidating and/or being bought out by larger producers
- a growing population and urban sprawl results in a loss of farmland to development
- BIPOC and new/beginning farmers are in need of support, including access to capital, land, training, and resources
- increasing dependence on migrant labor from outside of the region leaves agricultural production vulnerable to shifting federal policies on immigration and worker abuse
- there is a lack of mid-scale manufacturing facilities to aid small businesses in growth beyond cottage industry production
- food buyers need products at high volume, consistency, and low cost, which is a challenge for local small and mid-scale producers
- food insecurity and the need for food assistance correlates with where Black, Indigenous, and people of color residents live within the county; Black and Hispanic communities are more likely to be impacted by food insecurity than their White neighbors
- Kent County is home to over 220 public food programs and over 10 percent of residents are still food insecure
- we produce more waste in our food system than ever before; organic waste is a significant contributor of greenhouse gas emissions in our county
- COVID-19 and increased occurrences of disruptive climate events have underlined the dire need to create a more resilient, equitable, and just food system in our county

Working together to improve our system is therefore essential to allowing everyone in Kent County to enjoy a thriving good food system, whether that be for farmers, workers, the land, and, of course, all of us as eaters.

And while a food system plan can't fix these challenges overnight, it provides strategic steps to reach food system goals for our county. Our food policy council looks forward to partnering with the City of Grand Rapids, Kent County, other local governments, and our community partners to achieve the actions in the plan that follows.

How was this plan created?

The Kent County Food System Plan is informed by a baseline assessment of the county's food system, by a comprehensive policy scan of existing food system policies in the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County, and by significant community input.

The Kent County Food Policy Council convened by the Kent County Essential Needs Task Force has led this effort and engaged partners, stakeholders, and community members along the way. New Venture Advisors (NVA), a team of food system planning consultants, was engaged in the fall of 2022 to guide and support the process.

In addition to the Kent County Food Policy Council (FPC), two committees were formed to guide the plan creation process. The **stakeholder advisory committee** (fourteen members) included representatives from key city and county leadership positions and departments. These committee members helped inform Kent County FPC members and staff about the initiatives in local government aligned with the plan and brainstormed how best to navigate the public adoption process. The **key partners committee** included more than forty partner organizations and individuals working in the regional food system. This committee helped spread the word about the food system planning process and informed the community engagement strategies.



Central to the Kent County FPC's vision for the plan was that the recommendations in the plan would be community-driven. To that end, thousands of Kent County residents were engaged at various points to share their vision for the Kent County food system, to share their challenges and experiences with accessing healthy local food, and to brainstorm potential solutions.

The community engagement process that informed this plan took on several different formats

The **Community Health Needs Assessment**, led by the Kent County Health Department, included a community-wide survey. Survey respondents were asked to rank their food system priorities from a list of twelve potential food system values.

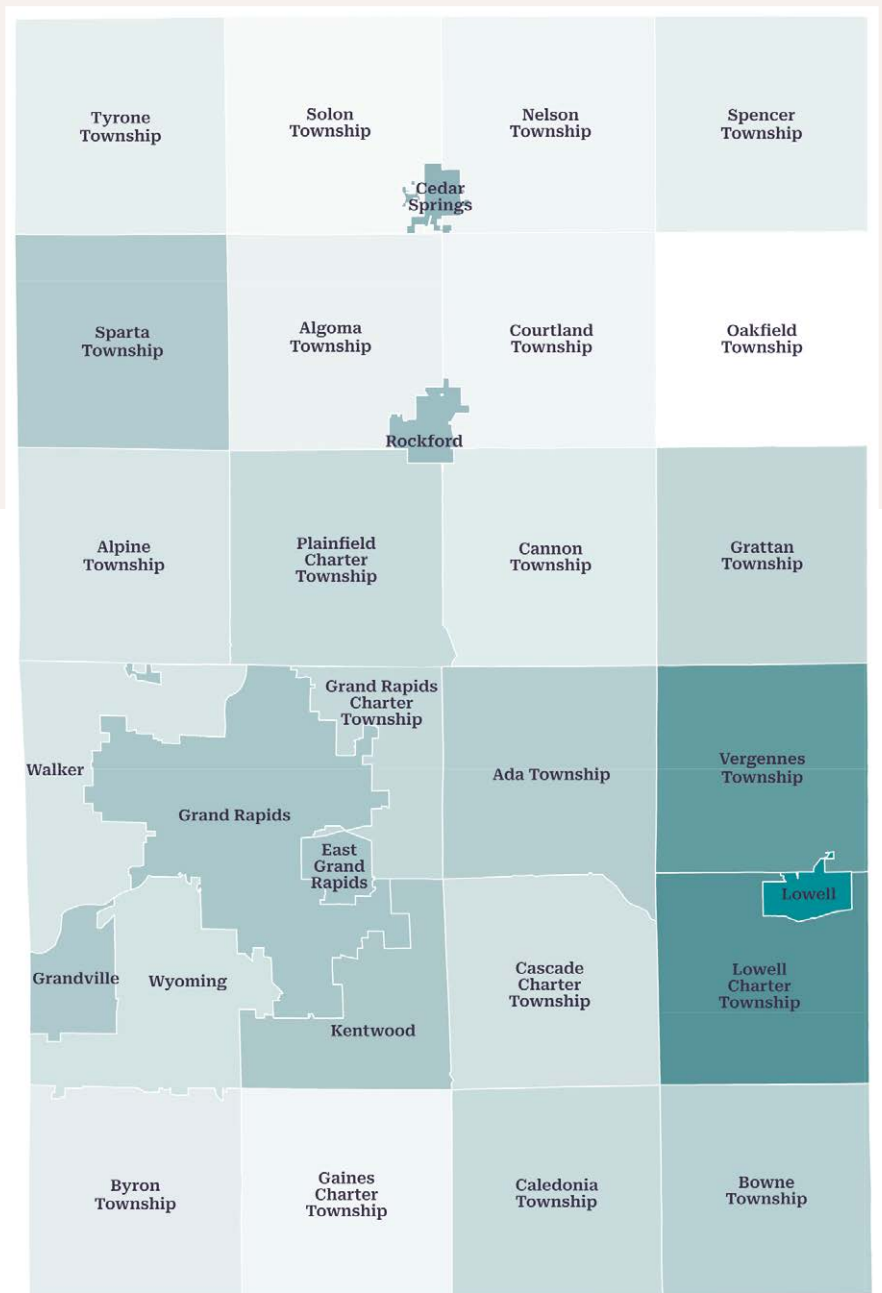
The top six food system priorities of 2,879 respondents from across Kent County were:

- 1 Ability to afford fruits and vegetables
- 2 Support for local food business owners
- 3 Access to recycling/composting
- 4 Support for local farmers
- 5 Reduce plastic food packaging
- 6 Food and nutrition education

In addition, the Community Health Needs Assessment asked Kent County residents to prioritize all health-related topics and “access to healthy food” was ranked as a top priority alongside affordable housing, health insurance, and access to medical care.

These food system priorities were used to refine the food system plan goals, which reflect the priority order of Kent County residents.

Community Health Needs Assessment
Response Rate by Municipality



Response Rate % by Municipality



Additional community engagement, led by Public Agency, a Grand Rapids–based community engagement and planning firm, was conducted between September 2023 and February 2024.

Two qualitative research techniques were used by Public Agency in this data collection effort

- **Key informant interviews** were used to gain detailed insight on specific areas of interest while also helping to direct the engagement effort.
- **Focus groups** were used to engage more individuals at one time and ensure adequate sampling and diverse representation of participants.

The primary themes used to organize and direct conversation were the four food system sectors identified by the Kent County FPC: (1) Grow and Harvest, (2) Process and Distribute, (3) Food Access, and (4) Food Waste and Recovery. Focus groups and interviews were held in various locations around Kent County. A select few engagements were held virtually. Additionally, three focus groups were held in Spanish. The remaining engagements were all held in English.

In all, 221 Kent County community members shared their time, insights, and ideas for how to build a stronger Kent County food system.

Focus Groups		
Sector	# of people engaged	# of events
Access	92	10
Grow + Harvest	65	9
Process + Distribute	7	2
Waste + Waste Recovery	8	2
TOTALS	172	23



Interviews		
Sector	# of people engaged	# of events
Access	31	5
Grow + Harvest	4	4
Process + Distribute	5	5
Waste + Waste Recovery	9	7
TOTALS	49	21



Key Findings

The notes from focus groups and interviews were analyzed to identify key themes that are important to the community, and to identify ideas for food system plan actions. The challenges and solutions identified by the community were grouped by theme and were synthesized by the NVA team into draft goals, objectives, and actions to share with the community.



Timeline

November 2022
Planning process begins, committees formed

January–April 2023
Food policy scan created

January–August 2023
Food system assessment data collected

September 2023–February 2024
Public Agency conducts community engagement (round 1)

In May–June 2024, the draft goals, objectives, and actions were shared with the community in a series of community forums. All previous interview and focus group attendees, along with the general public were invited to review the policy recommendations surfaced during the interviews and focus groups. Community forum attendees were given the opportunity to review and prioritize all draft plan actions.

The actions that were chosen as priorities by the community forum attendees were then refined and became the final actions in the plan that follows. In all, 162 Kent County residents participated in the five community forums held across the county.

The plan that follows is a reflection of the rich input we received from community members and food system stakeholders, refined over months of discussion and reflection. The Kent County Food Policy Council is so grateful to the thousands of participants who shared their hopes and dreams for the food system with us.



Community Forum	# of Attendees
Ed Dunneback + Girls	43
GR Neighborhood Summit	19
WMCAT	54
Kent District Library	20
Fulton Street Market	26
TOTALS	162

October 2023
Community Health Needs Assessment survey conducted

March–May 2024
NVA analyzes round 1 findings, drafts actions for public comment

May–June 2024
Public Agency hosts community listening sessions to gather feedback on draft actions (round 2)

July–December 2024
Plan is revised and finalized

How to read this plan

The Kent County Food System Plan was written to guide the development of an accessible, healthy, diverse, equitable, fair, and sustainable food system in Kent County, Michigan.

The timeline for the plan is ten years, recognizing some actions may be able to be implemented immediately, while others will take years of additional development.



Goal 1

Ensure access to healthy food for all



Goal 2

Invest in a thriving local food economy



Goal 3

Reduce food waste and related solid wastes



Goal 4

Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land



Goal 5

Strengthen food system coordination and education



The plan is organized from broad goals to specific actions

Goals state the desired outcomes and future vision for Kent County's food system. There are five goals in the Kent County Food System Plan that reflect the key needs and aspirations of our community. These goals were prioritized by the community, so goal 1 represents the top priority for Kent County residents, goal 2 represents the second priority, and so on.

Objectives are more specific, measurable strategies to guide local work to reach each goal. Each goal has multiple objectives that support it.

Actions are the specific policies, programs, and initiatives to meet the objectives.

As the plan was developed, it became clear that there were a few key topics that were cross-cutting issues that didn't fit clearly into any one goal but were of priority importance to the community. Therefore, these three topics are called out specifically in the plan and include actions specific to these areas:

Climate Action

Urban Agriculture

Farm to School





Goal 1

Ensure access to healthy food for all

Access to culturally appropriate fresh produce and whole foods is essential for a nutritionally balanced diet and overall health. While some residents in Kent County have access to these foods on a regular basis, we know that many in our community do not. This has significant impacts on our community members' health and wellbeing.

Key findings from the food system assessment revealed that food insecurity in Kent County peaked during the Great Recession and briefly spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the current overall food insecurity rate for Kent County stands at 12.4% of the population, food insecurity rates vary widely by census tract across the county—from 5.4% to as high as 26.4%. Also, Black and Latino residents of Kent County experience greater rates of food insecurity at 31% and 19% respectively.¹

The ability to physically access food is a key component in food security. 29 of 128 census tracts in Kent County have low vehicle access. With limited public transit options, especially in outlying cities and towns, the built environment can hinder residents' food access.

Attendance at programs through Feeding America of West Michigan has been increasing for months. Programs saw a 34% rise in the attendance at partner food pantries in 2023 as compared to 2021. Average attendance at Mobile Food Pantries was 41.4% higher in 2023 than 2021.²

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, Kent County residents spoke to the need to ensure access to healthy food for all residents. The number one priority identified in the Kent County Community Health Needs Assessment was the "ability to afford fruits and vegetables." Focus groups participants and interviewees spoke to the barriers that limit their ability to access healthy food, namely, challenges with transportation access, the rising costs of food due to inflation, the lack of culturally appropriate foods available in the region, and the need for community spaces to grow and learn about food.

Ensuring access to healthy food for all requires a focus on equity, health, sustainability, and community engagement. By centering our efforts on these themes, we aim to enhance food access for all Kent County residents, ensuring that everyone can enjoy the benefits of nutritious and culturally relevant food.

Therefore, the objectives and actions in this goal address critical factors influencing food access, including the physical accessibility of food stores and pantries, the affordability of food, the ability for Kent County residents to grow their own food, and the availability of food assistance programs.

¹Kent County Food System Assessment

²Feeding America West Michigan Newsletter, "The Need for Food is Significantly Increasing" January 24, 2024

Note: Many of the recommended actions below are mirrored in other community planning efforts, including the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan: [Bridge to our Future](#), the City of Grand Rapids [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#), and the [Kent County Strategic Plan](#).

Objective 1: Build and design our community to ensure access to healthy food in all neighborhoods

- 1.1 Ensure food retail outlets are accessible to all, focusing on transportation infrastructure in neighborhoods with low vehicle access and low income
- 1.2 Diversify public transportation options to food access sites and strengthen the existing public transit system
- 1.3 Create a food access investment fund to increase the number of food access points and alternative food access (i.e, delivery) in low-income, low-access neighborhoods; consider federal funding opportunities to support and identify regional conveners
- 1.4 Incentivize and promote best practices to neighborhood retailers and corner stores to stock fresh, culturally relevant, affordable food options
- 1.5 Incorporate a food access evaluation when developing housing and transportation plans and identify ways the new plans can support food access or increase access to places to grow, buy, and trade food
- 1.6 Partner with the Great Grocer project (or similar) to support and invest in neighbors/community members who champion food access and nutrition security to facilitate the promotion of equitable retail environments
- 1.7 Partner with public transit to provide opportunities for safe transport of enough food for a household, including updating the bag limit on buses



Objective 2: Invest in programs that address the affordability of healthy foods

- 2.1 Enhance food-as-medicine programs that support access to nourishing food for people with specific health conditions and lower incomes and advocate for the state's Medicaid program to apply for waivers to invest in these programs
- 2.2 Build awareness of and advocate for increased funding for the Double-Up Food Bucks program that provides SNAP-matching dollars for produce purchases
- 2.3 Incentivize alternative grocery models (e.g., Community Food Club and Fresh Markets) that provide affordable access to healthy foods for low-income residents

Objective 3: Create and promote opportunities for people to grow, prepare, and share their own food

- 3.1 Reduce barriers to growing food in urban and suburban areas by pursuing the recommendations of the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee for Grand Rapids, including
 - Decrease the cost of the backyard chicken permit fee to \$25 for a three-year permit
 - Create a permit process for backyard livestock similar to the chicken permit process. Specify which animals are permitted/prohibited. Establish defined number of animals permitted by right, noise/hygiene, enclosure/lot line regulations, slaughter regulations, etc.
 - Add edible trees and shrubs to the approved street tree list for city and county plantings
 - Require that 10 percent of any plantings be edibles, preferably edible perennials, within required urban open space
 - Require 10 percent of the landscape buffer and/or tree canopy be edible
- 3.2 Increase access to safe spaces to grow food; consider building community gardens in public parks and underutilized spaces and include community gardens as an option for all park updates
- 3.3 Expand and promote opportunities to learn skills that support food literacy for all, such as basic gardening, cooking, canning/fermentation, and meal planning skills, and access to relevant resources and supplies

Objective 4: Scale up food recovery efforts to ensure that excess food goes to people, not landfills

4.1 Reduce logistical, financial, and regulatory barriers to donating and recovering food by

- Partnering with the Kent County Health Department and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop an outreach and education strategy to promote food donation and recovery with local businesses and food service operations. This strategy should utilize the Michigan Good Samaritan Act to clearly describe what can be safely donated and explain liability protections for donors.
- Investing in infrastructure, transportation, and logistics for food recovery, especially for restaurants and other sources of prepared foods to reduce operational barriers for organizations that donate or recover food

4.2 Scale up food recovery and gleaning efforts by

- Supporting coordination and collaboration between food service, food relief, food recovery, and gleaning organizations to increase the scale and efficiency of food recovery and gleaning
- Incorporating gleaning opportunities into programs for youth and adults to support education around how to grow and harvest food while recovering produce for donation

Objective 5: Support an effective, sustainable, and equitable charitable food system

5.1 Support emergency food access sites (food banks, pantries, congregate programs, etc.) by

- Supporting improved coordination among emergency food assistance partners
- Promoting policies at food pantries that allow more choice, customer control, and cultural relevance in charitable food

5.2 Support the creation of a farm-to-food bank program to increase access to locally grown produce in charitable food settings and incorporate lessons learned in the USDA's Local Food Procurement Assistance program



Goal 2

Invest in a thriving local food economy

There are many benefits to a thriving local food economy: Farms and local food businesses provide meaningful employment, boost income through wages, increase economic activity by buying from other local businesses, and build the local tax base that supports infrastructure and services.

Key findings from the Kent County Food System Assessment highlight the leadership role that Kent County businesses play in the food system. Agriculture is a major contributor to the local economy and shapes the urban/rural relationships within the county. Kent County is home to the headquarters of three major grocery chains: Meijer, Gordon Foods, and Spartan Nash. The food manufacturing and processing sector in Kent County employs 6,215 individuals at 94 locations in the county.

Kent County also has many businesses growing and preparing food for local/regional consumption. Nineteen percent of farms sell products directly to consumers for a total market sector value of \$3.6 million. Kent County is home to four commercial kitchens used by small businesses for processing and production. West Michigan FarmLink, a food hub, operates as an online marketplace for buyers to shop from multiple local farmers and producers whose goods are aggregated and then sorted for pick up.³

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, Kent County residents spoke to the importance of a vibrant local food economy in the region. The number two priority in the Kent County Community Health Needs Assessment was “support for local food business owners,” and the number four priority was “support for local farmers.” While many focus group participants and interviewees noted the strength of the Kent County local food economy, they also noted the challenges they think impede further progress, including the high cost of agricultural land, the barriers to land access for new and beginning farmers, lack of farm labor, lack of consumer education about the benefits of buying locally, the need for clear regulations for food businesses, the need for financial support for small businesses and local food entrepreneurs, and the lack of workers in the food sector.

To realize the benefits of a thriving local food economy, community leaders need to invest in the growth of this sector. For this economic growth to support a more equitable food system, it is critical to ensure that historically marginalized groups who provide the labor in this food system are valued, that their rights are protected, and that opportunities for leadership are increased.

Therefore, the objectives and actions in this goal propose solutions that will increase the supply of locally grown foods by supporting farmers, building demand for local food, assisting entrepreneurs and local businesses, and supporting workers.

³Kent County Food System Assessment

Note: Many of the recommended actions below are mirrored in other community planning efforts, including the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan: [Bridge to our Future](#), the City of Grand Rapids [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#), and the [Kent County Strategic Plan](#).

Objective 1: Support agricultural producers to increase the supply of locally grown foods

- 1.1 Facilitate market access for producers by streamlining regulations and licensure requirements for agricultural businesses
- 1.2 Increase funding for and participation in the Purchase of Development Rights program to protect agricultural land access
- 1.3 Increase access to land and reduce barriers for producers, especially for socially disadvantaged farmers and new/beginning farmers
- 1.4 Inventory city and county owned properties to identify any suitable for agricultural use and make this land available to lease at a discounted rate for socially disadvantaged farmers and new/beginning farmers
- 1.5 Adopt the recommendations of the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee to support growing food within city limits, including
 - Classify greenhouses and hoop houses, not as an accessory structure
 - Establish building material standards for greenhouses/hoop houses
 - Establish maximum size of greenhouses/hoop houses
 - Create a straightforward permit application process for greenhouses/hoop houses



Objective 2: Support markets and build demand for locally grown foods

- 2.1 **Adopt local food purchasing preferences into city, county, and school district procurement policies, prioritizing the purchase of locally grown foods**
 - Increase promotion of a local CSA/food box voucher program through city/county workplaces
- 2.2 **Utilize city and county properties to support the promotion of local foods (e.g., seed banks at public libraries or food tree sales or giveaways in city or county parks)**
- 2.3 **Utilize city and county marketing resources to**
 - Incorporate local food into regional identity/branding efforts to promote Kent County as a local foods destination
 - Promote retailers that sell locally grown foods like farmers markets, CSAs, food hubs, grocers, etc.
 - Allocate funding that supports local farmers to reduce production costs and create fair pricing strategies that benefit both producers and consumers

Objective 3: Assist food system entrepreneurs to grow and sustain their businesses

- 3.1 **Fund entrepreneurship programs that support small businesses, providing mini-grants, loans, and technical assistance to food and farm businesses. These could be micro-grants to cover expenses that are commonly barriers to food system startups (i.e., licensing or legal fees).**
- 3.2 **Support the creation of food business incubators and commercial kitchens for food business owners to grow and scale their products**
- 3.3 **Allocate funding specifically for the infrastructure and logistics (cold storage, transportation, etc.) needed to accommodate greater amounts and diversity of fresh produce in food banks and pantries**
- 3.4 **Clarify city, county, and state regulations that impact small food businesses, including cottage food laws, the Food Code, etc.**
- 3.5 **Utilize the Neighborhood Investment Fund in Grand Rapids to support the establishment of small food businesses in Grand Rapids' neighborhoods**
- 3.6 **Utilize community improvement districts (CIDs) to leverage additional investment in neighborhood food system businesses and infrastructure**

Objective 4: Develop supports for food and farm workers and build the career pipeline for these jobs

- 4.1 Provide educational support for new/beginning farmers
- 4.2 Fund educational programs that cultivate the next generation of agricultural producers
- 4.3 Support educational programs that prepare students for careers in agriculture and food businesses through collaborations with high schools, technical colleges, and universities
- 4.4 Fund training programs, including experiential education, that target current and projected workforce needs across the value chain
- 4.5 Address the exclusion of seasonal and part-time workers (many of whom work in food and agriculture) from current training program offerings



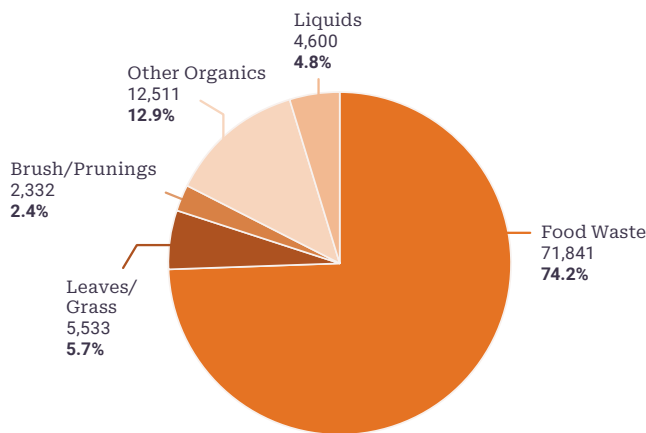


Goal 3 Reduce food waste and related solid wastes

National studies suggest that up to 40 percent of all food produced is wasted. Loss occurs at each step in the food system. Examples include unharvested crops in fields, unsold food from retail stores, and uneaten prepared food or kitchen trimmings from restaurants, cafeterias, and households. Reducing food waste and packaging can save consumers money, save space in landfills, and reduce landfill methane emissions that contribute to climate change.

Key findings from the Kent County Food System Assessment are more limited in this sector as most food waste data is estimated at the national level. However, Kent County Solid Waste does track the total organic waste generated in the county, and in 2021, 71,841 tons of the organic waste generated were food waste. This food waste accounted for 74.2 percent of all organic waste collected in the county.⁴

2021 Total Organics Waste Generated
in Kent County Breakdown
(in Tons per Year)



Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, Kent County residents spoke to their concerns about food waste and the need to reduce both food waste and packaging waste. The number three priority in the Kent County Community Health Needs Assessment was “access to recycling/composting” and the number five priority was “reduce plastic food packaging.” Focus group participants and interviewees spoke to the challenges that face this sector: lack of composting infrastructure; the financial viability challenges facing private composting businesses; the difficult logistics of recovering food from grocery stores, restaurants, and caterers; the concerns businesses have about the liability of donating food; and the lack of consumer education and awareness about this topic.

Therefore, the objectives and actions in this goal propose solutions that first focus on reducing the amount of food waste we generate, then prioritize feeding people food that is safe and nutritious and composting any food waste that remains.

⁴Kent County Food System Assessment

Note: Many of the recommended actions below are mirrored in other community planning efforts, including the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan: [Bridge to our Future](#), the City of Grand Rapids [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#), and the [Kent County Strategic Plan](#).

Objective 1. Reduce the amount of food and solid waste generated in public, commercial, and residential settings

- 1.1 Advocate to Kent County Materials Management Plan to exceed the state minimum standard
- 1.2 Adopt public procurement policies that facilitate solid waste reduction at city and county facilities and events, such as EPP (environmental preferred purchasing) policies that emphasize compostables, reusable, and recyclables
- 1.3 Establish food waste processes and corresponding resources (partnerships, contracts, and funding) for food at public facilities and events, prioritizing food recovery, waste diversion, and composting. Consider implementing waste reduction and diversion requirements for city and county agencies.
- 1.4 Adopt the Flow Control Ordinance and promote the highest and best use for municipal solid waste, including food waste
- 1.5 Promote existing programs that offer free or low-cost technical assistance on reducing food and solid waste to businesses, events, and organizations
- 1.6 Advocate for state policies that regulate or prohibit food waste in landfills



Objective 2: Support the safe recovery of food to feed people in need

See goal 1, objective 4 for suggested actions.

Objective 3: Increase access to composting services and provide resources for residential composting

- 3.1 **Reduce regulatory barriers to composting (e.g., modify zoning regulations that do not allow composting on-site)**
- 3.2 **Partner with our cities and county for composting service providers to increase awareness of existing composting services, such as by creating a composting resource guide and conducting outreach to restaurants, caterers, and farmers**
- 3.3 **Identify opportunities to co-locate composting drop-off sites with existing waste and recycling infrastructure**
- 3.4 **Increase public access to composting services through**
 - Establishing neighborhood compost sites and drop-off locations through partnerships with local organizations, community gardens, and civic centers
 - Investigating the viability of a curbside composting program and opportunities to modify contracts with haulers to require bundled services (trash, commingled/single-stream recycling, and compost), coupled with a thorough education and contamination avoidance program
- 3.5 **Support residential composting by**
 - Increasing awareness of existing compost education programs and expanding residential composting education opportunities
 - Offsetting the cost of residential (backyard) composting supplies
 - Advocating for school-based composting and vermicomposting programs and incorporating composting education in schools



Goal 4 Protect and regenerate our soil, water, and land

Our soil, water, and land in Kent County provide the very foundation of our food system. The food production practices we choose can either extract from or regenerate this natural resource base.

Key findings from the Kent County Food System Assessment highlight a concerning trend in Kent County—the loss of land for food production. Between 2001 and 2016, 2,100 acres of agricultural land in Kent County were converted to UHD (urban and highly developed) land uses and 11,200 acres were converted to LDR (low-density residential) land uses. As a growing metropolitan area, Kent County’s population has increased by 9.2 percent since 2010, in comparison with only 1.7 percent growth across the state during that time. Rapid growth can usher in development that puts pressure on greenspaces and agricultural land.⁵

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, Kent County residents spoke to their concerns about the loss of agricultural land, about how the changing climate will impact agriculture in the region, and the need to adopt food production practices that protect soil and water quality.

Therefore, the objectives and actions in this goal include recommendations to protect and preserve agricultural land for food production, to encourage the use of sustainable and regenerative farming practices, and to take action to reduce our impact on the climate.



⁵Kent County Food System Assessment

Note: Many of the recommended actions below are mirrored in other community planning efforts, including the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan: [Bridge to our Future](#), the City of Grand Rapids [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#), and the [Kent County Strategic Plan](#).

Objective 1: Protect and preserve agricultural land

- 1.1 Increase funding available to match federal and state grants for farmland preservation
- 1.2 Task the Agricultural Land Preservation Committee with developing a specific strategy to preserve land of 40 acres or less
- 1.3 Increase the agricultural acreage protected by conservation easements and within land trust programs
- 1.4 Encourage the use of MIFarmLink to connect farmers selling land with new and beginning farmers
- 1.5 Leverage the use of MSU Extension's Citizen Planner and include a module on agricultural land preservation
- 1.6 Support the development of a land trust incubator farm space with community partners

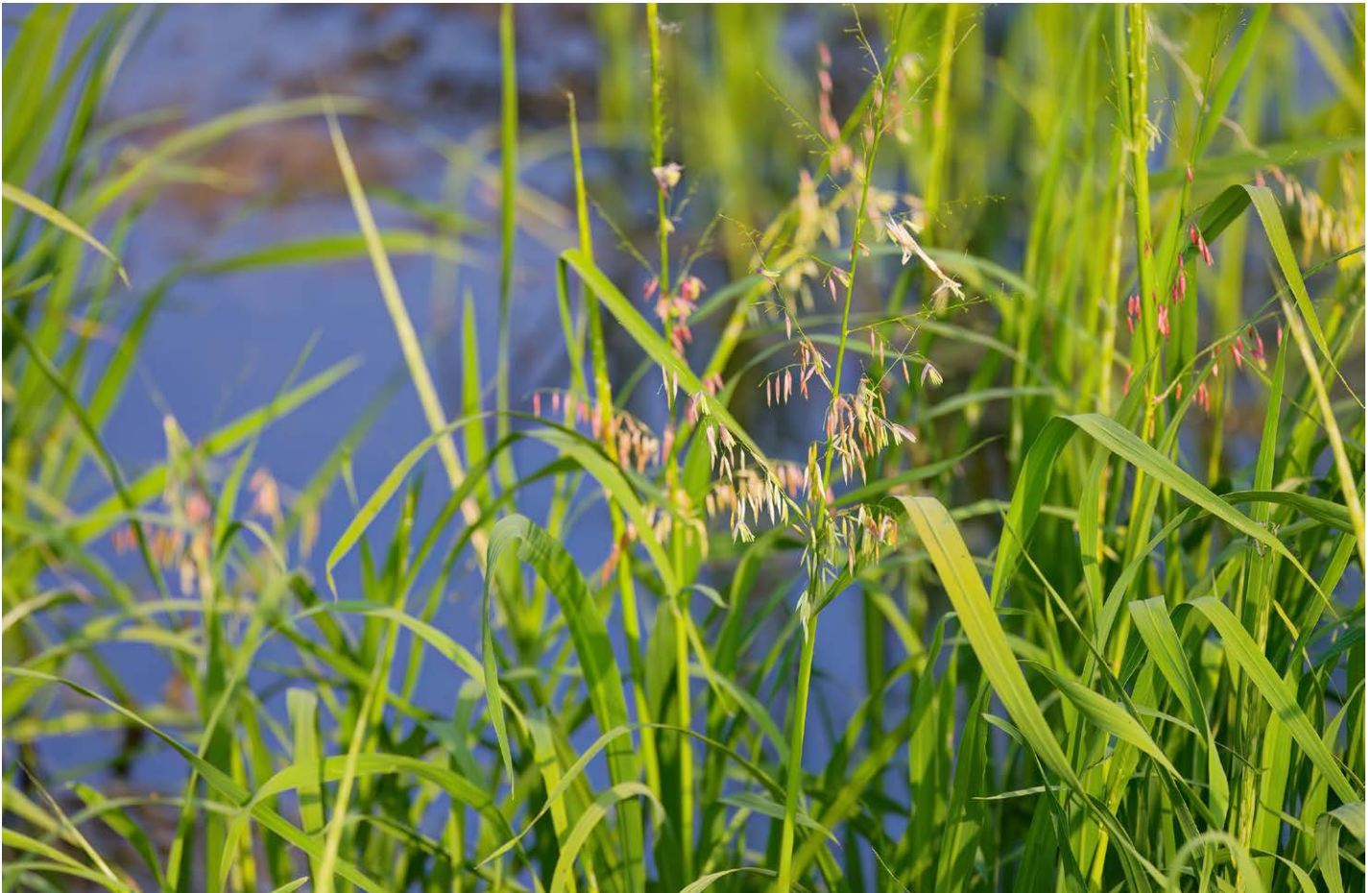
Objective 2: Encourage sustainable farming practices

- 2.1 Expand awareness of farming practices that reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity
- 2.2 Incentivize these practices on farms, especially by supporting upfront investments for producers transitioning their operations
- 2.3 Increase funding to the Kent Conservation District to support implementation of these best management practices on farms
- 2.4 Ensure that funding for implementing these practices is accessible to all producers, especially beginning farmers and historically underserved producers
- 2.5 Expand awareness of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program technical assistance, assessment, and verification program that helps and recognizes farmers who reduce erosion and runoff from private land into public waters
- 2.6 Support efforts to protect pollinators and increase pollinator habitats on farms and in urban gardens
- 2.7 Support water efficiency practices in agriculture and gardening operations

Objective 3: Align with City of Grand Rapids sustainability goals and Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

*In particular, focus on intersections of the food system and climate action, including

- 3.1 Encourage renewable energy like solar photovoltaic systems on farms. Consider how these renewable energy installations can preserve agricultural land and protect it from development.
- 3.2 Establish EPP policies in local government and institutions to prioritize products that reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- 3.3 Implement actions to reduce food waste (see goal 3)
- 3.6 Support the development of a land trust incubator farm space with community partners





Goal 5 Strengthen food system coordination and education

Throughout the community engagement process that informed this plan, we heard from focus group participants and interviewees about the need for coordination between food system partners (businesses, nonprofits, institutions) and the need for additional education (for consumers, farmers, and school children). These themes arose in each topic area represented by goals 1–4.

Focus group participants and interviewees emphasized the critical need for enhanced coordination among food system partners—businesses, nonprofits, and institutions—as well as increased education for consumers, farmers, and school children. **Effective coordination is vital for streamlining resources, reducing duplication of efforts, and fostering a collaborative environment that can better address the diverse challenges within the food system.** This collaborative approach not only strengthens community ties but also ensures that initiatives are more effective and sustainable.

These themes emerged consistently across goals 1–4. In response, we established a fifth goal dedicated to enhancing community solutions that promote coordination and education within the food system. While the primary audience for this plan is local governments in Kent County, the actions outlined are relevant to all stakeholders. The Kent County Food Policy Council looks forward to collaborating with partners to advance coordination, collaboration, education, and awareness in our communities.



Note: Many of the recommended actions below are mirrored in other community planning efforts, including the City of Grand Rapids Community Master Plan: [Bridge to our Future](#), the City of Grand Rapids [Climate Action and Adaptation Plan](#), and the [Kent County Strategic Plan](#).

Objective 1: Support coordination between food system partners and other community sectors by investing in the Kent County Food Policy Council

- 1.1 Engage with the Kent County Food Policy Council to provide policy guidance to the City of Grand Rapids and Kent County
- 1.2 Appoint city and county representatives to serve as non-voting members of the Kent County Food Policy Council
- 1.3 Support the Kent County Food Policy Council with funding and resources to advance their mission of convening diverse food system stakeholders to address food system policy
- 1.4 Encourage the use of MIFarmLink to connect farmers selling land with new and beginning farmers
- 1.5 Integrate the Kent County Food System Plan into existing city and county planning efforts

Objective 2: Support community education and awareness about the benefits of a resilient local food system

- 2.1 Support coordination with school districts across Kent County to support farm-to-school efforts in K–12 schools and facilitate collaboration between these entities to inform nutrition curriculum, healthcare, school gardens, school wellness policies and procurement of local foods
- 2.2 Support existing education programs on food systems topics, especially nutrition, cooking, and gardening programs that educate consumers about how and why to eat local foods
- 2.3 Utilize city and county communication tools (i.e., bill inserts, social media, etc.) to promote awareness of community food resources ensuring translation of these resources into multiple languages
- 2.4 Support a sustainable “buy local” food campaign with community partners and consider declaring a “buy local” month during the summer to highlight locally grown foods
- 2.5 Clarify how food is coordinated in emergency management strategies in the county

Cross-cutting community priorities

As the plan was developed, it became clear that there were a few key topics that were cross-cutting issues that didn't fit clearly into any one goal but were of priority importance to the community. Therefore, these three topics are called out specifically in the plan and include actions specific to these areas.

Climate Action

Urban Agriculture

Farm to School



Climate Action

Food production, distribution, and food waste are large contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, which are the main driver of climate change. It is also true that climate change poses numerous threats to our current food system. Rising temperatures and changing precipitation patterns will negatively impact growing seasons for crops and livestock health.

Shifting our food production system to more sustainable and regenerative practices will help reduce agriculture's role in climate change and also help make our food system more resilient to ever-changing conditions.

Concurrent to the development of the Kent County Food System Plan, the City of Grand Rapids facilitated a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) process to provide a roadmap for how the community of Grand Rapids will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Throughout the city's community engagement efforts for the CAAP, they received significant community feedback about the need to shift food system practices. In particular, community members shared their ideas for how to reduce food waste (which contributes to GHG emissions) and build more resilient access to food in the community.

Therefore, given the significant community input on this topic, we've called out climate action as a key topic area in the Kent County Food System Plan. In particular, these actions in the plan are informed by the CAAP process and our food system plan community feedback on climate change:



Goal 1: Objective 4: Action 4.1

Reduce logistical, financial, and regulatory barriers to donating and recovering food by

- Partnering with the Kent County Health Department and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to develop an outreach and education strategy to promote food donation and recovery with local businesses and food service operations. This strategy should utilize the Michigan Good Samaritan Act to clearly describe what can be safely donated and explain liability protections for donors.
- Investing in infrastructure, transportation, and logistics for food recovery, especially for restaurants and other sources of prepared foods to reduce operational barriers for organizations that donate or recover food



Goal 1: Objective 4: Action 4.2

Scale up food recovery and gleaning efforts by

- Supporting coordination and collaboration between food service, food relief, food recovery, and gleaning organizations to increase the scale and efficiency of food recovery and gleaning
- Incorporating gleaning opportunities into programs for youth and adults to support education around how to grow and harvest food while recovering produce for donation



All actions in Goal 3 under the following:

- **Objective 1:** Reduce the amount of food and solid waste generated in public, commercial, and residential settings
- **Objective 3:** Increase access to composting services and provide resources for residential composting



Goal 4: Objective 2

Encourage sustainable farming practices

- Expand awareness of farming practices that reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity
- Incentivize these practices on farms, especially by supporting upfront investments for producers transitioning their operations
- Increase funding to the Kent Conservation District to support implementation of these best management practices on farms
- Ensure that funding for implementing these practices is accessible to all producers, especially beginning farmers and historically underserved producers
- Expand awareness of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program technical assistance, assessment, and verification program that helps and recognizes farmers who reduce erosion and runoff from private land into public waters
- Support efforts to protect pollinators and increase pollinator habitats on farms and in urban gardens
- Support water efficiency practices in agriculture and gardening operations



Goal 4: Objective 3

Align with City of Grand Rapids sustainability goals and Climate Action and Adaptation Plan

- Encourage renewable energy like solar photovoltaic systems on farms. Consider how these renewable energy installations can preserve agricultural land and protect it from development.
- Establish Environmentally Preferable Purchasing policies in local government and institutions to prioritize products that reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Urban Agriculture

The practice of urban agriculture, or growing food within cities, is a growing trend in local food systems in the United States. For several years, the City of Grand Rapids has convened an [Urban Agriculture Committee](#). This committee is tasked with educating the public about the benefits of urban agriculture in Grand Rapids, supporting the development of urban agriculture production and infrastructure, and advising policymakers about policy changes that would better support this type of food production.

Throughout the community engagement process for the Kent County Food System Plan, we heard about some of the challenges facing urban growers, including lack of access to land, restrictive local policies that make it challenging to operate, and a dependence upon grants for these types of projects.

Given the significant community input on this topic, we've called out urban agriculture as a key topic area in the Kent County Food System Plan. Urban agriculture is a cross-cutting issue that touches all of the food plan goals, but especially the goals of increasing access to healthy food and investing in local food businesses. These recommendations may also be applicable to the other urban centers of Kent County, including Cedar Springs, East Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kentwood, Lowell, Rockford, Walker, and Wyoming.

In particular, we believe that these actions recommended by the Grand Rapids Urban Agriculture Committee in 2021, and included in the Kent County Food System Plan, should be adopted to advance community health, increase food access, and build strong local food businesses:



Goal 1: Objective 3: Action 3.1

- Reduce barriers to growing food in urban and suburban areas by pursuing the recommendations of the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee for Grand Rapids, including
- Decrease the cost of the backyard chicken permit fee to \$25 for a three-year permit
- Create a permit process for backyard livestock similar to the chicken permit process. Specify which animals are permitted/prohibited. Establish defined number of animals permitted by right, noise/hygiene, enclosure/lot line regulations and slaughter regulations, etc.
- Add edible trees and shrubs to the approved street tree list for city and county plantings
- Require that 10 percent of any plantings be edibles, preferably edible perennials, within required Urban Open Spaces
- Require 10 percent of the landscape buffer and/or tree canopy be edible



Goal 2: Objective 1: Action 1.5

- Support agricultural producers to increase the supply of locally grown foods. Adopt the recommendations of the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee to support growing food within city limits, including
- Classify greenhouses and hoop houses, not as an accessory structure
- Establish building material standards for greenhouses/hoop houses
- Establish maximum size of greenhouses/hoop houses
- Create a straightforward permit application process for greenhouses/hoop houses



Farm to School

Farm-to-school initiatives enrich the connection communities have with healthy and local food by influencing how schools and early care and education sites buy food, serve food, and educate students about food. Farm-to-school activities differ by location but generally include serving local foods in cafeterias, building and maintaining school gardens, and integrating agriculture into school curriculum.

Throughout the community engagement process for the Kent County Food System Plan, we heard from community members about the importance of education about the food system. Key topics were the need to educate future generations of farmers, to help residents learn how to grow/process/prepare foods, and the importance of starting this education at a young age.

Given the significant community input on this topic, we've called out farm to school as a key topic area in the Kent County Food System Plan. While farm-to-school efforts in Kent County vary across the region, we believe that these actions in the plan can help students in Kent County to gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips.



Goal 1: Objective 3: Action 3.3

- Expand and promote opportunities to learn skills that support food literacy for all, such as basic gardening, cooking, canning/fermentation, and meal planning skills, and access to relevant resources and supplies



Goal 2: Objective 2: Action 2.1

- Adopt local food purchasing preferences into city, county, and school district procurement policies, prioritizing the purchase of locally grown foods



Goal 2: Objective 4: Actions 4.2 and 4.3

- Fund educational programs that cultivate the next generation of agricultural producers
- Support educational programs that prepare students for careers in agriculture and food businesses through collaborations with high schools, technical colleges, and universities



Goal 3: Objective 3: Action 3.5

- Advocating for school-based composting and vermicomposting programs and incorporating composting education in schools



Goal 4: Objective 2: Action 2.1

- Expand awareness of farming practices that reverse climate change by rebuilding soil organic matter and restoring degraded soil biodiversity



Goal 5: Objective 2: Actions 2.1 and 2.2

- Support coordination with school districts across Kent County to support farm-to-school efforts in K-12 schools. Facilitate collaboration between these entities to inform nutrition curriculum, healthcare, school gardens, school wellness policies and procurement of local foods
- Support existing education programs on food systems topics, especially nutrition, cooking, and gardening programs that educate consumers about how and why to eat local foods



Moving the plan forward

The Kent County Food System Plan will serve as a guiding document for the Kent County Food Policy Council and our partners for the next ten years. It is a plan that will require community collaboration between a variety of partners—local governments, institutions, nonprofit organizations, residents, and businesses—all working together to improve the local food system.



The Kent County Food Policy Council will guide the Food System Plan through:

- **Partnership Engagement:** The Council will convene stakeholders to prioritize and work together on recommendations and identify relevant funding
- **Coordination of Action Items:** The Council will coordinate, track and delegate actions with community partners and members to ensure effective execution.
- **Progress Assessment:** Regular evaluation will assess and track the success of the plan.
- **Community Engagement:** The Council engage our community to present findings, gather community input and communicate about progress made

Get Involved

- **Learn More:** Visit the Kent County Food Policy Council website (kentfoodpolicy.org) for updates and participation opportunities.
- **Stay Connected:** Join our [email list](#) for project updates and ways to engage like becoming a Council member or joining a workgroup.
- **Come to a Meeting:** [Our meetings](#) are open to the public and we welcome community members to come share their ideas and discuss with us.
- **Contact Us:** Reach out to the Kent County Food Policy Council at kcfpc@hwmuw.org for more information.

Glossary

BIPOC

BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Pronounced “bye-pock,” this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment is the physical spaces and infrastructure that people create or modify. It includes buildings, roads, sidewalks, water systems, etc. and can encourage or discourage healthy behaviors like physical activity and healthy eating.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, including activities that change the atmosphere’s composition (e.g. through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g. deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification, etc.).

CULTURALLY-APPROPRIATE FOOD

Culturally appropriate food is food that is safe and nutritious, and that takes into account the cultural identity of the people who are consuming it. It also includes the cultural practices around how the food is prepared and consumed, such as where, how, and with whom it is eaten.

FOOD ACCESS

Food access is the ability of an individual or household to obtain food for a healthy diet. Factors like distance to a food store, the cost of food, and the cultural appropriateness of the food offered can all impact someone’s ability to access the food they want to eat.

FOOD HUB

A **food hub** is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products, primarily from local and regional producers, to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

FOOD JUSTICE

Food justice ensures that the benefits and risks of where, what, and how food is grown, produced, transported, distributed, accessed, and eaten are shared fairly. Food justice is seen in communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. People practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities, and a healthy environment

FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity is the condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one’s basic needs.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

FOOD SYSTEM

The **food system** is the process food follows as it moves from the farm to your table. It encompasses a range of activities, including growing, foraging, and ranching; processing; transporting, and distributing; retailing and marketing; preparation and cooking; eating; waste management; safety; land and water stewardship; and environmental preservation. The journey our food takes through the food system is influenced by our ecosystem, research, education, funding, policies, and our community’s rich cultural traditions.

HEALTHY

Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers, and animals.

HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

Historically marginalized communities are groups of people who have been systematically denied access to resources, power, and full participation in society. This can be due to a variety of factors, including: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and religion

LOW INCOME, LOW ACCESS

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) identifies areas of low food access based on certain low-income and low-access criteria. Low-income (LI) is defined as a census tract with a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, or median family income at or below 80 percent of the statewide or metropolitan area median family income. Low-access (LA) is defined as a low-income census tract with at least 500 people or 33 percent of the tract's population living more than one mile (urban areas) or more than ten miles (rural areas) from the nearest supermarket or grocery store.

ORGANIC

USDA-certified **organic** foods are grown and processed according to federal guidelines addressing, among many factors, soil quality, animal raising practices, pest and weed control, and use of additives. Organic producers rely on natural substances and physical, mechanical, or biologically based farming methods to the fullest extent possible. Produce can be called organic if it's certified to have grown on soil with no prohibited substances applied for three years before harvest. However, many crops are organically grown but do not carry the USDA certified organic label because the certification process can be expensive for small farms.

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

A **purchase of development rights (PDR)** program is a voluntary program that allows landowners to sell their development rights to a public agency or land trust in exchange for compensation. The program's goal is to permanently protect the land from development, while still allowing the landowner to retain ownership and use of the property.

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Regenerative agriculture is an approach to farming that promotes environmental outcomes related to nutrient, water, soil, and biodiversity conservation. It aims to enhance farmers' well-being and community prosperity through improved social and economic outcomes. The context-driven principles apply to all farm systems – small to large, grain to grazing, urban to rural.

SOIL BIODIVERSITY

Soil biodiversity refers to the variety of life forms present in soil, including bacteria, fungi, insects, earthworms, nematodes, and plant roots. Essentially, it's the richness and complexity of living organisms within the soil environment.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

The largest federal nutrition assistance program, **SNAP**, provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. This card is used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is often defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." It includes environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Sustainable agriculture is farming in such a way to protect the environment, aid and expand natural resources and to make the best use of nonrenewable resources.

VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING

Value-added processing is a means to utilize produce not used for fresh market sales and the surplus of product during the growing season. Adding value can be something as simple as sorting fruits and vegetables by size and selling through unique packaging to the complexity of processing salsa, jams, jellies, chutney, and meat animals.

WIC (SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN)

The **WIC** program provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.



Kent County
Food Policy Council

A Committee of ENTf