

Food for Us

We're All at the Table Together

Report on the Leon County Sustainable Communities

Summit held January 24, 2015

Prepared in conjunction with a Technical Assistance Grant from Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity

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Letter of Welcome



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On behalf of the Leon County Government, the Office of Sustainability was delighted to host the 2015 Sustainable Communities Summit. This year's Summit built on efforts begun in 2008, when the office hosted the Climate Action Summit—which evolved into our 2010 and 2012 Sustainable Communities Summits, now an ongoing event. It is encouraging to witness the community's growing support for expanding awareness and taking action to create a more sustainable future. Interest in the topic of growing the local food movement was evident in the number of this year's attendees. Registration for the event reached maximum capacity in the week prior to the event, and plans for overflow participation were put in place.

Collaboration and partnership are necessary for the success of any venture, and Leon County Government is grateful to have enthusiastic and passionate citizens and community organizations working to promote local food. Leon County is honored to serve in the role of convener, providing a platform for collaborative learning. The main objective of the Summit was to create and host a gathering that not only served as a one-time event but could also help to build the local food movement. As the event tag line said, "We're All at the Table Together."

A list of Sustainability Office efforts with regard to food can be found on page 12. Leon County looks forward to being a partner with the citizens and organizations in our community in shaping the good food future!

In Service,
Robert Mills
Director of Resource Stewardship

Executive Summary

“Food is a great uniter because everyone has to eat. It has a way of bringing us together that other issues can’t.”

Ellen Kahler, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

The 2015 Leon County Sustainable Communities Summit cast new light on the local food landscape, alerting a strongly interested public to both the challenges and rewards in developing a local food economy—pursuing the Summit’s “good food” goals of healthy, affordable, accessible food for all. Among the Summit’s highlights:

- **Local experts** described the benefits—for the environment, community health, and job creation—of a more fully developed food economy, and emphasized the urgency of addressing local food needs.
- **Food activist Karen Washington** traced the poor health of many Americans to the loss of control of our food systems, telling a story of neighborhood revival in a “guerilla gardening” movement that connects her Bronx, New York neighborhood with Tallahassee, much of the country, and even the world.
- **Vermont farmer and food systems expert Philip Ackerman-Leist** offered an introduction to the next steps in local food movement development, from rising food awareness to a fully-fledged food economy—steps that the Leon County community seems poised to make.

In pre-Summit workshops, community leaders offered many suggestions—many of them highly practical—about how to address local food needs. In evaluating them, Summit participants showed enthusiasm for continued development of local gardening projects; supported a shift away from conventional food charity models to forms that build greater self-reliance; and agreed on the need for a comprehensive plan to grow a vibrant local food economy.

Takeaways

The Summit pointed to the considerable inherent strengths of our food landscape, some of which reside in our land and climate, some in our history: Local small farm traditions, largely unencumbered by commodity agriculture, are rapidly evolving, with young people and women leading the way. The local food movement is impressive in its breadth if not yet in its depth.

The Summit process also revealed gaps in general understanding about the need to expand local agricultural infrastructure—especially the need for rural farm expansion to accompany urban growing—if a larger food economy, one that captures a serious share of local food spending, is to develop. These are gaps that the Office of Sustainability has recently moved to fill, and that County government, as governing body with rural oversight, is suited to address.

The Summit and Summit process achieved many, arguably all, of its organizers’ goals and objectives (see list below). In addition, it:

- Heightened awareness about the growing strength of the food movement and its possibilities, bringing new voices and interests to the conversation.



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- Revealed generous willingness on the part of the public to contribute knowledge, skills and even physical assets to local food development.
- Created a Food Movement Map that identifies connections between food organizations and related interests.
- Helped to publicize the work of local food and health organizations.
- Assembled a lengthy list of food-related initiatives, some with long gestation in the community and clear public support.
- Offered a sense of connection to the rising global movement to develop local food cultures and economies.
- Offered an orientation to next steps, communicating the scope of the challenges facing the community.

Feedback and Recommendation

An ambitious summit program that included two keynote speakers left little time for in-depth examination of County food realities—one possible criticism of the event. Still, 90% of respondents to a post-Summit survey found the event valuable. Assuming continued strong interest, the place to examine such realities more closely might be at a follow-up event, perhaps in two years' time—the County continuing in its role as convener—where progress on a food master plan by local organizations could be offered for public feedback.

Summit Goals and Objectives:

1. *Conduct a canvass of organizations and people who are active in the local food system, with an accompanying sense of the areas in which they work. Make this information available to the public.*
2. *Better understand the current connections between these people and groups. Show areas of high activity and areas of deficit.*
3. *Identify areas where collaboration is needed to enhance such connections. Identify what partner-to-partner linkages would be fruitful.*
4. *Raise public awareness about the growing strength of the food movement. Portray the diversity of actors and activities underway.*
5. *Prioritize near-term actions to enhance the economic development aspects of the local food system. Strengthen partnerships.*
6. *Prioritize near-term actions to enhance the food security and health aspects of the local food system.*
7. *Prioritize near-term actions to continue the dialog on building the local food system.*
8. *Develop an overview of the local food movement in Leon County: assets, gaps, and top-ranking initiatives.*

The Summit was made possible in part by a grant from the State of Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity. Its primary goal was to identify gaps in the local food system and chart a course to address them, to pave the way for a truly local and sustainable food economy.

The Local Food Landscape

How does a community move from the enthusiastic embrace of local gardening—from increasing awareness of the social imperatives of healthy food—to the development of a full-fledged food economy? This is the challenge facing Leon County. With a strong rise in organizing around food issues in the last decade, a significant alignment of forces made the time ripe to focus on food at this year’s Sustainability Summit.

While the focus of food movement activity is adamantly local and regional the prizes are far from small, especially as measured in potential jobs, improved health outcomes, and economic and social development. With annual local food purchases valued at more than \$258 million (Hodges and Stevens 2013, 24), capturing a greater portion of food purchases in the area could boost Leon County’s economy in many ways, from farm cultivation to transportation, processing, and sales. Some people estimate that local production does not yet supply even 1% of local area food sales.

Ramping Up: Requirements and Impediments

But capturing a greater share of food dollars requires increased capacity. The Red Hills Small Farm Alliance, recently approached by a restaurant about a contract for lettuce, found that it would need to harvest 100 pounds a week—equivalent production for a large farm installation—to meet even such comparatively limited demand. “We’re just beginning to understand the volume required and what it takes to get that volume,” says Alliance co-founder Louise Divine.

Nor is the task ahead necessarily easy. Impediments include the challenges to local business investing when so much of retirement and other investments are keyed to stock markets and corporate development. Despite the implicit economic promise that lies in meeting basic food needs, governments struggle to know how to boost local efforts. (For ideas about how to bolster such investment see *Local Dollars, Local Sense*, by Michael Shuman, a book in the same series as *Rebuilding the Foodshed*, by Summit keynote speaker Philip Ackerman-Leist.) And healthy fresh food, especially in a context of current ongoing food price rises, is often—rightly *and* wrongly—seen as more expensive than commercial processed food.

A Landscape Laden with Positives

Still, local food conditions boast many positives, starting with an 11-month growing season and considerable unused land capacity. The Red Hills region boasts what may be the highest concentration of unused land per-capita in the country. (Putting it to use is another matter, of study and policy initiatives. And local soils, in most places, must be carefully built up.) Floridians strongly identify with their state’s produce, and area consumers have a strong taste for local

food. A study by UF researchers found 10% more local food consumption in our Capital region than in the second-highest ranking state locale, Gainesville (Hodges and Stevens 2013, 38).

Appreciation for healthy and local food has clearly risen with food awareness. Speaking engagements by food activists Will Allen, Vandana Shiva, and Miguel Altieri have recently drawn big crowds. Community gardening projects abound. A number of local restaurants celebrate their “local sourcing” of fresh produce. Tallahassee supports four major market chains that emphasize their healthy food credentials and various pop-up and permanent farmers’ markets, a number of them started by Florida A&M University’s Small Farms Program. The Lake Ella Wednesday Market has found success by operating mid-week and offering only organic produce, while the oldest local market—at Market Square—is now 40 years old.

What Is Local?

There is no definitive answer to this question. For food activists “local” often means food that hails from within a radius of 100 miles, sometimes expanding to 250. For the US Department of Agriculture, produce sold within 450 miles of its origin qualifies as “locally or regionally produced.” Local also often means food from one’s own state (though a great deal of our “local” food comes from Georgia). Vermont’s Ellen Kahler (see page 32) argues for a flexible approach to *localism*, noting that produce from all over New England is consumed “locally” in Boston and even New York, sometimes within hours of its harvest. There is no reason why Tallahassee and Leon County cannot occupy the center of Big Bend or Red Hills food production while eventually supplying healthy fresh fruit, produce, meat, and seafood to Atlanta, Orlando, and even New Orleans.

Organizational Activity

“The movement daily surprises me by its growth and impact.”

Nathan Ballantine, The Man in Overalls, a Tallahassee Food Network Founder

A full survey of area local food activity would be difficult, and a glance at the Food Movement Map developed for the Summit (pages 25-27) make clear why: a wide range of activity takes place in Leon County around food issues. Instead of trying to be fully comprehensive, this section offers an outline of present activity, starting with the most multi-faceted organizations and their activities.

Tallahassee Food Network

Much of the area’s recent food momentum has been supplied by activists in the **Tallahassee Food Network (TFN)**. Centered in Tallahassee’s Frenchtown community, the organization of growers, educators, health advocates, researchers, and entrepreneurs has partnered with local food interests on dozens of projects. TFN has created community gardens and—at its lush inner-city “iGrow” farm—trains young people to manage an increasingly diverse food-and-social change enterprise. For four years TFN has engaged community members in conversations about the direction of the food movement at its monthly “Collards and Cornbread” meetings,

where many current food projects were first discussed. TFN is not only rooted in these practical undertakings—members are also evolving unique research models, based in principles of participatory action, that bring researchers to live and work in communities they study and encourage community members to take part in their own research. The projects have brought revenue to local neighborhoods and national praise along with it. TFN members founded the annual Youth Symposium on Food and Hunger, and have partnered with collaborators like the Tallahassee Childhood Obesity Prevention & Education (COPE) Coalition on food and wellness policy. TFN is currently partnering with the City of Tallahassee, Whole Child Leon (see below), and other organizations to develop a citywide gardening-and-community-organizing project, expanding its youth urban agriculture program to Tallahassee’s South City.

Inadequate Nutrition

A 2009 University of Florida study, conducted by members of the Health Equity Alliance of Tallahassee, found that only 12% of Leon County middle and high school students were getting the government-recommended number of fruits and vegetables daily.

The Red Hills Small Farm Alliance and Red Hills Online Market

The **Red Hills Small Farm Alliance (RHSFA)** is poised to play a key role in the future development of local agriculture. Founded in 2010, the organization works to promote the economic stability of small farm enterprises within 100-miles of its Northwood Mall distribution hub, and to expand the provision of local food to all of the area’s people. With 50 farm enterprises on its member roster (many of them strong individual contributors to local food development—see Food Movement Map, 25-27), the nonprofit alliance has a sophisticated online ordering service (Red Hills Online Market) that delivers meat, cheese, and preserves along with produce to individual homes and to four area drop-off sites from farmers who list weekly on its website (www.RHOMarket.com). The RHSFA sponsors workshops and training for farmers and organizes various community events, including a week-long local food festival, Seven Days of Local Delights.

A Small Farm Boom

Small farms are springing up across the country, many started by young people—especially women. Small operations are popular in part because land is expensive, but agro-ecological innovation continues to increase yields (even as fossil fuel-intensive factory farming methods near their productive limits). Women now run 14% of national farms, up from 5% in the 1980s (Gainesville Sun July 18, 2013). Women raise a greater variety of crops than men, who are more likely to focus on commodity monocultures. They also tend to sell more food locally, with beneficial effects for communities’ nutrition.

The Frenchtown Neighborhood Improvement Association and Heritage Hub & Marketplace

Based in Tallahassee's historic Frenchtown neighborhood, **The Frenchtown Neighborhood Improvement Association** is developing the **Frenchtown Heritage Market & Food Hub**, grown from an outdoor farmers' market it launched in 2011 to offer increased food access and business opportunities to local residents. The project was carried out with the help of Knight Creative Communities Institute, TFN, the Frenchtown Community Redevelopment Agency, COPE, and other local organizations. The market, which is equipped to take Electronic Benefit Transfer (formerly food stamp) cards, also takes part in an incentive program—Fresh Access Bucks—that doubles Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars for produce purchases. The multi-faceted project, which aims in time to provide Tallahassee with the kind of central market enjoyed by the world's great cities, will grow as funding and infrastructure allow. It is hoped that the market will provide a focus through which area groups can collaborate in developing the local food economy.

What Is a Food Hub?

A place where farmers and retailers can coordinate the processing, sale, and distribution of local food, a food hub aggregates food from small- and medium-sized farms to achieve economies of scale that individual producers cannot attain themselves. Food hubs operate above the scale of farmers' markets and direct farm sales but below the scale of retail chains' giant distribution centers to boost the development of regional food systems, small growers, farmers' markets, and food businesses. They increase access to fresh food for consumers, including people living in underserved areas. According to a Cornell University study, every dollar spent on local food through a food hub generates an additional 81 cents in local economic sectors (McMillan 2014).

The food hub idea is evolving, and can include a number of food enterprises that associate with the kind of basic functions described above. The Frenchtown Heritage Market & Food Hub, set to open on Tallahassee's Martin Luther King Boulevard in summer 2015, plans to develop an array of food-and-community-related services to go with aggregation and processing, offering meeting space for local organizations; cooking classes; kitchen rental; food business incubation; grower/vendor education and marketing; community events and workshops; and (not least) an indoor/outdoor market.

Sustainable Tallahassee

Sustainable Tallahassee (ST), a group that promotes sustainability efforts in a wide array of fields from recycling to alternative energy development, recently began a year-long partnership with Leon County and the City of Tallahassee designed to engage the community on the subject of local food. Activities include presentations to local organizations, helping food businesses host community events, and aiding in the development of gardening projects. ST is currently working with community partners to develop and fund food business incubation projects, and working on an initiative to reduce consumption of disposable plastic water bottles.

Building the Consumer Base, a USDA Project

Building on development of the Frenchtown Heritage Market, a USDA-funded study, carried out in conjunction with FAMU's Institute for Public Health, is examining ways to stimulate the engagement of local consumers with the Frenchtown Heritage Market, including the sale and consumption of its produce to low-income community members. Through interviews, field tests, observation, and surveys—principally carried out by local residents—the 18-month project is designed to uncover ways to make local people, especially the 550 residents of Tallahassee's low-income housing facilities, greater patrons and beneficiaries of the market.

Other Food Organizations

- With support from **United Way** and other donors, **America's Second Harvest (ASH)** annually distributes 5.5 million pounds of food to local people in need. **Lott's Community Garden**, a ten-acre site where volunteers receive production training, contributes fresh produce to the operation. In this way, and through donations from gardeners, farmers, and gleaners, local produce has come to make up 15% of ASH food donations.
- **New Leaf Market Co-Op** hosts many local food activities, including an **Annual Farm Tour**, which brings thousands of visitors to nearly 40 farms in the fall each year. New Leaf is poised to open a second store on the city's north side.
- Another cooperative, **Bread & Roses**, located in Tallahassee's All Saints neighborhood, was begun and is largely run by FSU students.
- Along with community, workplace, church, and neighborhood gardens, vibrant public school gardening programs, a number of them begun by the Damayan Garden Project and/or TFN/iGrow, are flourishing across the County.
- **The Sowing Seeds Sewing Comfort Ministry** involves women, children, and families in projects that improve livelihood, raising food for neighbors and people in need.
- **Whole Child Leon**, a broad-based partnership devoted to children's health, backs various nutrition-related programs including **Food on the Move**—a bus delivering food to local neighborhoods—helping to fill the vacuum that arises in summer, when many children lose access to subsidized school lunches.
- A **Tallahassee Food Incubator Group** has been initiated to help develop infrastructure for local food start-ups.
- **The Tallahassee Sustainability Group**, an FSU student organization, runs two community gardens and engages in various food development efforts. Its **Agrinauts Training Program** seeks to turn participants into “pioneers of sustainability.”
- Institutional forces including **FAMU's Cooperative Extension and Statewide Small Farms Program** and the **University of Florida/IFAS Leon County Extension** are strongly allied with local food forces, offering programs about farming, food production, and nutrition.

Recent Office of Sustainability Efforts Regarding Food

Leon County's Office of Sustainability was founded in 2008. Recent office efforts in the food arena include:

- **A gardening program**, inaugurated in 2012, with three gardens established on County land and grants to 14 stakeholder gardens. Gardens may be established for educational purposes, in response to food security deficits, or for neighborhood revitalization and beautification. The County provides three kinds of help: financial assistance in the form of grants; material assistance, including mulch; and technical assistance through Leon County Cooperative Extension.
- **Partnering with Sustainable Tallahassee and the City of Tallahassee** to facilitate community engagement and education around local food with the **"Year of Good Food" project**.
- **Assessing barriers and opportunities for small farms** in Leon County. It has also developed draft ordinances and coordinated stakeholder engagement to elicit feedback and ensure community support for such efforts.
- With the **Leon County Public Library system (LCPL)**, the County hosts **"Sustainable Community Matters,"** a series of educational sessions about sustainable living. The recent focus has been on food and gardening.
- Also in conjunction with LCPL, the County has launched a **Seed Library program** in which patrons use their library cards to obtain packets of locally hardy and favored vegetable seeds, selected by the Leon County Extension Office for each growing season.
- **The County's Solid Waste Facility** processes yard debris into mulch- coarse for paths and flower beds and fine for use as a soil amendment. The resource is available free to residents.
- **Assisted in developing the USDA grant** (see previous section) to study local food with FAMU's Institute for Public Health.
- **Sponsors the New Leaf Market Farm Tour**, hosts an educational booth on composting for the event, and has developed **an interactive GIS map** depicting participating farms (www.GrowingGreen.org/FarmTour2014).
- **Assisted in developing a 2013 Preliminary Food Assessment** by FSU Urban & Regional Planning graduate students (see next section).
- **Conducted a focus group** in May 2014, canvassing food leaders about steps needed to encourage the local food movement.
- Operates the long standing **Leon County Cooperative Extension** in conjunction with University of Florida's IFAS program, and recently created a position for a **Sustainable Agriculture and Community Food Systems Agent** to focus on developing our food system. The position is relatively novel among extension programs, and signifies support of the local food movement beyond traditional positions and resources.

Reference website: www.GrowingGreen.org

Food Assessment

A 2013 **Preliminary Food Assessment** by students in Florida State University's Department of Urban and Regional Planning, collaborating with the Office of Sustainability, TFN, and others, sought to develop data for formulation of local food policies—first step to a Community Food Assessment that might contribute (in its turn) to development of a comprehensive food plan for the area. The project, the first of its kind in the Florida Panhandle, looked at food systems within a 100-mile radius of Tallahassee. Among its findings:

- One in five people in the study area lacks consistent access to adequate food (is “food insecure”). Neighboring Gadsden County has Florida’s highest rate of food insecurity.
- Healthy food is less affordable, accessible, or available in low-income areas.
- The number of area small farmers is growing, but markets through which they operate are under-capitalized. Small farmers often lack both business knowledge and time to invest in growing their businesses.
- Local climate and growing conditions offer strong capacity for expanded production once a more receptive market is developed.
- Comprehensive plans and land use laws prevent development of urban neighborhood gardening and food sales.
- Local water use is a critical issue, with strong implications for local food development.

The authors called for study of how the retail food environment affects nutrition, especially with regard to diabetes and obesity. They advised that store permitting processes be used to encourage placement of food stores in low-income areas. The use of best management practices by local farms requires investigation, the authors said. Ways to increase employment in agriculture should also be examined. The study repeatedly cited a need to educate consumers about farmers’ markets and healthy food. The assessment can be accessed online at: <http://fpdl.coss.fsu.edu/Studios/Preliminary-Community-Food-Assessment>.

What Is Food Systems Planning? A Definition and Some Reading

A food system is “the network of activities, actors, resources, regulations and institutions required to produce, process, distribute, and dispose of food” (Neuner et al. 2011). **Food systems planning** is both a movement in the making and an emerging multidisciplinary approach to studying food, from “farm to table” and (still more comprehensively) “soil to soil,” from soil development, planting, and maintenance to waste prevention and recycling.

An example, one Oregon community’s 15-year food action plan, can be found here: <https://multco.us/multfood>.

Summit Preparation and Aims

The 2015 Sustainability Summit was designed to move what had become an increasingly intense conversation among food community initiates to a wider audience, to expand the number of people “at the table.” In preparation, the Sustainability Office solicited feedback from 30 community leaders, both relative newcomers to the food community and food veterans. In the meeting, officials solicited suggestions about Summit planning, and showed participants portions of talks by the planned keynote speakers. They also gathered ideas for food initiatives that were used in a survey of 100 community members (see below). These “Round Table Partners” reconvened after the Summit to grapple with the event’s implications and consider further action (see page 32).

Pre-Summit Survey

As an informational aid and program-building tool, a survey was created to engage the community and collect data prior to the Summit. Various meetings occurred to shape the content and value of the survey. Round Table Partners were the original recipients of the survey, and they passed it on to other members of the community using the “snowball effect.” . Circulated two months before the Summit, the survey asked about involvement in food-related projects; about addressing local food issues; about skills and assets they could offer the food movement; and about resources going untapped in the community. While the results were not scientific, they proved suggestive, and were often very practical in character. Space was provided for personal responses in almost every category, and surveys were completed with thoughtful attentiveness.

The survey sought to develop categories to define local food work for future mapping of the regional food environment. The categories developed (“Health & Nutrition Advocacy,” “Farmer Development & Support,” etc) proved sturdy and comprehensive, with each category representing at least 17% of respondents, who selected one or more categories to describe their involvement in the food movement. They were employed in the **Food Movement Map** created by Leon County Sustainability staff (see pages 25-27).

Additional findings:

- When asked about skills and assets that they had to offer the food movement, respondents identified an array of talents and tangible assets. Among these:
 1. Community organizing experience (48%)
 2. Health and nutrition knowledge (42%)
 3. Facilities for meetings/storage/other space (40%)
 4. Practical farming knowledge (37%)
 5. Volunteer labor (37%)

6. Academic or deeper subject knowledge (37%)
 7. Leadership or facilitator training (33%)
 8. Program design (31%)
 9. Grant writing experience (30%)
 10. Business plan development (19%)
 11. Food processing or other production know-how (19%)
 12. Tools or other equipment (11%)
 13. Land to loan or give (9%)
 14. Loans, monetary gifts, or matching grants (6%)
- Asked which local groups they perceived as “untapped or under-utilized reserves of talent or energy,” respondents identified faith-based organizations and their members foremost (50% of them selecting this category), followed by retirees (40%). The health care community—with its vested interest in healthy eating—also ranked high, at 20%.
 - Asked which developments would best contribute to boosting the availability and consumption of local food, respondents chose:
 1. Building a grassroots effort to make food production a community-wide focus (67%)
 2. Branding and developing local food products, building on local dwellers' pride of place (50%)
 3. Taking advantage of unused land in our fertile region, overcoming zoning/other barriers to use (46%)
 4. Providing greater impetus for local food production from local governments (37%)
 5. Educating consumers about how to cook and store fresh local food (33%)

Local Food Initiatives

One of the most important tasks performed by the Round Table Partners at pre-Summit meetings was compiling a list of **ideas for local food initiatives**. These ideas—wide-ranging in their character and specificity—were added to a list of initiatives developed at a Sustainability Office focus group meeting in May 2014. (Several of these ideas, in their turn, had originated in TFN and its Collards & Cornbread circles.) The combined list was presented to survey takers, who were asked to indicate their support for each. Those that received at least 75% combined support (“strongly support” or “support”) were selected for the Summit activities. Those initiatives receiving ample support were:

1. **HEALTHY FOOD EDUCATION:** Strongly integrate the topic of healthy food consumption in public school curriculums.
2. **COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK:** Create a county-wide network of associations to promote and develop community gardens.
3. **GARDENS IN SCHOOLS:** Create gardening programs in area schools.
4. **COMMUNITY FOOD PLAN:** Develop a comprehensive Community Food Systems Plan for our community.



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5. **COMMUNITY GARDEN LAND TRUST:** Establish a community garden land trust to obtain property for garden projects.
6. **YOUTH AG PROGRAM:** Develop a county-wide youth agricultural development program to help create the next generation of farmers.
7. **FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY:** Develop more food self-sufficiency models, moving up from food pantries and charity.
8. **LOCAL FOOD IN SCHOOLS:** Strive to enlist local education institutions in purchasing locally and regionally produced foods.
9. **FOOD POLICY COUNCIL:** Establish a Food Policy Council to prioritize and implement policies promoting local food development.
10. **INCENTIVIZE LOCAL FOOD:** Incentivize local businesses to participate in the local food movement, including through the purchase of more local food.
11. **EBT ACCEPTANCE:** Work to assure that Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are accepted at all farmers' markets.
12. **GOOD FOOD DIRECTORY:** Develop a Community Good Food Directory—an online and paper directory of local food resources, from food organizations to farmers and food outlets.
13. **FAST HEALTHY FOOD:** Develop an initiative to make healthy food as easily accessible as fast food.
14. **MUNICIPAL COMPOSTING:** Develop an integrated municipal composting operation that supplies the needs of local gardeners and growers while reducing waste.
15. **FOOD HUB:** Organize and implement a food hub—a central processing facility where farmers and retailers can coordinate processing, distribution, and sale of locally grown produce; create a strong program to promote its use.
16. **HEALTHY FOOD STRATEGIC PLAN:** Devise a strategic plan to increase healthy food consumption in neighborhoods, providing culturally relevant food information and education outreach.
17. **CRA FUNDING:** Broaden the goals of Tallahassee's Community Redevelopment Agency to include human capital development—including food projects—along with the current emphasis on bricks and mortar.
18. **COTTAGE INDUSTRY SUPPORT:** Develop an initiative to enhance the development, processing, and distribution of new local food products/small cottage industries.

Readers interested in helping to develop any of the initiatives are encouraged to contact TFN (TallahasseeFoodNetwork@gmail.com).

Summit Highlights

Thanks to excitement about local food issues and arduous advance work, the 2015 Summit was a sellout, with 250 people filling the main hall at FSU’s Turnbull Conference Center and a spillover crowd watching on a screen in a room next door. (They joined the larger group for the day’s last events.) A notable number of attendees were Florida A&M and Florida State University students.

A youth workshop, hosted in partnership with Leon County 4-H and TFN/iGrow, drew 26 children. Over the course of the day the children mapped the sources of their food, received instruction in composting, made healthy snacks and biodegradable seed pots, and talked about how young people can impact the food system.

The consulting team of Michelle Royal and Luke Fillaramo of the **Royal Innovation Design Group** (RIDG), led participants in several of the day’s events, while Claire Stephens, a RIDG staffer, created a “graphic recording” of the event (see centerpiece). An initial exercise—building on the survey food work categories—challenged participants to consider their roles in the food system and to look on themselves as “co-creators” of the event. Their input was used to further elaborate the **Food Movement Map** (see pages 25-27).

Community Snapshot: Lightning Speeches by Local Subject Matter Experts



Miaisha Mitchell: Engaging the Community’s Voices
TFN co-founder, health educator, and community activist

Miaisha Mitchell kicked off the lightning round by highlighting the importance of community engagement in a sustainable food system. She called on audience members to shout out ideas about what is needed “to bring focus to the value of growing good food for our children and families.” “Love” and “respect” were popular suggestions. The exercise was followed by four brief presentations from local community members, each discussing one of the pieces to complete the “Good Food diagram” (shown below).

Heather Mitchell: We Need a Plan for Food Self-Sufficiency

Former President and CEO, United Way of the Big Bend

Mitchell spoke urgently of the need to address local food problems, noting that the Big Bend region faces a shortfall of \$28 million dollars to meet food needs in 2015. “Access to food is a critical issue for many in our community,” she told the audience, painting a stark picture of local want:

- One in five people is affected by food insecurity.
- 75% of residents often have to choose between buying food and paying their utility bills.
- 83% of food insecure families had used “multiple strategies” to get enough food in the past year, including selling personal property, eating food that was past its expiration date, and watering down food or drinks.
- 35.1% of those who are food insecure are not eligible for government assistance.
- The number of families that need food is increasing. America’s Second Harvest feeds 7,000 families in Leon County monthly; many more get food from small non-profit organizations and churches.

“Many organizations are working on food issues,” said Mitchell. “But our community has yet to set priorities or establish a community-wide plan to address hunger. We need a plan for food self-sufficiency,” she insisted. The summit provided an opportunity to move toward such a plan, to “create a strong community-wide strategy and speak with one voice about solutions” to our food problems.

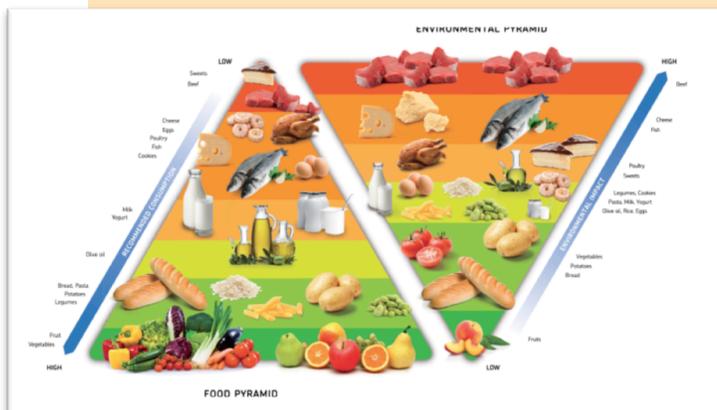
“We need a Big Bend Food Coalition,” Mitchell declared.

Richard Gragg: Nutritious Local Food Has a Smaller Ecological Footprint

Environmental Sciences Institute, Florida A&M

FAMU Professor Richard Gragg, an environmental toxicologist, stressed the benefits to communities when they orient their food systems to local production and healthy consumption of food. “More nutritious food has a smaller ecological footprint,” he told his audience. Gragg showed listeners the **food double pyramid**, which inverts the well-known US Department of Agriculture pyramid to show that products at the top of the traditional pyramid—meat and baked goods, cheese and poultry, milk and other products (see image)— require the most resources to produce, impacting nature much more powerfully. The most nutritious foods, meanwhile, have the smallest impact. It takes 15,000 kilos of water to produce a kilo of meat, Gragg told listeners, but just 214 kilos of water to grow a kilo of tomatoes. Food production based on this inverted model lessens greenhouse gas emissions, and lowers consumption and degradation of resources.

We can reduce such heavy impacts on nature at the level of growing, processing, and consumption, Gragg noted, especially when we raise food and eat it closer to home. Gragg insisted that we are all environmental experts (“We live it every day!”) and must take charge of the health of our environment.



Accessibil

- Addressing “food deserts”
- Improving affordability of good food
- Finding culturally appropriate solutions

COM

Sus

Food

Environment

ENGA

- Promoting locally grown food on working landscapes
- Encouraging food choices with lighter eco-footprints

Dr. Qasimah Boston: Food Impacts Public Health

*State Director of the Children's Mental Health System of Care Expansion
Co-founder of the Tallahassee Food Network*

Boston emphasized the powerful impact that diet has on public health. Diabetes, hypertension, depression, anxiety, stress, and cancer have all been linked to unhealthy food consumption. Food has been found to play roles in schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and Alzheimer's disease, Boston noted. Anemia in women, autism, violence, infant mortality, substance abuse, obesity, and aging are all affected by the food that we consume—health officials can correlate the number of years of potential life lost in a given community with dietary consumption. Social policy must be targeted to improving public health outcomes through food, Boston told her audience.

Boston encouraged listeners to join local activists, who are “engaging in conversations and education at workshops, youth symposiums on food, and TFN’s Collard and Cornbread conversations,” as well as through Tallahassee’s COPE coalition. “We are taking action,” she said, “by using research to examine perceptions of convenience store owners, African American women, residents in public housing” and to promote the availability of healthy food. “We are. . . engaging and training youth in urban agriculture, developing healthy learning modules for youth, partnering with the County and City to develop policies that support urban agriculture, sharing our stories through published articles and presenting at national conferences. A lot has gone on and there is much more to be done!” Boston said. Public health, she said, means all of our health. “Food is about you, you, and you!”

Health

Increasing consumption of nutrient-rich food

- Improving knowledge of nutrition & cooking

COMMUNITY

Health System

ENVIRONMENT

Economy

- Growing local farmers & food businesses

Creating spin-off economic benefits

Katie Harris: Buying Local Food Keeps Money in the Community

Owner of Full Earth Farm and Co-Founder of the Red Hills Small Farms Alliance

In the first of a series of lightning presentations about the contexts of local food, Katie Harris—farmer and co-founder of the Red Hills Small Farm Alliance—talked about the effects on local economies of the circulation of local food. Sometimes local economic problems are attributed to lack of consumer spending, Harris told listeners.

But customers aren't completely broke. A bigger problem is that money spent on corporate food commodities leaves the community. All of this changes when consumers buy local. In one study, twice as much money remained in local circulation when it was spent at farmers' markets than when spent at supermarkets. Such money cycles through the community once more, Harris noted, as farmers spend on local goods and services.

Harris pointed to research that shows that communities with well-developed local economies have fared better during the recent national recession and long financial downturn. Food safety is also enhanced when we consume local food, according to Harris. Local food is fresher (nutritional value is often lost in processing), and more easily traced in the event of food-borne illness—a recent outbreak of e coli in a national spinach brand took days to track down, according to Harris. Another virtue of local production: along with consumer health, seed and soils prosper when adapted local varieties are grown.

Food/Farm Fact:

Fruit and vegetable farms with local sales employ up to four times as many people as farms that grow for processing or for far-flung chains and markets (O'Hara 2011 in Hodges and Stevens).

The speeches, with all of the Summit proceedings, can be found online at: www.GrowingGreen.org/Summit/2015

Inspiration and Empowerment Keynote

Karen Washington—Healthy Food Builds Healthy Communities

Karen Washington had a first career as a physical therapist. Many of her clients' health problems, she came to realize, resulted in strong part from what they ate. Washington began working in Bronx, New York neighborhoods, starting community gardens. Later she started the City Farms Market, which provides local fresh vegetables to the borough. Washington is the former president of the New York City Community Garden Coalition and a co-founder of Black Urban Growers (BUGS).

Washington began by praising the agricultural settings she had visited in Leon County, meeting people at urban gardens and rural farms. And (no small matter in the context) she praised the local food: "Y'all know how to feed somebody!" she told listeners.

Then Washington became serious, painting a dire picture of American poverty and global health, lamenting our increasing disconnection from the soil. "Our grandparents and great-great grandparents were farmers," Washington said. But "we have lost a generation of people who don't know where their food comes from. . . who could care less about the ethics" involved in its production, and have too little notion of how their food affects their health. "We spend billions on treatment but far less on prevention," Washington told listeners. "Lobbyists and marketing firms," she said, control what we eat. Seventy-two percent of elderly



men and 67% of elderly women are overweight or obese, Washington noted; the world has a billion overweight people, 300 million of them obese. The key causes: engineered, highly processed foods, dense in sugars and saturated fats, coupled with a lack of exercise. If the rates stay constant, half of us will be obese by 2050. This is not sustainable, Washington said.

Seizing the Storyline: Growing Means Human Connection

We need to "take back our story and the narratives," Washington told listeners. She related the story of her own Bronx experience, extolling the virtues of urban gardening: food security, health, and the sense of ownership that comes with such involvement. Washington said that the Bronx and Tallahassee were part of an emerging "guerilla gardening" movement. In the Bronx fifteen years ago there were 15,000 empty lots, Washington said. These are slowly being filled with urban gardens. Residents who farmed were achieving a measure of **food sovereignty**

(see box), and the results were not merely a passing fad: “Urban agriculture isn’t going away,” Washington insisted. “To grow your own food gives you power. You know how and why you grew it—you grew it for yourself, your family, and your community.”

Washington praised the power of relationship and connection that grows from engagement with food issues, including the simple virtue of requesting neighbors’ help. She said that organizations often wonder: “How come people don’t come to our events?” “It’s the power of asking!” she declared. “Get people involved!”

But the growth of a local food economy cannot be based solely on volunteerism, Washington told listeners. If communities really want local food economies, she insisted, “people need to get paid. We need a green economy that pays for the jobs we have been doing.”

Solutions: Cultivate Social Conditions in Which Healthy Food Can Grow

Student debt, Washington said, prevents young people from becoming farmers, from buying land or accessing loans to start food projects. She called for a forgiveness program for graduates who enter farming and food-related fields. Washington also called for laws to limit the number of fast food restaurants in low-income neighborhoods, and for incentives to businesses willing to offer healthy food and bring employment to low-income neighborhoods. She spoke forcefully for an international right to safe, healthy food and water.

“Food isn’t a privilege, it’s a right. And we want people to exercise that right. . . in their neighborhood.”
Washington

Food Movement Terms: Food Sovereignty, Food Security, Food Justice

Food Security: Food security speaks to sufficiency of food—guaranteed availability (and in some definitions, affordability and accessibility), which governments may pledge to insure for their populations. Sometimes this availability is tenuous. In Trinidad & Tobago food security means a five day supply in Miami warehouses. Food organizations push for a more expansive definition of the idea, which may include elements of *food sovereignty* (see next). Internationally, food security compacts are often predicated on the idea of disaster planning, which may be created through corporate contracts.

Food Sovereignty: An idea developed by the Vía Campesina—global organization of 200 million small farmers—food sovereignty insists on the right of communities and people to control their own food systems and guide the development of policies surrounding food. Advocates insist that the only way to insure true food security is *through* food sovereignty. The United Nations has partly recognized a right to food sovereignty, and a number of governments—including Nepal and Ecuador—have enshrined the idea in their national constitutions or laws.

Food Justice: Closely related to *environmental justice*, food justice insists on the right of urban and rural poor people to access healthy food and—increasingly—for their right to the means to produce it. Racism, whether overt or institutional, may be a factor in depriving food to poor populations, advocates say. Washington is a member of the board of *Just Food*, a primary organizational advocate of food justice in the United States.

Economic Development Keynote

Philip Ackerman-Leist: How to Create a Local, Sustainable Food System

Both a farmer and a teacher, Ackerman-Leist is founder of the nation's first online graduate program in food systems at Green Mountain College in Vermont. He is the author of *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems* (Chelsea Green 2013). His talk grew out of experiences in a Swiss mountain village, where he managed a model farm; in Rutland, Vermont, town of 16,500 where he lives; and in helping develop Vermont's **Farm to Plate (F2P)** initiative (see discussion below and in next section).



Ackerman-Leist oriented listeners to steps communities are taking in their efforts to build viable local food economies, offering several guiding concepts for such work. One was the idea of the **foodshed** (geographic area that provides food for a population), an organizing idea that he feels can connect communities in new ways, offering no less than “a new vision of democracy.” The foodshed, Ackerman-Leist said, should be “defined by the periphery of our influence to create positive change.” More intimately, he also offered a vision of “reconciliation at the table”—how food can be used, in ways both personal and social, to harmonize communities.

Like Washington, Ackerman-Leist insisted that food change be predicated on the development of good working relations—indeed, on friendship. To make the new economy, he said, “you build the relationships first.” (“Start with the grassroots and work your way down to the highest levels of government!” he joked.) In a suggestion of the time frames involved, he described a two-year “nurturing and implementation” process that eventuated, for Vermont, in a ten-year comprehensive plan. F2P, he said, is succeeding—in its third year, the project supplies three times the growth of any other sector of Vermont’s economy.

Ackerman-Leist pointed to projects that Leon County listeners might draw on for ideas: in Rutland, where his community just opened the state’s first year-round farmers’ market; around Vermont, where F2P is unfolding; and across the country, including the Appalachian region, which possesses a highly developed food economy (especially in the area around Asheville). He described the core requirements of effective school gardening programs: hands-on experience; food in the curriculum; cafeterias using school-grown produce and healthy food. He talked about community colleges as a “gateway to the food system,” pointing to programs that train students to build local food economies. He spoke of cutting food waste as perhaps the most critical ignored feature of sustainable food development, and of a need for **anaerobic municipal**

composting programs. (As much as 40% of the food we grow is wasted, accounting for 2% of the energy the world consumes.)

Among the strongest messages that Ackerman-Leist carried for Leon County listeners—amid salutary emphases on food health and food justice—was the degree to which the Vermont plan focuses on jobs. The goals of Vermont’s legislature in establishing F2P were 1) to increase economic activity in the food and farm sector, 2) to create jobs, and 3) to improve access to healthy local food.

“[W]e have to view ourselves more as food citizens than as food consumers. Citizens will studiously delegate decisions about food and agriculture to people who will be stewards of the common good; consumers will merely relegate those decisions to someone else.”

Ackerman-Leist

Organizations and Initiatives Referenced by Ackerman-Leist

The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks works to create a network of sustainable food enterprises throughout Appalachian Ohio: <http://www.acenetworks.org>

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project: <http://www.buyappalachian.org>

Central Carolina Community College has a model vocational program in sustainable agriculture: <http://www.rutlandfarmandfood.org>

The Food Recovery Network, a student organization with chapters nationwide, works to fight food waste: <http://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/>

The Lexicon of Sustainability, “a grassroots collection of everyday heroes,” documents good food work around the country: <http://www.lexiconofsustainability.com>

Sustainable Food Systems brings sustainable food practices to institutions across the country: <http://sustainablefoodsystems.com>

Rutland Area Farm and Food Link offers a view to Rutland, VT food organizing efforts (see the Locally Grown Guide and Learn pages): <http://www.rutlandfarmandfood.org>

Vermont Feed works with schools and communities to raise awareness about healthy food: <http://www.vtfeed.org>

Vermont Farm to School Network develops farm-to-school programs: <http://vermontfarmtoschool.org>

The Real Food Challenge is a national student-run organization working to bring fair food to all: <http://www.realfoodchallenge.org>

The keynote speeches may be heard online at: www.GrowingGreen.org/Summit/2015

Interacting with the Community



Philip Ackerman-Leist and Karen Washington meeting farmers Herman and Louise Divine of Turkey Hill Farms the day before the Summit on the Community Tour organized by TFN.





Leon County
Board of County Commissioners
301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301
(850) 606-5300 www.leoncountyfl.gov



The Food Movement Map, as it has come to be called, was developed from survey responses and participant worksheets from the Summit, where individuals identified the arenas in which they work and their organizational affiliations. The map was created using a flow chart tool called MindMeister.

The map in its current state is a work in progress. The hope was that a map of the food movement could spread awareness of the depth and breadth of the local food movement, so that organizations and individuals can know who else is working on projects that impact their work areas. The map also allows us to highlight gaps in our current system.

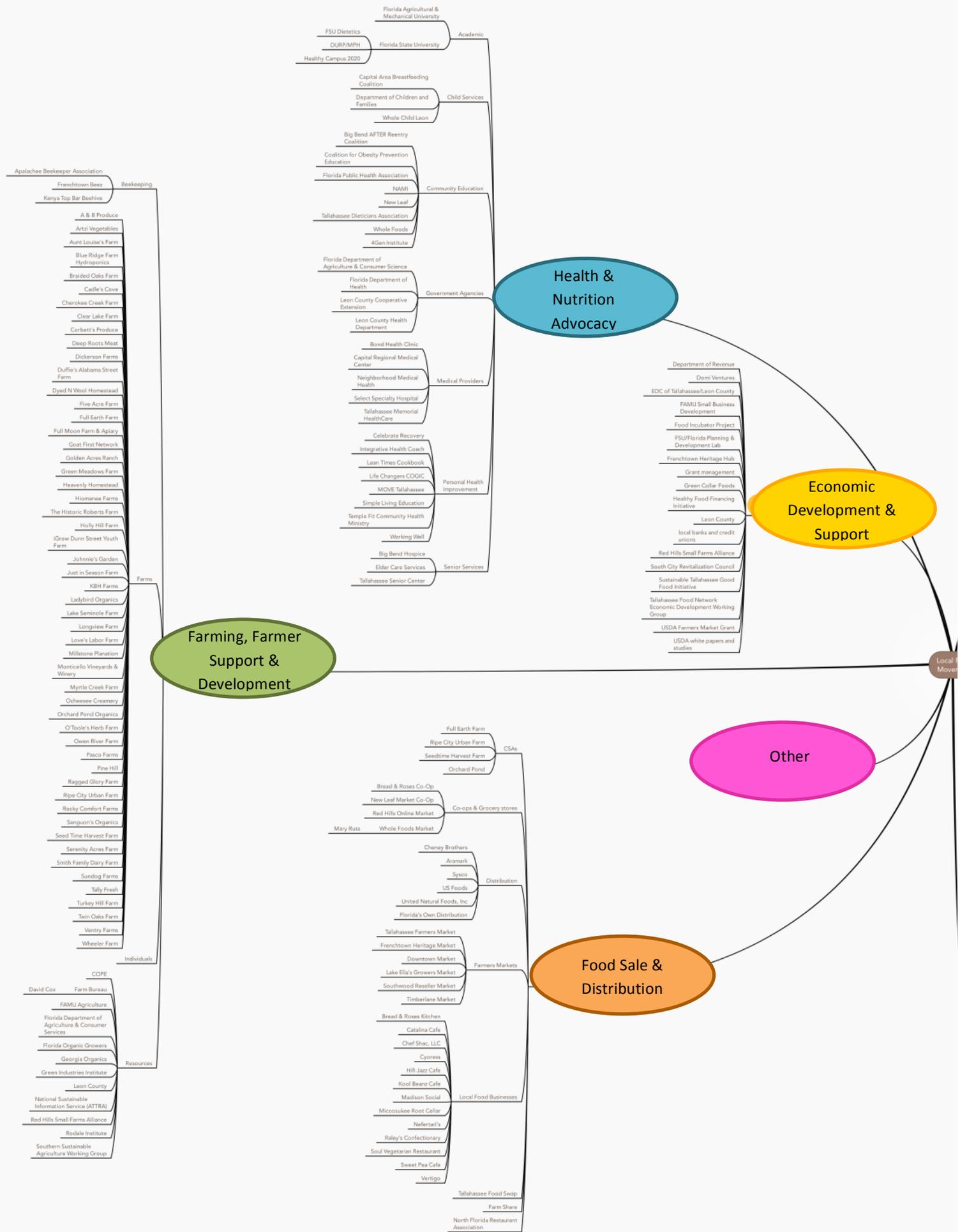
Because the idea of creating the map arose after pre-Summit information was collected, neither the Summit worksheet nor the survey asked for data in a format that directly correlates with the format of the map. Deductive reasoning was sometimes necessary to determine which organizations should be associated with which work areas for individuals who listed multiple areas and organizations. Many organizations appear in several work areas because they were reported as such.

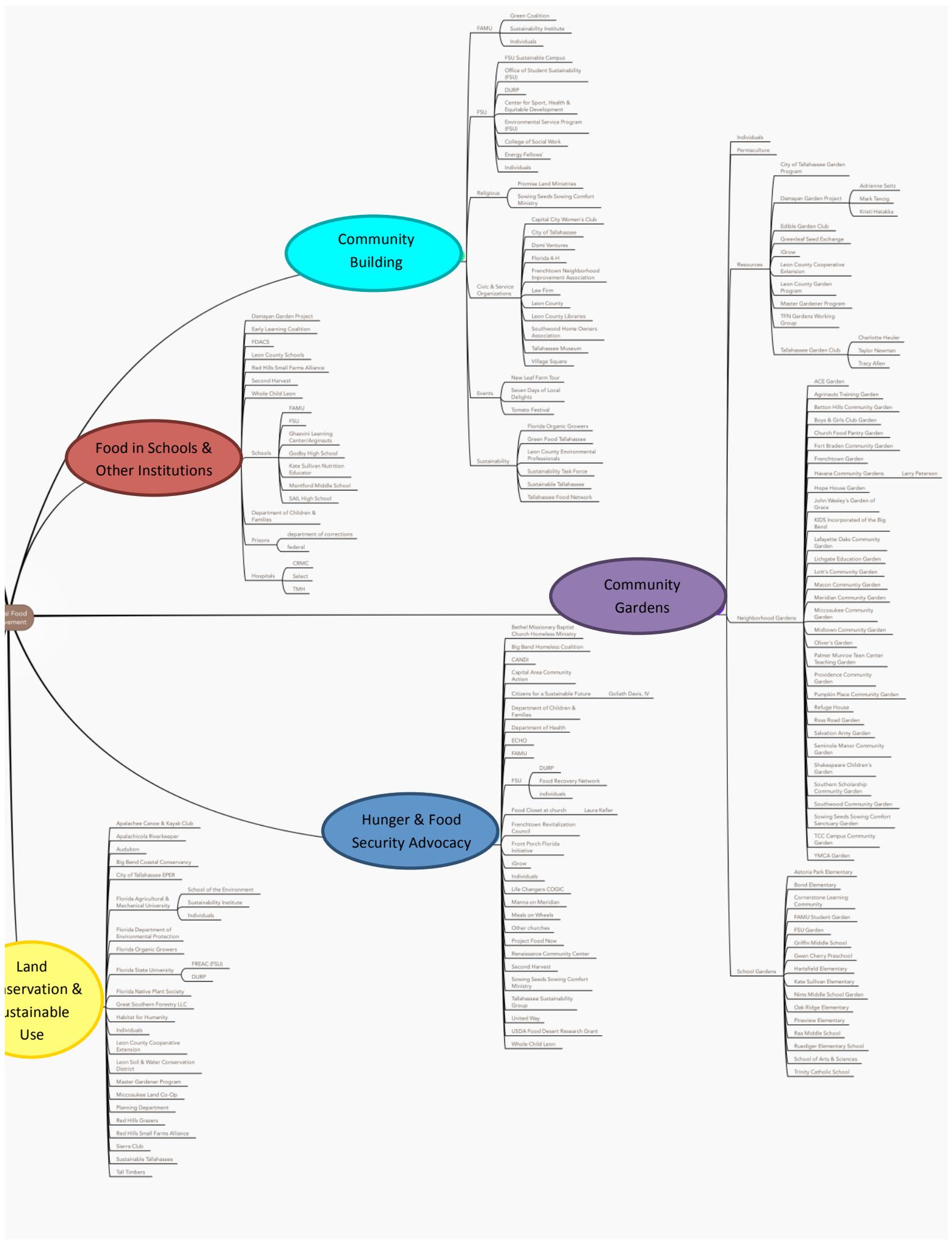
No data outside of that reported was entered on the map, though many individuals and organizations from the community were not represented. Feedback on the map as it existed after the Summit was requested at the Post-Summit Round Table meeting (see next section), and incorporated in the version that appears here.

The proposed next task will be to transfer the data to an open source format. Once posted, it will be open to everyone in the community to edit, to make corrections—people not represented in previous data collection strategies will be able to provide their data as well. Early work on this has already begun: On February 21, 2015, the map was introduced to the community at a Local Food Policy Workshop where attendees began adding data. Hopefully, the map will become a robust depiction of the food movement in Leon County and grow as a resource, with individuals and organizations updating their information as it changes, spreading knowledge of the map to newcomers in the food community.

The map is included here on the following pages, but due to the expansive local food movement, the content is largely illegible. To view the various elements of this map in greater detail, visit GrowingGreen.org/Summit/FoodMovementMap

Lauren Chappell Harris
Sustainability Assistant





Summit Activities

This Summit was intended to create a platform for community discussion about local food, and to be an interactive experience for participants. As such, the afternoon was comprised of activities designed to build on the energy and inspiration of the morning's speakers and inform, engage, and solicit input from community members.

GROW Test, GROWTH Exercise, and Summit Top Five Initiatives

The following activities were developed with help from Michelle Royal and her team.

GROW Test. Summit tables each scored a third of the eighteen initiatives identified by the pre-Summit survey. They gave each of the six initiatives assigned to their table a score between 1 and 5 in response to the following questions:

- How much will this initiative GIVE, in both tangible and intangible benefits, to the community?
- What level of RESOURCES is required?
- How OBSERVABLE (i.e., measurable) will its success be?
- How WILLING am I to co-create this initiative?

GROWTH exercise. The scores were compiled and weighted, and participants then workshopped the initiative(s) (one per table, in some cases two) that they had ranked highest in the previous activity, discussing the following questions:

- What will this initiative GIVE the community?
- What RESOURCES will make this initiative a stellar success?
- What OBSERVABLE metrics can we measure?
- WHO needs to be at the table for this initiative to be a success?
- What is the TIMELINE to complete this initiative?
- HOW can this be a success?

The five highest ranked initiatives were:

1. **Healthy Food Education:** *Strongly integrate the topic of healthy food consumption in the public schools.*
2. **Community Food Plan:** *Develop a comprehensive Community Food Systems Plan for our community.*
3. **Gardens in Schools:** *Create gardening programs in area schools.*
4. **Community Garden Land Trust:** *Establish a community garden land trust to obtain property for garden projects.*
5. **Food Self-Sufficiency:** *Develop more food self-sufficiency models, moving up from food pantries and charity.*

Despite the unofficial character of the exercise there was plenty to appreciate in the choices. Participants' understanding of the importance of **healthy food education** (#1) to help drive demand for a local food economy accords with the findings of the Preliminary Community Food Assessment (page 13) and of health advocates among Summit presenters, including Qasimah Boston and Karen Washington.

2015 Leon County Sustainability Summit: Summary Report

The fact that **food self-sufficiency** made the list (#5) suggests emerging collective awareness of the need to push beyond traditional food charity schemes to models that make it possible for communities to meet their own needs, acknowledging this as a fundamental right.

As important as any choice—finally—might be number two, ratification by attendees of the need for a **community food plan**. It is through such a plan, after all, that thoughtful prioritization of the initiatives—and new ideas—will develop.

*Tables were offered six initiatives to provide a workable number to consider in the time frame and ensure that participants had a diverse array of possibilities to consider. Notes from each table's workshop section were collected and later typed up as Word files by County personnel. The County plans to use these as the basis for future projects.



Organizations allied with the Tallahassee Food Network held a poster exhibit outside the Summit conference room after the event

able Communities

SUMMIT 2015

- COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK
- GARDENS IN SCHOOLS
- COMMUNITY FOOD PLAN
- COMMUNITY GARDEN LAND TRUST



VISIONS

Roots

Progress ZONING
Food Justice
Family
FIRST FOOD
BEAR LINES

Hand on my Heart
REVOLUTION
Unity
Land
RENEWAL
get rid of GAS
of GARDENS
Open mind
Access
Beyond
OASIS

garden
in schools
SHARE
Knowledge

TOP 5 Initiatives

HEALTHY FOOD
Education

COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK

GARDENS IN SCHOOLS

COMMUNITY FOOD PLAN

COMMUNITY GARDEN LAND TRUST



Post-Summit Round Table



Two weeks after the Summit, on February 9, Round Table Partners met at Tallahassee’s Old Willis Dairy. The goal: Discuss opportunities and directions for economic and community development through the local food system that arose from the Summit, especially potential solutions for strengthening economic development in terms of regional food systems.

The meeting began with a conference call to Ackerman-Leist—now back in Vermont—and Ellen Kahler, Executive Director of Vermont’s Sustainable Jobs Fund, who works with the **Farm to Plate** initiative and advises groups around the country about comprehensive food planning.

Kahler described conditions at the start of Vermont’s planning process, some of which echoed conditions in Leon County: Ferment on the food front. People wanting to enter farming. Worries about possible duplication of effort, both in kinds of food produced and among organizations vying for projects. “We wanted to make sure that we were working on the right things,” Kahler told assembled listeners. In an 18-month process, 350 organizations, agencies, businesses, and capital providers assembled the ten-year plan with accompanying strategies for implementation and monitoring, a process—initiated by the Vermont legislature—that Kahler oversees as part of a “backbone organization” (see “Key Elements,” page 35). Kahler extolled the virtues of the “collective impact framework” that Vermont had employed in an “implementation network” that connects 60,000 residents.



A Network and Its Features

Among planning considerations that Kahler cited was the distinction between a food **coalition** and the **network** approach that Vermont has adopted to enact its plan. Deciding which model to use is an important early decision, she said, that food planners face. She counseled Leon

County listeners to “dig into what’s going on” locally as they articulate the strands of an emerging local food system and work to understand its development needs.

Network or Coalition: What’s the Difference?

Coalition: Joint undertakings by community or political organizations—often around specific initiatives or public/political efforts—usually of fixed duration. Usually involves a fixed number of partners.

Network: Flexible working arrangements that are sometimes shifting, based in mutual reciprocity. Can lie dormant, or be set aside when no longer useful. Kahler spoke of a “network bargain” in which all parties see clear benefits in taking part.

Ackerman-Leist, for his part, urged that listeners examine local history for ideas, especially in Florida’s Panhandle, where the landscape is not highly encumbered by commodity agriculture. A region’s agricultural heritage, he suggested, can offer ideas about projects and products, including in the field of agro-heritage tourism: “Where is the pride?” he asked. “Where is the potential?”

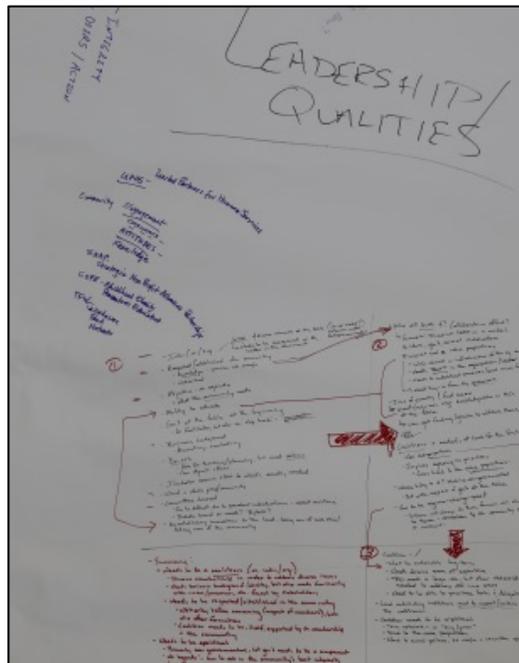
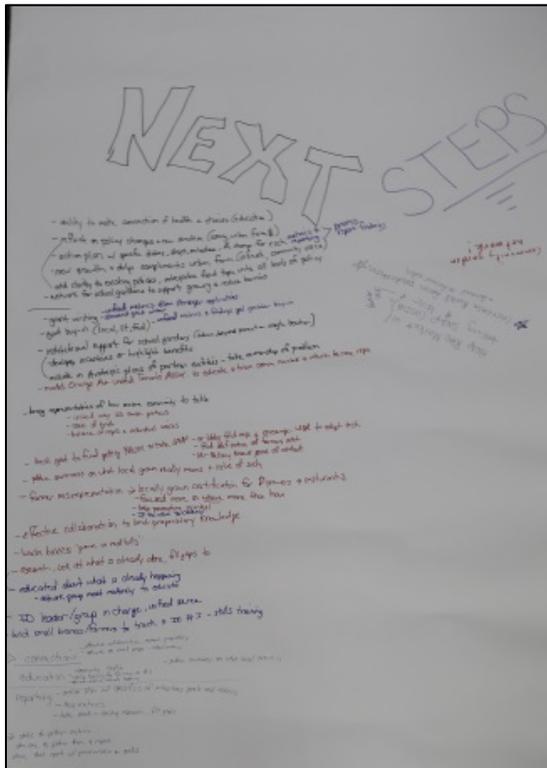
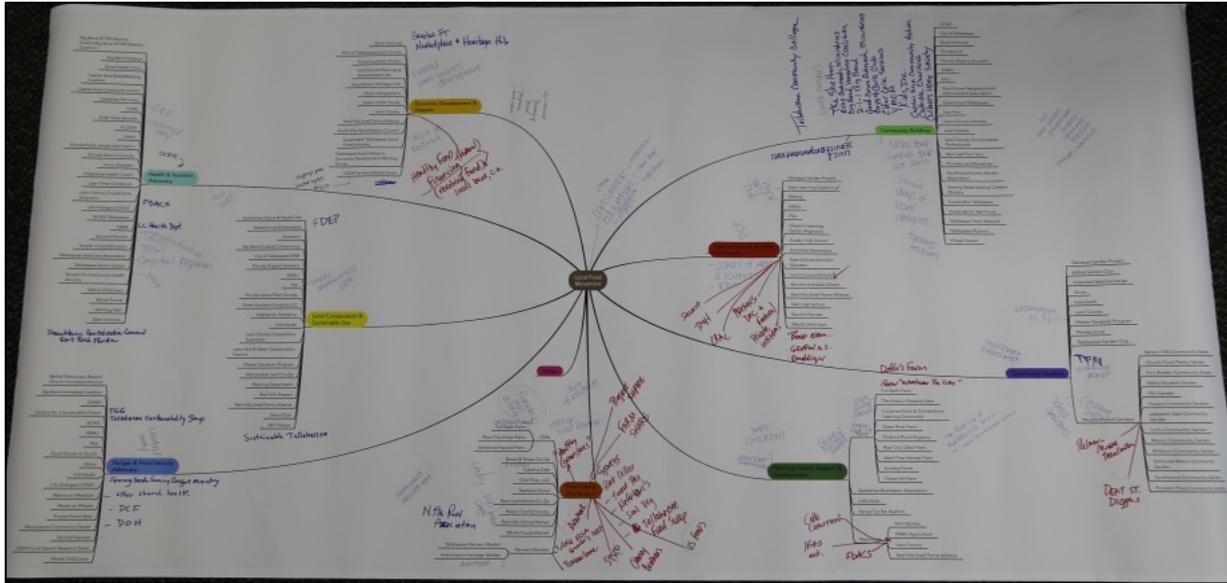
Both speakers emphasized that the process is not easy: “Changing food systems is like pulling teeth,” Ackerman-Leist said. They also emphasized the importance of making sure that “no one gets steamrolled” by plans as they unfold. “It’s better to go slow than fast,” Kahler said. Among measures that had fostered success in Vermont, according to Kahler, were training producers in small farm accounting, so that they “know their numbers,” and helping beginning farmers calculate the “minimum acreage to financial viability”—how much land they needed to devote to a farm product to succeed.

On another front—addressing poverty and malnutrition—Kahler conceded that “squaring price with poor people” was an unsolved dilemma in Vermont, although local groups were developing “strategies to get food to the poor.” Approaches in development include gleaning collectives, and mobile processing of fruit and vegetable “seconds.”

A World Café

Partners also participated in a “World Café” style workshop led by FSU Urban and Regional Planning professor Will Butler—an approach designed to elicit input from people in large groups. Participants—in groups—moved between four tables, stopping at each to examine a question about Leon County’s food future: the kind of leadership needed to develop a food plan; coalition and networking possibilities; next steps required for food system development; and mapping. After ten minutes each group moved to a new table. Table hosts welcomed each new group, filling them in on the new topic and what happened with the previous groups. Participants pored over the Food Movement Map, adding many new entries, while robust discussion ensued at the other tables.

2015 Leon County Sustainability Summit: Summary Report



Among ideas highlighted were the following:

- A need to better understand the issues facing existing and start-up farmers.
- Ensuring that “some of the bigger organizations . . . get on the same page.”
- Developing funding to finance food initiatives with the County, the City of Tallahassee, United Way, and state agencies as possible sources.
- Acknowledging that some degree of coalition-building is necessary to food plan development, even if this results in a network.

2015 Leon County Sustainability Summit: Summary Report

- Recognizing the need to integrate food and food production in government and comprehensive planning.
- Emphasizing the need, at all times, to have low-income community members at the table for such conversations.
- Acknowledging the importance of participatory research models that integrate the people studied in planning.
- Coordinating farmers' markets, possibly creating a local farmers' market association.
- Mapping community gardens and forming a county-wide garden network.

A call to lead in building the kind of network (or coalition) that Kahler had described was not immediately embraced. Nonetheless, TFN board member and food activist Michelle Gomez outlined plans for a policy planning workshop that she and community members had been at work on—a step on the way to a food policy council, and ultimately a comprehensive plan, that might bring together such a network.

The RHSFA's Katie Harris felt that the meeting had been useful. "It's one of the first times that the need to grow more food and develop more farmer education has seriously been part of the conversation. These things have been pushed aside in the past. Also, the idea of farm profitability being in the forefront and essential for the success of the whole local food movement is a new reality for a lot of folks. Farmers have to eat too."

Key Elements of the Collective Impact Framework Described by Kahler

1. All participants have a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
2. Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all the participants ensures shared measurement for alignment and accountability.
3. A plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities for each participant.
4. Open and continuous communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
5. A backbone organization with staff and specific set of skills to serve the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

Source: <http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/>

Conclusion: Where Do We Go from Here?

A shortage of local farms and farmers is the greatest obstacle to rebuilding our local food system.

The Red Hills Small Farm Alliance

Although the Summit process did not result in the immediate uniting of forces that local conditions suggest is now warranted (that the Summit process itself had helped underline), it did strongly clarify the food landscape. And it helped elucidate the many tasks now facing the food movement—above all the need for work that will result in a jointly developed comprehensive local and regional food systems master plan.

The process fulfilled its stated objectives, bringing more organizations and people to the table. It verified participants' willingness to become part of the food conversation and contribute to it in significant ways. And it brought to light a host of fine project ideas.

In addition the Summit process achieved the following:

- **Created a map** that identifies connections between food-related entities that will prove a boon to researchers, activists, and newcomers to the conversation.
- **Raised the profiles of local organizations** and their efforts, especially groups allied with the Tallahassee Food Network.
- **Sensitized County employees** to the tensions and possibilities in future work with local groups.
- **Offered an introduction to next steps** in food system development, clarifying the magnitude of the task.
- **Provided inspiration and ideas for the work ahead**, including a sense of solidarity with wider food currents, with testimony about the rewards (in human connection, jobs, and local well-being) to be reaped from local food development.

The Summit pointed to many strong features of the local food landscape. Among weaknesses displayed was a need for local forces to connect more fully and to think in the comprehensive and generous terms that will result in an integrated food plan. The process also showed gaps in community awareness about the steps required to scale up agriculture, including in the rural sector. These are gaps that the Office of Sustainability, in some real measure, has taken steps to address.

Although the process will take time, the eventual emergence of a food plan now seems likely—spurred in part by the Summit—with talks underway about formation of a Food Council, the joint bodies that might coordinate implementation of a food plan, and about funding. Possible County roles in these and wider food-related undertakings are described below.

Summit Feedback

While the Summit generated strong approval in a post-Summit survey, one strand of feedback held that more time should have been devoted to investigating local problems. (“I wish the format and focus of the Summit had been more on Leon County food supply and demand

realities,” said one participant.) The criticism that the Summit might have delivered more baseline information about County food conditions has some merit. But such feedback underscores a bigger gap: the need for more data, and for development of existing data around the planning process that must now take place. Given continued public interest, the venue for presentation of this fuller picture could be a future Summit, where local food forces describe the emerging plan and progress on it, possibly in two years’ time.

The Role of the County: Recommended Policy and Other Actions

“Why community-based ‘good food’ systems? Because place and community food culture matter. Community-based food systems are environmentally sustainable . . . and maximize community self-reliance.”

Bakari McClendon, “Growing Community-Based Good Food Systems,” 2014

With such clearly demonstrated local promise—and clear need—the County should continue to work ambitiously, when possible with the City of Tallahassee, to become a hub of regional food development. Given the impending challenges of climate change, the fossil fuel-intensive nature of conventional agriculture, and rising land pressure, sustainable agricultural development could arguably constitute a far greater, highly productive portion of County work going forward, widely benefiting County residents.

The following recommendations are potential opportunities for Leon County government to pursue or contribute to local good food development. As with other civic undertakings, it will take a coalition of partners and leaders from various aspects of the community to effect lasting change. Drawing from the local food initiatives identified by survey takers (page 15-16), opportunities exist in the following arenas:

- **HEALTHY FOOD EDUCATION:** Through Leon County Cooperative Extension, strive to integrate the topic of healthy food consumption in public school curriculums.
- **COMMUNITY GARDEN NETWORK:** Contribute to the creation of a county-wide network of associations to promote and develop community gardens.
- **GARDENS IN SCHOOLS:** Further the creation of gardening programs in area schools.
- **COMMUNITY FOOD PLAN:** Support the development of a comprehensive Community Food Systems Plan for our community.
- **COMMUNITY GARDEN LAND TRUST:** Contribute to the establishment of a community garden land trust to obtain property for garden projects.
- **YOUTH AGRICULTURE PROGRAM:** In partnership with Leon County Cooperative Extension, develop a county-wide youth agricultural development program to help create the next generation of farmers.
- **FOOD POLICY COUNCIL:** Support the establishment of a Food Policy Council to prioritize and implement policies promoting local food development.



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- **EBT ACCEPTANCE:** Contribute to the assurance that Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are accepted at all farmers' markets.
- **GOOD FOOD DIRECTORY:** Further contribute to the development of a Community Good Food Directory—an online and paper directory of local food resources, from food organizations to farmers and food outlets.
- **MUNICIPAL COMPOSTING:** Explore feasibility of developing an integrated municipal composting operation that supplies the needs of local gardeners and growers while reducing waste.
- **FOOD HUB:** Support the organization and implementation of a food hub—a central processing facility where farmers and retailers can coordinate processing, distribution, and sale of locally grown produce; create a strong program to promote its use. It is noted that the Frenchtown Heritage Market & Food Hub is currently underway.

Additionally Leon County Government can continue:

- In the role of convener, including through formal events and community initiatives.
- To foster entente between local organizations, which compete for limited funding, projects, and members, promoting events that require their collaboration.
- To contribute to capacity-building in groups that benefit local food welfare.
- To examine the barriers and opportunities to small farming in Leon County and implement changes accordingly.

Any build-out of local agriculture must be predicated on demand, both latent and developed. But local capture of even a portion of the food economy will bring benefits—in jobs, food health, and social and environmental resilience. Promoting sustainable rural development—connecting the city and surrounding countryside, unlocking the potential in our rich local resources (*rebuilding the foodshed*)—these are roles that County government is uniquely poised to fill, that an informed local citizenry backs in nonpartisan terms. Through the Summit and quite arduous process of its making, the Office of Sustainability has expanded Leon County's "food commons," illuminating the food landscape and way forward.

Thank You, Round Table Partners and Other Contributors

We wish to thank the community volunteers and staff who dedicated heartfelt work to planning and publicizing the Summit gathering. Special thanks to the Summit's Round Table Partners, whose commitment and input were key to the event's success.

Georgia Ackerman, *Tall Timbers*

Courtney Atkins, *Whole Child Leon*

John Baker, *City of Tallahassee*

William Butler, *FSU Department of Urban & Regional Planning*

Melissa Dancer Brown, *Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare*

Jim Davis, *Sustainable Tallahassee*

Louise Divine, *Red Hills Small Farm Alliance*

Rosanne Dunkelberger, *Rowland Publishing*

Richard English, *Second Harvest*

Heather Fusilier, *Working Well*

Michelle Gomez, *Greater Frenchtown's Heritage Hub & Marketplace*

Jiwuan Haley, *Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department*

James Howcroft, *Leon County Schools*

Lucas Lindsay, *DOMI Ventures*

Bakari McClendon, *Tallahassee Food Network*

Heather Mitchell, *United Way (Immediate Past President/CEO)*

Miaisha Mitchell, *COPE & Frenchtown Revitalization Council*

Larry Peterson, *Co-Founder of Sustainable Tallahassee*

Ben Pingree, *Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development Council*

Stefanie Prevatt, *Leon County Cooperative Extension*

Wes Raley, *Raley's Confectionary & Food Incubator Project*

Cathy Reed, *Leon County Schools*

Janet Roach, *Tourism Development Council*

Mary Russ, *Whole Foods*

RoseAnn Scheck, *Department of Health*

Alexis Simoneau, *Tallahassee Food Network*

Terry Steaple, *Florida Blue*

Elizabeth Swiman, *FSU Sustainable Campus*

June Wiaz, *New Leaf Market Co-op*

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks for editing and other kind help with this report go to Candace Ward, Lauren Chappell Harris, Tyler Maldonado, Kathryn Ziewitz, Nathan Ballantine, Anthony Gaudio, Bakari McClendon, Michelle Gomez, Miaisha Mitchell, Wes Raley, Sundiata Ameh-El, Rosa Ramos Morgan, Katie Harris, Louise Divine, Alexis Simoneau, Larry Peterson, Georgia Ackerman, and Maggie Theriot.