

Local Food Trends Snapshot – Project Scope

GO TO 2040 sets a broad goal promoting sustainable local food in the region through recommendations to supporting local food production and people’s access to affordable, nutritious food. The plan’s more specific goals emphasize facilitating sustainable local food production and processing; increasing access to safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable foods; and raising awareness by providing data, research, training, and information. The plan also addresses implementation actions focused on farmland protection, urban agriculture, federal food policy, local procurement, and hunger assistance programs. The Local Food Snapshot will provide an overview of existing conditions and trends local food in the region. While it will be primarily data-driven, it may also include a synthesis of relevant policy and planning research, including findings from GO TO 2040 and CMAP’s municipal survey. It will include some data on food access and explore the extent to which ON TO 2050 should engage that policy area.

The snapshot will provide a baseline understanding in the following primary areas:

- The number and characteristics of farms in the region
- The value of agricultural products sold in and from the region

Background

CMAP has been involved in local food policy and planning through the GO TO 2040 regional plan, tracking the indicators GO TO 2040 sets out, and pursuing subsequent projects through its Local Technical Assistance Program. GO TO 2040 includes a section of recommendations to “Promote Sustainable Local Food” as part of the “Livable Communities” theme. Citing the economic and public health benefits of both food production and food access, the plan recommends pursuing strategies to facilitate local food production, increase access to healthy food, and raise understanding and awareness of nutrition and food policy. The plan establishes the following indicators for food production:

1. Acreage of land in the region being used to harvest food for human consumption
2. Value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption in the region

GO TO 2040 did not set 2040 goals for these indicators, but the 2013 Plan Update established numeric targets and refined the agricultural products value indicator to measure the percentage of the entire market value of all agricultural products sold in the region that is made up of products sold for human consumption.

GO TO 2040 also establishes an indicator of food access:

3. Percentage of population living in food deserts¹

¹ Percentage of population in region, excluding Kendall County due to lack of data. The indicator defines a food desert as a “low-access area relative to a large supermarket that is below the weighted average median income (\$52,170) level for the seven counties.”

The conversion of land from agricultural production to other forms of development also bears significance for local food policy. From 2001-2015, nearly 140,000 acres of agricultural and natural resource lands in the region were developed while just over 50,000 acres were permanently protected.

Phase 1: Analyzing local food trends

This phase will focus on identifying and analyzing trends in local food development since 2010.

Key research questions include:

- What share of land in agricultural production in 2010 has remained in agricultural production?
- What amount of farmland is currently under protection? What have been the trends in farmland protection since 2010?
- How has access to fresh, affordable food changed since 2010?
- What progress has been achieved towards the original GO TO 2040 targets? Toward the Plan Update targets?

CMAP has multiple datasets available for this analysis. In addition to using the CMAP Land Use Inventory, the project team will use basic census data, including population, households, and employment data. The project team will also work with the Research and Analysis team to determine the utility of other data sources for identifying local food trends.

The project team may also leverage research conducted by other new plan projects, such as the Lands in Transition Strategy Paper, and briefly highlight the policy and planning tools that helped facilitate advances in the local food sector.

Findings from this phase, along with those of Phase Two, will be presented to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Phase 2: Summarize existing activities

This phase will focus on summarizing recent and ongoing activities in the local food access and production policy areas by CMAP and other organizations in the region. CMAP initiatives include the LTA projects that resulted in the Liberty Prairie Master Plan, the Lake County Sustainable Food Systems report, the Park Forest Sustainability Plan, and other LTA plans in communities with significant agricultural production, such as Harvard, Campton Hills, and Big Rock. Key external organizations to review include:

- Chicago Community Trust
- Openlands
- Fresh Taste
- Liberty Prairie Foundation
- Kane County
- McHenry County
- Family Farmed
- Advocated for Urban Agriculture

- Growing Power
- City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development

Findings from this phase, along with those of Phase One, will be presented to the Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

Phase 3: Creating snapshot final report

The results of the first two project phases will be collected into a final deliverable, a snapshot report that synthesizes the findings. The Local Food Snapshot will be primarily data-driven and feature graphs, tables, and charts that illustrate existing conditions and trends related to local food in the region. It will also include discussion of relevant policy and planning research and activities that CMAP and external organizations have undertaken in recent years. CMAP will collect its findings on these topics into a document that will present an overview of past and current activities.

Exploring new indicator methodology

If time allows, the project team will also explore potential new approaches for defining, measuring, and fostering local food production and access. This process could involve a literature review of indicator methodologies, and an assessment of which indicator methodologies would be most appropriate for our region based on data availability and shared characteristics. The goal would be to develop a more robust indicator that is better at tracking access to local food. Indicators such as the [Modified Retail Food Environment Index](#) (mRFEI) may provide a clearer picture of local food access than does the presence of supermarkets.

Outreach

The Environment and Natural Resources Committee will be the primary external audience and sounding board for the snapshot development. The committees will hear presentations on the initial findings and full draft in their September and December meetings, respectively. Individual meetings with committee members may be needed during the fall.

The project team will also engage the Lands in Transition Resource Group, Openlands, the Liberty Prairie Foundation, and Fresh Taste, presenting deliverables to each group and setting up individual meetings with their members as appropriate.

Timeline for Deliverables

June

Develop Draft
Scope

July

Finalize Scope

Compile and
analyze data

Review existing
initiatives

August

Compile and
analyze data

Review existing
initiatives

Draft annotated
outline

September

Summary

Present preliminary
findings to
committees

October

Final Annotated
outline

Draft narrative and
graphics

November

Complete draft
document

Present draft to
committees

Submit draft to
core team

December

Revise Draft
Document

Coordinate layout
and graphics with
communications
team

January, 2017

Submit final draft to
Core Team

February, 2017

Final Document

Present final
document to
committees