

Evolution of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

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Raychel Santo • Rachel Yong • Anne Palmer



Evolution of Baltimore's Food Policy

As cities, counties, and regions across the U.S. strive to improve their local food systems, food policy councils (FPCs) are being formed to address a variety of concerns. Issues such as the existence of food deserts, increasing rates of diet-related diseases, loss of agricultural land, and poor nutrition in schools are some of the many challenges that FPCs address through policy change and other programs.

Some FPCs are formally created by municipal governments, while others are initiated and supported by nonprofit organizations. Rather than selecting one of these two models, the city of Baltimore adopted a hybrid approach for its Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) by coordinating the efforts of community stakeholders and city officials through the unique addition of a food policy director.



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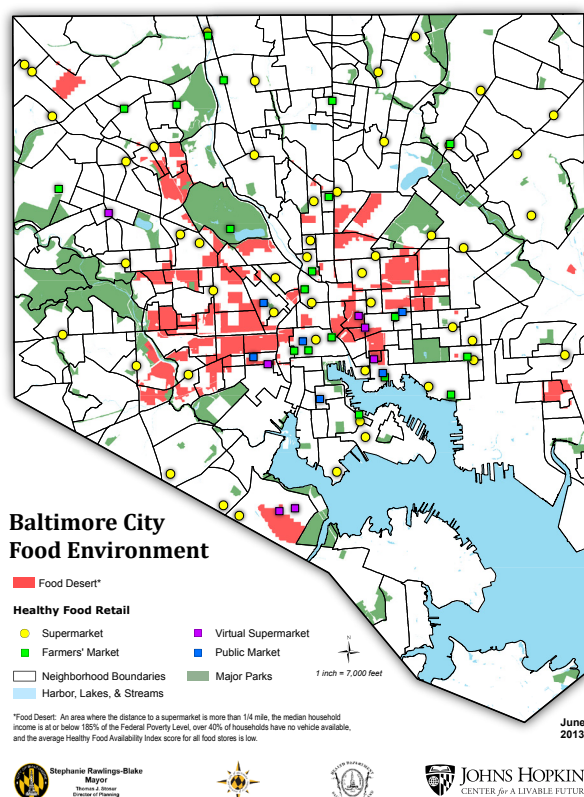
Lessons Learned

- Good policy at the local level needs to include the stakeholders affected by and working on community food issues, and does not require government agencies to be the driving force.
- Setting priorities before hiring a food policy director was effective.
- The Food Policy Advisory Committee is purely an advisory group rather than a formal, decision-making body.
- A “roadmap of recommendations” offered guidance but provided much-needed flexibility.
- The Baltimore Food Policy Task Force chose to focus on opportunities that could be acted upon immediately and spent less time waiting for complete data to determine exact strategies.
- Encouraging interested parties to invest in the vision set by the task force helped raise funding through nonprofit grants, which evolved into additional funding from the local government. Highlighting notable achievements through media has helped sustain funding.

Who We Are

Based within the Bloomberg School of Public Health, The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future (CLF) is an academic center that conducts and promotes research and communicates information about the complex inter-relationships among food production, diet, environment and human health.

Baltimore City Food Environment Map - 2013



Research Summary

The information presented in this participant-observer case study was gathered through document analysis, interviews, a literature review of other local food policy initiatives, and the direct experience of the researchers. To reduce the possibility of a biased account of events, the draft was shared and revised with the input of key stakeholders.

Strategies for Community-Based Change

- Identify needs and priorities first
- Balance evidence and action
- Ensure financial stability
- Maintain agility

Full Title:

Collaboration Meets Opportunity: The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative

Abstract available at:

<http://www.agdevjournal.com/component/content/article/444-baltimore-food-policy-initiative.html>