

**The Ohio State University Public Policy Capstone: Local Food Group**  
07 March 2010

**Executive Summary for Local Food Initiatives**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) with an overview of local food systems in several cities across North America. Specifically, this research seeks to codify and analyze local food plan parameters, problems and policy solutions from cities and regions with local food systems and to provide a comparison for Central Ohio. In conjunction with larger MORPC efforts, this report will help to illuminate the successes and setbacks of other cities' local food production, processing, distribution and consumption. This comparative analysis of the five benchmark cities will help to establish an effective Central Ohio plan: Flint, MI; Philadelphia, PA; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Toronto, Canada; and San Francisco, CA.

*Flint*

As Flint develops its local food initiatives, it does so alongside structural and fundamental changes to its landscape, laws, and mindsets. Since the 1970s, Flint has been struggling to overcome severe losses within its industrial sector. Vacant lots arose and the consequences of such deterioration demanded an answer. The city responded with a restructuring of its foreclosure process and a promotion of local foods. Neighborhoods within Flint took the challenge to revamp their communities and their diets through urban gardening. By extending the viability of local foods with high tunnels, community supported agriculture, and farmers' markets, Flint's successes and setbacks serve as a useful tool of comparison for Central Ohio.

*Philadelphia*

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a historic which can certainly act as a model for the development of a local food system. There is widespread support for a comprehensive local food strategy from the community, local government, and the regional planning authority. The community has seen the challenges that the city faces, and has risen to them by creating programs such as the Winter Harvest, passing "Healthy Farms, Healthy Schools" legislation, and increasing awareness of the importance of local food. Philadelphia's example demonstrates the importance of community support in developing a successful local food system. MORPC should focus on gauging the level of community engagement and on engaging the local non-profit community. A local food strategy will only work if the community is invested.

*Twin Cities*

In the Twin Cities, the local food system is multifaceted, and is comprised of government, university, and non-profit actors. With similar climate and growth patterns

as Columbus, the Twin Cities' more extensive and historical local food movement offers serves as a useful model for MORPC to emulate. The cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul have each enacted resolutions in support of local food movements there and the University of Minnesota is involved in a Regional Partnerships program aimed at fostering collaboration between public, private and non-profit actors. Many prominent non-profit groups exist in the region, highly active in establishing, promoting and sustaining local food initiatives. Broad-based community engagement and a high level of cooperation among local food stakeholders has resulted in a flourishing local food economy.

### *Toronto*

As a city with one of the most advanced local food economies in North America, Toronto has taken advantage of many existing levers for food system change. Toronto has adopted a local food procurement policy to begin to leverage its purchasing power in favor of homegrown products and established a 50% target for the amount of local food served through city programs. Toronto has created a list of plans and guidelines to help better involve local foods at the government level, which includes establishing mechanisms within local government to identify food opportunities, coordinate food initiatives, leverage resources, evaluate and support food initiatives and partnerships with the community. Another substantive policy adopted by the city is the creation of the Ontario Food Terminal which has vastly improved access to local food and support for local farmers.

### *San Francisco*

In the San Francisco area, the Urban-Rural Roundtable provided recommendations from a 360 degree view of local food stakeholders, which helped the government to make an educated decision on how to begin these initiatives on the city level. Columbus should adopt this beneficial roundtable approach, since it connects all aspects of local food and helps to remove food barriers. The executive directive by Mayor Newsom has established clear-cut guidelines for government agencies and is allowing the city to lead its constituents by example. Although they have not yet been built, the research undertaken proves that small scale processing is quite feasible, potentially profitable and beneficial to the job market. The production of a list of recommendations should lead to direct action by Mayor Coleman, much like Mayor Newsom's executive order.