



Food Security Plan Launch Event
April 6, 2017
Red Brick Courthouse
Rockville, MD

Meeting Minutes

Introductory Remarks from Heather Bruskin, Manager of Montgomery County Food Council

- Thank you to everyone who supported this plan, including:
 - Councilmembers Berliner and Leventhal, County Executive Legget, Food Security Plan Steering Committee, Montgomery County Innovation Program, Montgomery County Food Council, Montgomery County Council, Town Creek Foundation, and the over 300 community members who hosted listening sessions, participated in listening sessions, participated in work sessions, and completed surveys
- Thank you to Burness Communications for supporting this event and developing materials to engage community members in best ways to help improve food security in our County

Overview of Food Security Plan from Daniel Hoffman, Chief Innovation Officer of Montgomery County

- Food Security Plan was developed in response to unanimously approved County Council Bill 19-16, “Strategic Plan to Achieve Food Security in Montgomery County”
 - 70,000 people (7% of County’s population) are estimated to be food insecure
 - 33,000 children (13.9% of County’s children) are estimated to be food insecure
 - Food insecurity most prominent in East County, Silver Spring, Aspen Hill, Wheaton, Gaithersburg, Germantown
 - Shared Vision of the Plan: “Our community is a place where all people at all times have access to safe, sufficient, nutritious food in order to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to making Montgomery County, MD a place where all live in dignity.”
 - The key pieces of this definition are safe, sufficient, nutritious, and dignity
- This plan was a four-month collaborative process to develop a strategy to achieve food security in the County. This process included bi-weekly advisory committee meetings, 6 community engagement meetings, 8 community listening sessions, 40+ key stakeholder interviews and smaller group meetings, food council working group meetings, and online surveys.
- The plan is divided into three sections: Background, Findings, and Recommendations

- Background overview of the macro factors that have an impact on food security.
 - Biggest take away is that the County’s self-sufficiency standard, the household income needed to support a family of 4 without support, is over \$45,000 a year higher than the maximum income allowed to receive federal food assistance benefits. This means many people are not eligible for federal benefits yet are food insecure still due to high costs of living, especially high housing costs.
 - Important to know that food insecurity rate estimates are not direct measurements. They are metrics developed by Feeding America based on correlations between food insecurity and census variables. A key learning was that we need new metrics to accurately capture the impact of our plan.
- Findings identified challenges facing our most vulnerable residents and is divided into 5 sections: children, seniors, people with disabilities, foreign born, and other factors.
- Recommendations are divided into Year One, Years 2-3, and Years 4-5. This plan will be updated and revised every year for 5 years. For this reason, recommendations in Years 2-5 are subject to change.
 - Year One recommendations focuses on activities to better understand baseline conditions in the County and establish the metrics that will be used to track progress of future actions. These include standardizing data collection, formalizing publicly facing food security metrics, analyzing transportation networks, and improving connection and coordination resources for food assistance providers. Stabilizing and enhancing funding for existing programs are also included in Year One recommendations.
 - Years 2-3 recommendations are more action oriented. They include strengthening food assistance infrastructure, capacity building in small organizations, integrating health considerations into all food assistance programs, expanding food recovery, establishing new programs in underserved communities, enhancing transportation networks to connect people to food, and maximizing participation in existing benefits programs.
 - Years 4-5 recommendations are written as considerations rather than recommendations, as needed actions will be informed by work accomplished in Years 1-3. These considerations include expanding food literacy capacity, emergency preparedness planning, and workforce/economic development.

Remarks from Councilmember Berliner

- “The war against hunger is truly mankind’s war of liberation,” John F Kennedy
- This plan is an example of Montgomery County’s collaborative and inclusive values at their best
- The process connected cross-sectoral stakeholders to develop a vision of how to achieve food security in the County. The fact that an estimated 70,000 people are food insecure in Montgomery County is unacceptable.
- We have hundreds of resources in the County to address food insecurity but prior to this plan, there was no strategy to coordinate these efforts. Now we have a plan to coordinate our efforts to end hunger in Montgomery County.

- For year one, the County Council is already working to increase funding for senior meal programs and expand participation in Smart Sacks at MCPS to ensure hungry children have food on the weekends in their homes.

Remarks from County Executive Leggett

- Witnessed widespread poverty and food insecurity in his youth in rural Louisiana. Also saw community members pull together to make sure their friends and neighbors had enough to eat.
- Now that he is the leader of one of the most affluent communities in the US with unparalleled access to knowledge, technology, and a vibrant nonprofit network, food insecurity should not exist in this community. We must work together to fix this.
- Those of us working to end food insecurity should be aiming to put ourselves out of business. Our current food planning efforts should be the last time we need to meet to strategize on how to fix this problem.

Remarks from Council Member Leventhal

- Food Security Plan is a sophisticated document that reflects the well-resourced, affluent, progressive, inclusive, and caring community we live in
- Montgomery County is a highly desirable community to live in and has grown and changed rapidly since the 1960s and 70s
- Our community is proactively working to address the new challenges that arise as our County continues to grow rapidly in population through initiatives including this plan
- We will continue to stand together and address these challenges rather despite growing rhetoric nationally that promotes exclusion and ignoring social challenges facing our community

Remarks from Uma Ahluwalia, Director of the County's Department of Health and Human Services

- It is a privilege to work in a community with leadership so committed to ending hunger
- The Department of Health and Human Services will be integral to implementing the Food Security Plan and ending hunger in this County once and for all
- Families want to help themselves and that this plan will be integrated into a larger workforce and economic development agenda to help lift all people in the County out of poverty
- Our County's plan to end hunger will help enhance this broader workforce and economic development agenda in the County

Panel Discussion 1

- Participants
 - Susan Topping, CAFB, Moderator
 - Dorothy Bodie, Head of Allen Chapel AME Church's Food Pantry in Silver Spring
 - Recipient of Allen Chapel Church's pantry in Silver Spring
 - Jill Paisley, Director of Takoma Park/Silver Spring Meals on Wheels
- How do people find out about your services?
 - Advertisements in church bulletin and flyers in the community
 - Direct word of mouth outreach to community organizations, Home Depot, and other places where potentially food insecure people might congregate

- People connected to Meals on Wheels sometimes through hospital referrals
- Many connected to Meals on Wheels by family members, friends, and others who contact us directly because they know the name of our organization
- How have your services helped people?
 - Allen Chapel recipient: Food assistance is critical to our family's well-being, as we no longer have to choose between eating and paying our rent
 - Jill Paisley: a story from a client that wanted to be on this panel but could not make it today. He had spent 6-weeks in the hospital, most of those in intensive care, and overcame a life-threatening condition. He returned home to an apartment with rotting food and only had one egg to eat. He had no money to purchase food, no local family to support him, and had to figure out how to survive. Some neighbors helped him eat that night and connected him with Meals on Wheels that week. Since receiving Meals on Wheels, his health has improved and he has been able to stay out of the hospital.
- How do you address transportation challenges?
 - Meals on Wheels overcomes this barrier for seniors by delivering directly to their homes
 - At Allen Chapel's Food Pantry, some people (including our recipient and her family) seek transportation help from fellow church members. Dorothy does not turn anyone away and makes herself available to anyone who cannot make it to the pantry during normal hours. She says we need to collaborate as a community to end hunger. She says we need to act like neighbors and too many people aren't reaching out to help others.
- What resources would make it easier to address food insecurity
 - Better coordination of services: Where are the other pantries? Which communities are not being served adequately? How can existing food assistance resources coordinate to better serve these communities? Do hospital staff know to ask people if they need food and who to call to connect hungry patients with food assistance?
 - Food Security Plan starts to address many of these questions and more

Panel Discussion 2

- Participants
 - Andy Burness, President, Burness Communications, moderator
 - Jackie DeCarlo, CEO, Manna Food Center
 - Sarah Cody, Senior Director, Communications & Public Relations, HMSHost Corporation
 - Dr. Marilyn Lynk, Executive Director, Adventist HealthCare Center for Health and Equity Wellness
 - Marla Caplon, Director of Food and Nutrition Services at Montgomery County Public Schools
- What are you and your org doing that is consistent with plan? Anything from the plan that inspired you to do different things?
 - Loved the political willpower to develop the plan. Hope momentum continues to implement the recommendations from the plan so organizations like Manna can expand and continue our work to achieve food security
 - Hunger is both a system and a root cause of poverty and other social challenges. This plan will be an integral part of guiding how private industry can enhance their existing and planned efforts to help reduce food insecurity and poverty in our community.

- Healthcare plays an important role in food security and this plan will enhance our work to address food insecurity in our most vulnerable communities.
- MCPS' major barrier is identifying children that need summer meals, Smart Sacks, and other food assistance services. Stakeholders have convened since 2008 to identify how to connect to children who need summer meals and have developed innovative interventions (e.g., free recreation camps, mobile meals at apartment complexes). This taskforce has helped increase participation. The program today serves 10,000 youth, yet 55,000 students in MCPS are eligible for free and reduced meals. Indicates many students are not yet receiving summer services. This plan will enhance these efforts and help us connect to thousands more students in need.
- How does your organization collaborate with others to address food insecurity?
 - Manna has historically found Healthy Montgomery to be an excellent forum for connecting food security stakeholders. Would like to see increased capacity within this organization to be a more engaged leader in these issues.
 - Hospitals in Montgomery County are currently required to do needs assessments to understand the communities they serve. Through this process, hospitals and local partners collaborate rather than compete to coordinate how to address the needs of the most vulnerable clients and communities.
 - MCPS has found creative partnerships to be key to identifying and serving students in need. Especially with summer meals, MCPS collaborates with apartment complex management companies, department of recreation, neighborhood associations, and others to ensure children have access to food in the summer.
 - HMSHost leverages partnerships in a variety of ways to address food insecurity. Food recovery and waste reduction in airports requires immense coordination among vendors and can play a critical role in supporting food security. Partnerships also arise to help engage associates internally and at partner business in reducing food waste, recovering edible food, and volunteering to help our community's vulnerable residents.

Community Engagement Q&A

- How can we bring MCPS summer meals to our community?
 - Contact Marla's team at MCPS and they will work with you to develop a customized plan to engage neighborhood stakeholders and connect to children in need.
- What are the steps in the plan to increase availability of culturally appropriate foods?
 - Building relationships with retailers (e.g., Mega Mart, Global Foods) to expand recovery of culturally appropriate foods and other partnerships to expand availability of culturally appropriate foods.
 - Working with the Office of Agriculture's New Farmer program to support farmers that grow culturally appropriate table crops
- How do we better address food insecurity in immigrant communities as fear increases in these communities about federal policies and negative rhetoric?
 - We need to stick to our progressive Montgomery County values of inclusion and overcome increasing national rhetoric of exclusion. We want everyone in our vulnerable communities to know that they are welcome at our community pantries. If you are a

community member in need regardless of where you are from, we will work to connect you to food, education, shelter, healthcare, and other basic needs.

- How can non-food system businesses support food security in the community?
 - Funding always helps. Many local food assistance organizations know what they need but lack the funds to address those needs.
 - Engaging associates in volunteer opportunities can help build employee community and morale in a company. Can be volunteering to support a food drive or offering a skill set to support food security (e.g., accountant volunteering time to help school system calculate amount of funds children need to replenish their meal accounts; MCPS never turns away a hungry child)
 - Grab a postcard developed by Montgomery County Food Council and Burness Communications to learn about more ways to get involved!