



## The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee

**Background.** The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) has developed 10 policy recommendations to improve access to fresh healthy food. One of the FPAC recommendations is that the City of New Orleans should make access to fresh food retail a priority for neighborhood development. Another recommendation is to make zoning and permitting processes for grocery stores, farmers' markets, and urban growing more straightforward – and indeed supportive of these important features of healthy neighborhoods.

The New Orleans City Planning Commission is working with a consultant team to prepare a Master Plan to guide the city's long term development, and to update the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. Representatives from the planning firms Goody Clancy and GCR discussed the Master Plan project, particularly as it relates to food access, with FPAC members and community partners on November 12, 2008.

**Discussion Synopsis (November 12, 2008).** The following strategies were discussed as ways to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods in all New Orleans neighborhoods. (These ideas have not been endorsed or prioritized by the full FPAC; they are summarized here as a record and resource.)

### Provide Convenient Access to Fresh Food Retail

#### Master Plan strategies discussed:

- Identify access to fresh food retail as a public health and an economic development priority.
- Create incentives for stores that sell fresh produce/healthy foods in underserved areas.
- Establish a walkability standard (one-half mile) for access to grocers/sources of fresh produce.
- Set a target ratio of residents per grocery store.
- Address the affordability of fresh foods, e.g. encourage retailers to accept EBT cards, WIC, and other nutrition program benefits.
- Restore grocers/markets damaged in Katrina (Circle Food, St Roch Market) to sell fresh food.
- Encourage farm stands and markets to operate in areas of greatest need, in particular in proximity to social service agencies.
- Extend public transit routes to ensure access to fresh food retailers.
- Ensure that access to fresh food is addressed in all relevant sections of the Master Plan.

#### Zoning Ordinance strategies discussed:

- Fast track permitting for fresh food retailers, particularly in underserved areas.
- Create a clear definition of a "green grocer" (based on a minimum standard of produce sales) and make this a permitted use distinct from convenience stores and other retailers.
- Mitigate excessively restrictive supplementary use standards for green (farmers') markets, such as the existing parking requirements; adopt more supportive market regulations.
- Consider whether zoning requirements (parking, setback) will prevent grocery stores from moving into underserved areas; mitigate or provide zoning incentives as appropriate.
- Establish limits on allowable store square footage to promote a greater number of small and medium-sized fresh food retailers.

## Provide Opportunities for Urban Growing

### Master Plan strategies discussed:

- Identify urban growing as a key strategy to increase fresh food access and support health.
- Recognize community gardens and urban agriculture as a productive use of land, including on vacant and abandoned properties.
- Promote local food growing as a means to reduce transportation costs and pollution.
- Encourage the sale of locally grown food, e.g. facilitate supply links with institutions and grocers; create incentives for market gardeners.
- Enable and support composting, a key means to improve soil quality.
- Ensure long-term land tenure for sites used for urban agriculture and community gardens.
- Promote school gardens and other youth education programs that shape healthy habits.
- Create a comprehensive urban agriculture document within the Master Plan; or, ensure that urban agriculture is addressed in all relevant sections.

### Zoning Ordinance strategies discussed:

- Allow gardening as a permitted use in all zones. Clarify the CZO for residential zones; explicitly allow community gardens on public land.
- Address and expand permitted urban agriculture uses in all zones.
- Eliminate excessively restrictive barriers to composting.
- Allow limited sales of food grown or produced on site.

## Avoid a Concentration of Unhealthy Food Providers

### Master Plan strategies discussed:

- Restrict fast food outlets and liquor and convenience stores from locating near schools, parks, and other places that youth gather.

### Zoning Ordinance strategies discussed:

- Restrict approvals of new fast food outlets located in residential districts and in proximity to schools, parks, libraries, etc.
- Restrict approvals of new liquor/convenience stores located in residential districts and in proximity to schools, parks, libraries, etc.
- For such outlets, restrict the transfer of “legal nonconforming use” authorization when there is a transfer of ownership &/or change in lessee.
- Regulate signage of unhealthy food providers.