Project Description: Lane County Local Food Market Analysis

SERVICE-LEARNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

The Lane County Local Food Market Analysis was part of the Community Planning Workshop (CPW) at the University of Oregon. CPW offers students a rich, cross-disciplinary, experiential learning opportunity, while working hands-on in communities for real clients. Experiential learning encourages the development of transferable skills (e.g. communication, problem solving, client presentations, team work), more reflective practitioners, and results in a richer, more rewarding educational experience for students. Through facilitating expert panels, collaborating with planning professionals, group work, public presentations, and applied research, students go beyond academic coursework to build the necessary skills demanded by the planning profession.

As part of this project, the student team also collaborated with the Center for Sustainable Business Practices at the University of Oregon to gain insight on supply chain management and analysis, agricultural and marketing experts at the state level to understand the agricultural economy, and local food experts to understand the varying components of the local food supply chain.

Please see the CPW experiential learning website: http://cpw.uoregon.edu/

PROJECT FUNDING

This project was sponsored with $30,000 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (as part of the EDA’s University Center program). In addition, the City of Eugene, Lane County, and the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) provided matching grant funding of $10,000 each.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Introduction to the Project

The Lane County Local Food Market Analysis examined the local food system in Lane County with the core objective of creating economic development through the expansion of local markets for locally produced food. In particular, this project aimed to promote economic development by analyzing the market for local food,
specifically focusing on the potential to capture local demand from institutions and chain grocers—organizations that have enough purchasing power to influence the market significantly. This project investigated the potential for expanding the local food economy in the short-term: the next one to five years. This study defined local food as food grown and consumed within Lane County.

To overcome the gaps identified in the study, CPW proposed a set of implementation strategies that the private sector, local governments, and nonprofits should consider to achieve the goal of increasing local production and consumption of food products.

**Food as an Economic Development Strategy**

While localization of food production and consumption has many benefits, the primary objective of this study was to identify economic development opportunities created by local food production and consumption. Expanded local food production can provide new jobs and keep money in the local economy. When money is spent on goods produced elsewhere, much of this money “leaks out” of the local economy.

**Project Outcomes**

Recommendations from the Lane County Local Food Market Analysis are already being implemented by the project partners (Lane County, the City of Eugene and the Eugene Water and Electric Board). The following section summarizes detailed actions by the project partners as a direct result of this study.

**LANE COUNTY**

CPW presented the market analysis to the Lane County Board of Commissioners in September 2010. In addition, Lane County has already distributed $300,000 in funds to the following local food projects:

- Hummingbird Wholesale Expansion: received $95,400 in funding from Lane County to expand its local food distribution facility, including its local food storage capacity;
- GloryBee Foods, Inc Production Expansion: received $94,185 in funding from Lane County to expand its local food processing facility;
- Lane County hired a part-time local food coordinator in September 2010; and
- Camas Country Mill: received $96,782 from Lane County for equipment and other start-up expenses needed for its processing facility, focused primarily on milling local grains.
CITY OF EUGENE

The City of Eugene is in the process of developing an Urban Agriculture Coordinator position as a direct result of this study. The study also satisfies the recommendation made by the City of Eugene Food Security Resource and Scoping plan to do a market analysis on the local food system. The market analysis was presented to the Eugene City Council in September 2010.

EUGENE WATER AND ELECTRIC BOARD (EWEB)

In conjunction with the recommendations in this project, EWEB secured land for a 90-acre demonstration farm that will be used to demonstrate wetland restoration techniques and agricultural best practices. In particular, the farm will be used as an educational tool to test and demonstrate farming techniques that mitigate impacts on water quality and increase energy efficiency, as well as to experiment with crops new to this region and identify and test emerging agricultural markets. As a financially-supported model farm, it has the capacity to try new growing techniques or crops, develop methods for making them successful and share that information with other local farmers without being a competitor in the local agricultural economy.

In addition, EWEB is conducting outreach with local farmers to better understand their needs, particularly as they relate to local food markets. EWEB has received grant funding designed to assist farmers in protecting water quality while increasing farm revenue. As a result of the market analysis, CPW is currently helping EWEB gather data useful in designing and prioritizing assistance projects.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

Research to Ensure Farm Viability: Inherent in encouraging local food production is both ensuring that farming is an economically viable profession and that land currently devoted to growing food stays in food production. The EDC is currently doing research to find opportunities to help farmers remain financially viable and enhance their ability to access markets and financing.

After reviewing this study, other Oregon counties have approached the EDC for help designing and carrying out local food market studies similar to the one carried out by CPW in Lane County. We hope that this study can serve as a model for communities across the country.
To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support for your application to the APA’s AICP Student Project Awards. The reference project was the Lane County Local Food Market Analysis, completed by your team in the Community Planning Workshop (CPW). As a funder and project initiator, I am pleased that this is the University of Oregon’s nomination for this year’s award.

This project provided an innovative approach to identifying the development of local food markets for use in regional economic development strategies. The core objective of this project was to characterize the demand and supply elements of the local food market and identify future opportunities to increase local production and consumption based on increased population and use of local products. What we found in the research process was that accessing local market supply and demand data was very difficult, and because of this, a majority of the national food security planning efforts do not incorporate fine grained local market data. These students work adds incredible value to not only regional food market development, but the national discourse on food security.

Food security plans and local agriculture have become two of the most prevalent issues that urban sustainable planning agencies are addressing. The approaches range from increasing food access for low-income populations to increasing the amount of gardening spaces available in the urban area. The food market analysis project was a recommendation from the City of Eugene’s Food Security Resource and Scoping plan and is one piece in the puzzle for our local food security efforts. CPW students provided foundational research that identifies short and long term strategy recommendations that are supported by factual data. As our community works to identify high priority issues that require public and private investments, the discussion will be informed by this work rather than anecdotal arguments.

The quality of this project is found in the collaborative approach toward framing the research. This was accomplished first by the funding partners: City of Eugene, Lane County, Eugene Water and Electric Board, and the UO funded by a US Economic Development Agency grant. Following through this coalition of partners was a team comprised of graduate students in community and regional planning, landscape architecture, architecture, business administration, and law. This cross discipline approach brought true vision to the project and exemplified APA’s mission, vision, and values.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support for your project. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. You can reach me at ethan.a.nelson@ci.eugene.or.us.

Sincerely,

Ethan Nelson, Manager
Waste Prevention and Green Building
November 19, 2010

AICP Study Project Awards Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great pleasure to write a letter of support for the Local Food Market Analysis, completed by the Community Planning Workshop at the University of Oregon. As a client for this project, I can speak to this study’s outstanding contribution to our community and to the nation by establishing such a rigorous, innovative methodology to evaluate the economic benefits of local food systems.

While most food studies focus on food security or environmental benefits of local food, this study details the economic benefit to Lane County as our food system is increasingly localized. This economic perspective is often neglected in studies of this kind – indeed; the team found no precedents for a similar study this comprehensive.

Many local food studies also focus on the direct farm to market relationship. This study is unique in that it looks at how the local food market can reach large institutional buyers, such as schools, prisons and hospitals. Looking at the large institutional market for local food offers further economic development potential. Further, while the study is specific to our county in Oregon, its thorough methodology and extensive use of varied levels of data provide models to other communities nationwide.

I am extremely impressed by the professional quality of this student report. A testament to the relevance and impressive quality of this report is the fact that the Lane County economic development office has already awarded almost $300,000 in funds to businesses involved in local food production and distribution as a direct result of recommendations and implementation strategies outlined in this study. In our own offices, this study has promoted the addition of a Local Food Coordinator position at the County level.

We plan to continue with our local food agenda in the coming months by building public-private partnerships and begin a grant writing process to aid with funding for identified local food projects. We will refer to the data and recommendations outlined in the Market Analysis to push this agenda forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support of the Local Food Market Analysis nomination for the APA student project award. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Best,

Michael McKenzie-Bahr
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Community & Economic Development Coordinator
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AICP Student Project Award
Leadership Department
American Planning Association
205 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1200
Chicago, IL 60601

AICP Study Project Awards Committee:

The University of Oregon and the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management proudly nominate Lane County Local Food Market Analysis, a student project of the highest quality and relevance to the field of planning. This project best demonstrates the contribution of planning to contemporary issues.

The field of local food planning and policy is gaining traction as communities look for innovative ways to foster health, implement food security measures and fuel their local economies. Although most previous local food studies focus on the direct farm-to-market relationships, the Local Food Market Analysis looks at local food as a regional economic development strategy. The study specifically looks at how the local food system can increase production for the purpose of large institutional buyers, such as hospitals, schools and prisons.

The study was lead by the Planning, Public Policy and Management Department’s Community Planning Workshop, a renowned service-learning program that allows students to work on real projects for real clients, while at the same time providing professional quality research for local Oregon communities. Headed by students, the research team used extensive research and analytical tools, including literature reviews, quantitative data collection and analysis, interview research methods and development of policy recommendations and implementation strategies. The students worked on all aspects of the study, including interviewing local food processors, distributors, producers and buyers, and facilitating a 15-person expert panel that included agricultural, economic and marketing researchers at the State level. The paragraphs below address the AICP selection criteria.

Innovativeness: The research design emerged out of a unique collaboration between the University of Oregon, the Economic Development Administration, the City of Eugene, Lane County, the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), and 50 experts and players in the local food system. Traditionally, local food studies have focused on household consumption; the
environmental aspects of local food; or food security issues. This study is unique in that it looks at the complete local food supply chain for the purposes of economic development. This focus on economic development has made it more applicable to a wider range of planning issues and political goals.

**Transferability:** The final report and its detailed methodology serve as a guide for other communities that are searching for ways to increase the production and consumption of local food to fuel their local economies.

**Quality:** The content and design of the *Local Food Market Analysis* and supporting materials demonstrate excellence on many levels. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of agriculture in Lane County, followed by a detailed analysis of the value of local food and its potential impact on the local economy. It utilizes original graphs and charts, highlighting the fundamental findings. Its ultimate format is both information-rich and very accessible, making it an easily utilized tool for local organizations.

**Implementation.** The *Local Food Market Analysis* is already making a difference. Lane County has already granted over $300,000 in local economic development funds to local food projects as a direct result of the recommendations in this study. EWEB has also secured its land to start a Demonstration Farm, also recommended in the study. The City of Eugene is developing a new role for an Urban Agriculture Coordinator and has included support for the local food system in its new Climate and Energy Action Plan.

**Comprehensiveness.** The *Local Food Market Analysis* is an important part of Lane County’s strategy to improve local economic development by providing healthy food to local institutions. It simultaneously addresses health issues, local infrastructure issues, economic development strategies and opportunities for a strengthened local identity based on our region’s agricultural heritage.

It is an honor for the University of Oregon to nominate the *Lane County Local Food Market Analysis* for the AICP 2011 Student Project Award.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard D. Margerum
Associate Professor
Department Chair and CRP Program Director