Food System Planning and Connections to APA Divisions

The food system is the chain of activities beginning with the production of food and moves on to include the processing, distribution, wholesaling, retailing and consumption of food, and eventually to the disposal of food waste. Food system planning is multi-disciplinary and cross-divisional, involving issues related to the environment, transportation, social equity, public health, land use, and economic development. The following is a list of food system planning issues associated with APA’s divisions. It is intended to show areas in the emerging and important field of food system planning that could be of interest to APA’s divisions.

The points below are only illustrative; no doubt members of divisions might find other links between food system planning and their division's interests and goals.

Environment, Natural Resources & Energy (ENRE)

- Environmental impacts of modern agriculture (air quality, water, soil, and organisms), and related planning implications
- Farm runoff (pesticides, chemically treated manure, etc.) causing lake and river pollution
- Health of fresh and salt-water fisheries
- Energy (fossil fuel)-intensive practices in our industrialized food system, from farm to table
- Significant amounts of food system wastes (organic and inorganic
- Loss of biodiversity of farm crops and livestock and problems related to the introduction of species that results from modern food systems
- Factory farms causing problems related to water pollution
- Links between sustainable communities and sustainable food systems
- Rooftop gardens for climate control, energy savings, and food
- Production and distribution of certified organic foods
- Ethical treatment of wild and farm animals

Planning and Law

- Issues related to food access and sustainable food systems arising from zoning
- Regulation of food-producing areas--e.g. community gardens, urban agriculture, tourist agriculture
- “Right to farm” laws and planning implications
- Legal and regulatory barriers to the development of more localized food systems

Planning and the Black Community

- The rise of low-income child obesity and its effect on African-American children; higher incidence of obesity in minority communities
• “Food deserts” in lower-income areas; food sector (restaurants, fast food places, supermarkets) as important source of low-paying jobs for minorities
• Enrollment and participation of low-income African American residents in public and nonprofit nutrition programs
• Building food-related entrepreneurship in African-American communities
• Community and market gardens as a source of neighborhood revitalization, youth development, and food security in African American neighborhoods

Planning and Women
• Food procurement and preparation continue to be predominantly women’s responsibilities within households
• As more and more women came into the job market, more dollars are spent for food outside the home than before, leading to a significant increase in eating out and purchase of ready-to-eat meals
• Food-system occupational sectors are characterized by gender segregation, with women predominating in low-wage service jobs
• Gender disparities in diabetes, obesity, and other diet related illnesses suggest specific attention to gender issues in food marketing and consumption

Gays and Lesbians in Planning
• Food related businesses that promote gay identity and community and support gay rights

Economic Development
• The role of public retail and wholesale markets
• Entrepreneurial urban agriculture projects like Village Farms in Buffalo
• Centralized community facilities that help small farmers to process, transport, wholesale, and sell food products
• Important role food sector plays in creating jobs, multipliers, and local economies

Transportation Planning
• Reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicle miles for grocery shopping
• Improving transit for food access for all
• Transportation logistics and infrastructure for connecting small farmers to markets and institutions

Small Town and Rural Planning
• Loss of small farms contributes to decline of rural communities
• Farm-to-Cafeteria movement helps small farmers survive by creating markets through partnerships with schools, colleges, hospitals, prisons and other institutions
• Farmers markets help farmers retain more of the food retail
• Housing and community services for migrant farm workers
• Addressing cultural tensions and issues of diversity as immigrants move into small towns to work in meat packing and processing industries

City Planning and Management
• In general, food system impacts many functional areas that planners plan for--economic development, transportation, land use, environment, etc.
• Rise of food policy councils in some cities that provide a focus for systematic study and action on food issues

Indigenous Planning
• Most Native American communities face high rates of poverty, food insecurity, and diet-related illnesses such as diabetes. Food system issues, such as access to grocery stores, paucity of food related jobs, poor nutrition, etc. affecting other low-income communities also apply to this group
• Revival of indigenous and traditional food production, processing, and distribution as an economic development strategy in Indian communities, such as the Tohono’Odham in Arizona
• Community development corporations in Indian Country developing food related businesses or cooperatives or related partnerships with outside corporations (e.g., The partnership between several Navajo communities and Bashas’ Supermarkets in Arizona and New Mexico)

Private Practice
• Planners as consultants to community food assessments, retail analysis, food policy development, and related activities

Regional and Intergovernmental Planning
• Land use patterns in urban/rural/agricultural settings and the loss of farmland and the use of TDR/PDR and other land use tools, both regulatory and incentive-based
• Regional economic trends and the sustainability of family farming and rural economies
• Connecting local farms that require markets to stay viable with urban communities that need access to healthy food
• Environmental sustainability and quality of life including aesthetic quality and ecological functionality of rural and agricultural areas as well as use of petroleum products used in food production and transport
• Regional waste disposal, composting, and recycling
• The location of farming and food production in and around metropolitan areas
• Governmental efficiencies gained (in monetary or service delivery) by addressing food in a systemic manner
• Developing farm support industries (such as machinery, seed sales, nurseries, etc.)
Federal Planning
- Role of U.S. Dept. of Agriculture initiatives on community food projects is a positive, but farm subsidies contribute to decline of biodiversity, mono-cropping, small farm communities
- Federal policies related to nutrition, such as food stamps, WIC (Women, Infants and Children), Summer Nutrition Program, Farmers Market Nutrition Program need to support all qualified poor households and small farmers

Information Technology
- Use of GIS, spatial mapping and other computer software to analyze relationships between community and food sector activities
- Use of wireless technology for farmers markets to enable electronic benefits transfer (EBT)
- Communications and logistics to support small farmers who market to institutions such as schools, colleges, and other institutions

Housing and Community Development
- Scarcity of affordable housing leads low-income households to spend more of their income on housing, which might result in greater need for food assistance as fewer dollars are available for food and other basic needs
- Location of emergency food sources (soup kitchens, food pantries, etc.) with respect to subsidized housing and low-income neighborhoods
- Incorporation of community gardens in affordable housing schemes

Resort and Tourism
- Agricultural tourism ventures to give farmers other sources of income
- Non-food sources of earnings for farmers (petting farm, artist retreats, etc.)

New Urbanism
- Incorporating access to nutritious foods (backyard and community gardens, farmers markets, grocery stores, etc.) within new urbanist communities
- Conservation subdivisions that protect agricultural land and promote agriculture

Urban Design and Preservation
- Aesthetic issues related to community vegetable gardens in cities
- Addressing potential conflicts between preservation and the need for supermarkets near older neighborhoods
- Design guidelines for grocery outlets (especially big-boxes) and eating and drinking places
- Integrating community gardens into plans for new housing developments
International

- A lot of food system activity overseas in more and less developed countries, including on issues related to urban and peri-urban agriculture, local food-security policy, and fair trade.

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