

Marin Food Policy Council
Meeting Notes

June 18, 2013
[HHS campus](#)

Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting scheduled for:

Tuesday, July 16th, from 3:00-5:00 p.m. @ [HHS campus](#)

Action Items:

Janet's Opening Remarks:

Community gardens and urban farms are the foundation of a solid approach to lasting community food security. By definition, it is only possible to organize for such an outcome through the engagement and inclusion of the entire community. The realm of community food security encompasses a broad range of human-scale activities aimed at improving the health of the entire population. It is a systemic approach proven to solve problems of access and need for the long-term, and constitutes a true public health initiative.

Community food security initiatives are part of an overall planning process that prioritizes health as consideration. They lead to greener, cooler cities, increases in individual and group self-sufficiencies, reductions in use of non-renewable resources, improvements in human and environmental health, shortened distances from field to table, greater equity in the food system with corresponding reductions in health disparities, more beautiful neighborhoods, increases in the quantity and nutritional quality of local foods, improved recycling and waste management practices, optimization of social networks, encouragement of neighborliness, reduction in crime and increases in public safety, and establishment of a genuine disaster preparedness plan that serves all residents.

They are a solution that solves more than one problem without creating new ones. Dr. Richard Levins, John Rock Professor of Population Science at Harvard Medical School, points out that there are many “false dichotomies that plague science. A particularly important dichotomy, he says, is the one between individual responsibility and social determination of health.” He asks us to consider these two propositions:

1. We are each responsible for our own health, and
2. Health is socially determined.

He emphasizes that each statement taken separately is false, but that taken together they are jointly true.

Community gardens fall exactly at the focal point of those two health determinates. A community garden is something any person can decide to become involved in for reasons of improving his or her own health and the health of their family. And what is also true, is

that social institutions, agencies, and governments can do a lot to encourage that impulse and help see to it that more people are successful in initiating and benefitting from those efforts.

As a beginning point, one of our proposed policy recommendations is that public land that is not assigned for other use, and is not ruled unsuitable for food production, be mapped and so designated. That way, those Marin residents with a desire to try their hand at food production, but who lack a place to do it, would be easily able to find a piece of land to serve that purpose. We want to make it friendly and inviting for groups and individuals to begin.

This shared vision we are building together, this common cause, has brought us to the task of drawing up a map of our common ground. Mapping the commons is an exercise that is sure to lead to some fresh thinking about “development” and about “ownership” and just what kind of opportunities are available for discussion and exploration. It provokes questions about our collective rights and responsibilities regarding quality of life issues for our community and ourselves.

Historically, Marin County is a nationally recognized leader in long-range planning and policy development. From Marin Headlands, Mt. Tam State Park, Pt. Reyes National Seashore, and Marin Agricultural Land Trust, we have taken the lead in protecting natural resources, ensuring public access and ownership, and preserving opportunities for future generations.

This community garden initiative is part of that leadership tradition, and is no less forward leaning, and no less visionary. They are radical, in that they go to the root causes of inequity and disparity. Many of the policy recommendations we anticipate this Council to align on are as important and innovative, as future-oriented, as any this County has ever proposed. These policies lead to the creation of a parallel food system that is decentralized, accessible, democratic, responsive, quality oriented, and affordable. If Marin is inspired to follow these recommendations and encourage this approach, we would again earn the attention of the nation as an outstanding example of visionary community design and development.

Lauren Klein, Marin Master Gardeners:

- Community Garden Needs Assessment
 - High demand and waiting lists for existing gardens
- Two previous Community Garden Summits focused on shifting policy and approval of community gardens
 - Each town and city is different
 - Need to have standardized language and city plans
 - Get MMWD involved for discount on water for growing food
- Residential Community Gardens are another opportunity
 - Landlord gives permission and space and tenants manage the garden
- Master Gardeners have formed the Edibles Guild
 - Building food growing expertise among members to serve the community

Karen Holleran, Nita Krygier, Marin Master Gardeners:

- Garden as a nutrition education tool
- Marin Master Gardeners help schools with starting school gardens:
 - Consultation and education
 - Currently in 27 schools
 - Bring schools together to talk about:
 - resources
 - curriculum
 - share propagated plants
- Council Questions
 - How do the most recent school wellness policies and requirements relate to community gardens?
- What are the opportunities for entrepreneurial fund raising for school gardens?
 - Examples include - Marin Montessori, Seattle Food Forest, and New Orleans Edible Schoolyard
- Obstacles:
 - Curriculum delivery and assisting teachers to deliver the content within their teaching assignment
 - Sustainability – parent and teacher partner and leadership is critical
 - There is an opportunity to do a shared community garden so that summer care of garden is provided and to avoid vandalism
 - School District policy and capacity put limits on school's willingness to take these on
 - Vermin and critter control – “closed composting” is preferred for this reason
 - Limited class time allocation for access to gardens
 - Growing for lunch program has always been an idea, however, there typically is not enough production
 - Leverage of available land identified for community gardens
 - City Council approval and support
 - Comfort zones around the aesthetics and values of edible and food production:
 - not seeing the need
 - worry about vermin
 - maintenance requirements and cost
- Council Member Questions and Comments
 - What are the opportunities for dual use of school and community gardens? NUSD exploring policy e.g. Summer Feeding Program
 - Are these community gardens and school gardens with corresponding produced food being connected with communities of need?
 - Marin City is impacted by limited community gardens:
 - Public housing has a garden for those residents
 - Larger garden for all community is needed

- Community relationship building is key for gardens success
 - Youth Commission willing to provide support and collaborate

Patti D'Angelo Juachon, Marin Community Foundation (MCF):

- MCF reinstating funding for Environmental Program
 - Smaller, one-time installment for 2013-2014
- Focusing on the environment and equity nexus
- New Strategic Plan to be developed in 2014
- Currently a one-year, short-term grant opportunity
 - Access to foods
 - Sustainable Ag./ Garden Approaches
 - Not individual gardens
 - Access to parks/ green space
 - Environmental literacy
- Questions to the Group:
 - What are the opportunities to build capacity for food access support?
 - Who would be the partners to bring this forward?
- Wants to fund in September with a proposal submitted in July
- Autonomy and decentralized school districts, cities, and communities make this funding opportunity a challenge to coordinate and implement

Council Policy Ideas for Community Gardens:

There was a council member request to get update on how this has gone in San Francisco.

1. Declarative statement akin to San Francisco's
 - Include rural, urban, and suburban in the second to last sentence
 - Those in attendance gave approval
2. Zoning template language and elimination of permitting process
 - Summit of mayors, council members, planners and sustainability managers on the topic to get adoption
 - Inclusion of bees and poultry and other production systems
 - Policies are different across cities
 - Those in attendance gave approval
3. Garden Management
 - For Bullet No. 3, find the right agency, organization and department to fill this need
 - Revise to be about Marin and cities/towns, not San Francisco
 - Need a coordinator role and lead to accomplish this
 - Those in attendance gave approval
4. Garden Site Mapping

- What is the parallel process in Marin
 - Convening County BOS and City Leaders all together
- Social justice and communities with most need to get the assistance
- Using the criteria for communities of need – layers of map:
 - Sites of opportunity
 - Communities of need
- Those in attendance gave approval

HEAL Marin Grant:

- \$12K for MFPC to develop a plan between July and September
- Additional \$9K in January
- HEAL framework published with email distribution to be forwarded

Janet's Closing Remarks:

It is not easy to cross boundaries to adopt a whole-systems approach to health. It means leaving the areas we know well and venturing into fields where we have to depend on the expertise of others. It means learning unfamiliar concepts and mastering new tools to engage complexity. It means asking people to take health into account in making decisions that usually depend on other considerations. It may provoke controversy. It may make people we approach uneasy and even angry. It requires patience, imagination, courage, integrity, and a sense of humor.

- Dr. Richard Levins, John Rock Professor of Population Science at Harvard Medical School

Next Meeting:

- Set for Tuesday, July 16th, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the [HHS campus](#)
- Steering Committee will meet to plan for next meeting with potential topics including: CX3, Sourcing for food pantries (Richard/ Terrie/ Sheila), Infant access to breast milk (WIC)