

Marin Food Policy Council  
Meeting Notes  
November 18, 2014  
[HHS campus](#)

**Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting:** December 16, 2014, 3-5p.m. @ [HHS campus](#)

**Attendees:**

*Steering Committee* - Janet Brown (AllStar Organics); Bonnie Nielsen (UCCE Marin); Julia Van Soelen Kim (UCCE Marin); Leah Smith (AIM); Rebecca Smith (HHS)

*Committee Members* – Alexandra Danino (SF/Marin Food Bank); Amy Ridout (Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden); Becky Gershon (SF Food Bank); Elaini Negussie (HHS); Lauren Klein (UCCE); Madeline Hope (West Marin Community Services District); Miguel Villareal (Novato USD); Peter Healey (AIM); Sheila Kopf (SF Food Bank); Socorro Romo (West Marin Community Services District); Susan Martinelli (WIC); Terrie Green (Marin City Community Services District)

**Welcome** – Janet Brown

**Canal tour debrief** - Richard Waxman

Canal background info

- one of highest density areas in Marin lots of people in less than 2 miles, often families share housing
- 70% Latino (30% Latino County-wide)
- 30% people live below poverty line (7% County-wide)
- 11:1 fast food options:healthy food options
- 40% more males than females
- High crime rates
- Transportation and safety concerns
- Between 1 in 3 and 1 in 4 food insecure households (1 in 5 for the County)
- Free & reduced lunch is 70-100% (25% County-wide)

Canal Tour highlights

- Mi Pueblo: majority of employees are full-time, currently hiring, most employees are from within the Canal, soccer and famous people helps sell food, not cheap food, but is culturally-appropriate. Lost thousands of employees because of E-verify, less Latinos working there now. Local store is limited by what corporate headquarters is willing to do (greater chance of success when you deal with owners, not managers).
- More for Less: convenience store w more junk food but some fresh produce, opening for more healthful options but sales and practicality is the bottom line
- Canal Community Garden: waiting list, families really like it
- Mi Rancho: found that by expanding fruits and vegetables and reducing alcohol and tobacco they have increased sales on fruits and vegetables by 3-4 times. One of few stores willing to share retail sales info with us, the

County has been working with the store with signage, helping with displays, etc. County is going to be doing more taste-tests, demos, help with signage, etc. Hope to get successful quantitative data to share with other stores.

- Community Health Hub – serving ~25 lbs. of food per household weekly with their healthy food distribution. Also chronic disease screening (over 60% of people screened are previously undiagnosed with diabetes, pre-diabetes, and hypertension), nutrition education with traditional recipes, Latino food cookbook distribution, yoga, Zumba, CalFresh enrollment assistance...
  - o 10-15 day laborers come, want 30+ (people know it's there, but fewer come because of the stigma), people are more willing to take the food if it is brought to them. Constituencies within each community that need special attention.
  - o First pantry next to a clinic opened in Novato April 2013. Great sense of community, dignity, people known on a first-name basis... close to 85% return rate weekly. People handing out the food are from the community. All of this doesn't happen overnight, but this location grew very quickly because the organizations putting it on were already known and trusted.
- WIC – very trusted within the community because they don't ask questions about documentation. Restrictions around the WIC coupons (certain items, brands, etc.) are challenging. A swipe system rather than a coupon system should save money – decisions made on the federal level. 62% of babies born in CA are born into the WIC system (highest state in the country, 51% nation-wide).

#### **CalFresh update – Alexandra Danino**

- Commitment and passion for CalFresh is huge, but the stigma and myths around the program are just as huge.
- SF/Marin Food Bank has been doing lots of outreach to debunk these myths. County and Guatemalan consul wrote letters to dispel myths around deportation and military service, and it makes a big difference when shared with the community.
- Working with the County, non-profit orgs (i.e. the SF/Marin Food Bank provides incentives for every new family enrolled), as well as the Affordable Care Act.
- Working with schools, farmers markets, farm stands, etc. on outreach and retail acceptance of EBT with assistance from the Berkeley Ecology Center
- Marin County is restructuring, have implemented a call center for public benefits access assistance manned by teams of people to take questions and refer people to the correct agency.
- Stats: Marin households 6311, individuals: 10,375, \$1,569,699. Marin is 55 of 58 counties in CA in February (only a third of those eligible are enrolled), don't know of the change since then. Changes: federal poverty level has gone up, and 10 year drug ban was lifted to be effective in April.

- Code for America working w SF Food Bank starting a text line for clients to be informed of their EBT balance.
- Connection with homeless individuals possible: can use P.O. Box through Ritter Center, will accept a signed letter to verify identity
- Earlier this year CA Dept of Social Services released County-level data to the public about CalFresh around (can share data in a few months):
  - o Crossover with CalFresh and Medical, looking to bridge the gap and do dual enrollment
  - o Days to receive benefits
  - o Success and usage of expedited service
  - o Number of people eligible for CalFresh (involves varying degrees of estimation)
- Working with the Alliance to Transform CalFresh state-wide because Marin isn't alone
- Supplemental Security Income program improvements (below the federal poverty level) – if you receive SSI in CA you are ineligible for CalFresh. Trying to fix this – eliminate ban, or increase the SSI benefits so CalFresh isn't necessary. Letter to sign on and show MFPC organization support. MFPC takes a vote to endorse the letter; **Council agrees with consensus.**
- Compile data packets for each county for policy makers to make informed decisions.
- Surprises: disconnect between Medical and CalFresh, as well as Free and Reduced Lunch and CalFresh – it should be easy to apply and receive all the benefits you qualify for.

**Update on draft Equitable Access Policy document and working group meeting** – Janet Brown

At this working meeting the group attempted to identify a policy recommendation template for food security and equitable access in the County – we are developing two template versions that can be customized: County-wide version and city-by-city versions. We want to create something that works short term and can also be sustained over time, work with community-specific teams to shape the templates. The focus is on opportunities for greatest impact on most individuals, as informed by community tours, and is not inclusive of all food policy topics we've covered...

**- 5 Areas of Policy Focus:**

1. HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS
2. COMMUNITY FOOD PRODUCTION
3. SAFE TRANSPORTATION ROUTES TO FOOD
4. SUPPLEMENTAL FOOD PROGRAMS
  - a. Federal Programs
  - b. Non-Profit Programs
5. EDUCATION AND EMERGENCY FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMS

**Suggestions:**

- Add supper to fed food assistance programs (SFUSD is working on this now, trying to transform the whole meal environment at schools, has a manual of their ideas around this program)
- Add breastfeeding/infant nutrition into the document – insert in these areas and/or stand-alone policy?
- Have we addressed the needs we've seen and learned about in the community tours? We are finalizing content now, next step will be to discuss structure of the templates and look at more specific data.
- Concern for unincorporated areas that aren't called out specifically. Don't want unincorporated areas to get left out. Could be separate templates.
- Monitoring and Advancement – if you want something to work, you need a watchdog. Marin BOS will request an annual progress assessment, which MFPC will develop with data from county departments.

#### **HEAL mini-grant update** - Rebecca Smith

- Applications have been emailed out, due December 15. Up to \$19,000 for projects that emerge from this group as a whole. Not meant for ongoing program support, but for time-limited projects with outcomes related to improving community food security topics we have been addressing at MFPC meetings. Can discuss more at the next meeting on 12/16. Meant for capacity-building and expanding opportunity. For more details refer to the email announcement from Rebecca.

#### **Council representative updates** – All

- Julia, from David: The Marin Municipal Water District has begun discussions of water rates, including the idea of supporting food production through water rate discounts in the urban sector, specifically for urban farming and community and school gardens. David Lewis is attending the next MMWD Finance Committee meeting in December to provide input from UCCE about the benefits of supporting food production in this way and to offer Marin Food Policy Council's assistance. At this juncture, David's involvement would be an expression of the Council's interest in the topic only and any potential policy statements would be developed and approved through the Council's process.
- Rebecca: recent HHS internal event with unhealthy food served drew attention to the need for a County wellness policy. County vending policy exists, but no County food and beverage policy. Trying to pass an HHS organizational wellness policy to dictate food and beverages for events similar to Marin City Community Services District's policy. How many of our orgs can adopt an organizational food and beverage policy in 2015? Perhaps add zero waste as well? This could be a great unifying effort for all MFPC member organizations to commit to, along with technical assistance.
- Lauren: thanks for all the support for the Community Garden Summit, it went really well.
- Terrie: met with shopping center owner as a community and meeting went really well. Marin City is moving forward towards a grocery store!

**Closing remarks (Janet Brown)**

*"It's 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,  
Harvard School of Medicine

**Meeting adjured** at 5:10 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, December 16, 2014, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at the [HHS campus](#)