

COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN:

What are the collaborative's long-range approaches (strategies) for achieving the vision?

We will implement projects in neighborhoods with community partners, (including youth), build community coalitions, and replicate and link these projects across the city, connecting neighborhood work with citywide initiatives. We will leverage WKKF's investment with in-kind and financial resources from public and private sources. Our core strategies serve many goals; categorized in three areas:

School Food Systems

- Strengthen local/regional food system by increasing markets through schools.
- Build a sustainable infrastructure that can carry out our mission by empowering youth advocates and educators.

Community Food Environments

- Increase markets for local/regional foods through direct sale and retail venues.
- Increase access and affordability of healthy food in retail outlets, especially independent stores in low-income neighborhoods.
- Ensure equity of access to healthy food through representation by community coalitions on citywide initiatives.
- Build sustainable infrastructure by supporting community coalitions focused on healthy food systems.

Active Living

- Increase active transportation: develop and fully implement Complete Streets Guidelines.
- Increase bicycling for transportation and recreation.
- Convert small-scale underutilized open space to play areas, gardens and pocket parks so residents can be physically active near their homes.
- Expand program offerings of community centers to meet needs of adults and youth; incorporate more local representation on their boards.

Improving School Food Systems

a) Policy and system-change targets

BCFF's targets in this area are to:

- 1) Strengthen local and regional food systems by increasing institutional markets, using the significant pull of Boston Public Schools' purchasing power.
- 2) Ensure that changes are sustainable by creating an infrastructure of youth advocates and peer educators, campaigning with BCFF support for changes that are important to them.

b) Shorter-term approaches

1) *Strengthen local and regional food systems by increasing institutional markets.* This strategy will be put in place by creating a multi-faceted Farm to School initiative. Activities include;

- Hire a Farm to School Coordinator to increase local/regional procurement and expand the number of participating schools.
- Develop a Farm to School business plan that sets up an integrated approach including increased procurement, education, and interaction between farmers and students.
- Select and implement food, farming and nutrition curriculum modules that meet Boston's educational standards. The Farm to School Coordinator will be assisted in this activity by graduate student interns who can select the best options from existing Farm to School

curricula, modify to be appropriate for Boston, and pilot the curricula in target neighborhoods.

2) *Ensure that changes are sustainable by creating an infrastructure of youth advocates and peer educators.* This strategy will be supported by leadership development and training of youth involved with BCFF and other young people that they recruit. It includes:

- Development of a youth campaign including selection of healthier menu items to promote in schools.
- Leadership development and youth engagement in BCFF Committees. This will help youth understand systemic barriers that impede some of the solutions they want to implement, and allow Committee members to support youth goals.
- Leveraging BCFF youth organizing through the Boston Youth Fund. This can provide opportunities for summer employment of youth to assist with nutrition promotion and summer food assistance programs.

c) Who will be responsible / d) Expertise

1) Boston Public Schools, BCFF staff and BCFF Food Committee. The Farm to School Coordinator will be housed in BPS, to help institutionalize this effort and provide easier access to BPS databases and food purchasing systems. Food experts participating in the Food Committee will ensure that the Farm to School initiative takes full advantage of the national and Mass. Farm to School Network and programs such as School Food FOCUS

2) BCFF Youth Advisory Board and Project Manager, with expertise in youth and community development.

e) Champions: BCFF Food Committee and residents who urgently desire better food for their children.

f) Timeline: The Farm to School Coordinator will be hired in winter 2009 and develop a business plan by Spring 2010. The Youth Advisory Board is already in place, and will begin developing its campaign with community coalitions in target neighborhoods, 2 in Year 1 and expanding thereafter by recruiting new youth.

Creating healthy community food environments

a) Policy and system-change targets. BCFF major targets in this area include:

- 1) Building up local and regional food systems by increasing direct-sale markets.
- 2) Increasing access to and affordability of healthy food in retail outlets, especially independent small- to mid-sized stores in low-income neighborhoods.
- 3) Ensuring equity of access to healthy food through outreach to/representation of community coalitions on citywide initiatives.
- 4) Building neighborhood coalitions focused on healthy food environments to sustainably carry out BCFF's mission.

b) Shorter-term approaches.

- 1) *Building up local and regional food systems by increasing direct-sale markets.* This strategy includes the following activities:
 - Implement a Farmers' Market Initiative by hiring a Farmers' Market Coordinator to expand the number of markets and provide technical assistance as needed. The Coordinator will ensure that all markets have EBT, and promote use of Bounty Bucks.
 - Develop a Direct Marketing plan, to include expansion into underserved neighborhoods and exploring the possibility of low-income CSA shares in target neighborhoods. The Direct Marketing plan will integrate farmers' markets with nutrition education, local economic development, youth employment and skills training.
 - Set up a citywide Farmers' Market Viability Group. While Massachusetts has a statewide Farmers' Market Association, there is no such group in Boston. This will support a Farmers' Market Coordinator to work on key issues identified during the

assessment phase, such as providing wireless EBT machines and promoting USDA WIC and SNAP purchases at all farmers' markets.

- 2) *Increasing access to and affordability of healthy food in retail outlets.*
 - Partner with the BPHC Strategic Alliance for Health to assess market potential for local/regional produce and needs for technical assistance in retail stores, through a retail survey and interviews.
 - Develop components of a Healthy Foods Promotion Program with BPHC, addressing WIC changes (social marketing, signage, technical assistance and training to retail stores, neighborhood promotions, etc.).
 - Provide technical assistance in stores in target neighborhoods.
 - Establish a citywide financing program for infrastructural improvement in retail stores, to allow better placement of healthy foods and more fresh or frozen produce sales.
 - Create a marketing plan for introducing healthier foods, including local/regional produce varieties, crops and pricing, into independent retail stores in target neighborhoods.
 - Increase volume of local/regional produce sold through independent retail outlets, especially culturally appropriate items.
- 3) *Ensuring equity of access to healthy food through representation of community coalitions on citywide initiatives.*
 - Identify and financially support community representatives on the Boston Food Council from BCFF target neighborhoods. Assembled at the request of Boston's Mayor Menino, current members include the Mayor's Chief of Staff, Project Bread, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Chefs Collaborative, Farm AID, BPHC, The Food Project and other public and private partners.
- 4) *Building neighborhood coalitions focused on healthy food environments to carry out BCFF's mission sustainably.*
 - Support community organizing and health/food promotion through neighborhood coalitions, beginning with Mattapan and East Boston and growing by at least 2 neighborhoods per year. The East Boston neighborhood will engage youth in creating cultural events to promote a local farmers' market and tasting events to promote a youth-maintained community garden. The Mattapan neighborhood will focus on promoting EBT machines and Boston Bounty Bucks.
 - Provide training and technical assistance to neighborhood coalitions.
 - Support youth and leadership development in particular.
 - Link citywide activities to statewide advocacy and policy by supporting the Massachusetts Food Policy Alliance and advocating for the formation of a legislated MA Food Policy Council. Many aspects of food systems are regional in nature, so focusing only on activities within the city of Boston will be inadequate to sustain longer-term system change. Both BCFF and the Holyoke collaborative are participating in the Massachusetts Food Policy Alliance to create a statewide Food Policy Council.

c) Who will be responsible / d) Expertise

- 1) The Food Project and City of Boston will take the lead in this area, with the Farmers' Market Coordinator housed at The Food Project and continuing work to develop farmers' markets.
- 2) BPHC will take the lead on a Healthy Foods Promotion Program through the Strategic Alliance for Health. Red Tomato and UMass Amherst will assist with developing marketing plans for increasing sales of local/regional produce through retail venues.
- 3) City of Boston will lead on creation of the Boston Food Council, and BCFF staff will ensure community participation from target neighborhoods.

- 4) The BCFF Project Manager will have community organizing expertise. The Project Manager will work with BCFF to devise a strategy for providing leadership development to neighborhood coalitions. The BCFF Food Committee will help link neighborhood initiatives with state and national programs and resources.

e) Champions: BPHC, The Food Project, Red Tomato, UMass Extension, food experts on the BCFF Food Committee.

f) Timeline: Farmers' Market Coordinator will be hired by winter 2010 and develop a business plan beginning spring 2010. The Healthy Foods Promotion Program will begin winter 2010, with pilots by summer 2010. A marketing plan for local/regional produce in retail stores will be developed during spring 2010 and expanded over the next 2 years. A retail store infrastructure financing initiative will be put in place by 2011. Community coalitions focused on healthy food environments will be expanded by 2 neighborhoods per year, beginning with East Boston and Mattapan in 2009.

Creating opportunities for active living in the natural and built environment:

a) Policy and system-change targets: Strategies combine citywide work with community-led activities in East Boston and Mattapan.

- (1) Make it easier for people to choose walking or bicycling as preferred modes for short trips.
- (2) Expand program offerings of community centers; include local representation on center boards so programs reflect community preferred fitness activities.
- (3) Support the conversion of under-utilized urban space into space that provides improved opportunities for physical activity.

b) Shorter-term approaches

(1) *Make it easier for people to choose walking or bicycling as the preferred modes of transportation for short trips: 2 linked components:*

- Support bicycling infrastructure improvements in low-income neighborhoods. This links to CDC community strategy #17 "communities should enhance infrastructure supporting bicycling." It also links to a widely publicized recent effort to make Boston more bicycle-friendly, supported by Mayor Menino.

Activities include:

- Resident- and youth-led work in East Boston and Mattapan (e.g. East Boston work to convert an old railroad right-of-way to a bike path). Each neighborhood will work with BCFF to create a plan for a more bike-friendly neighborhood, and work with city agencies to institute specific improvements.
- Work with the Boston Bicycle Advisory Board to include representation of low income and underserved communities in the City's bicycle planning process, tying neighborhood work more closely to citywide efforts.
- Support the development and implementation of Complete Streets Guidelines with involvement by community representatives and advocates. City streets ought to be for everyone, young or old, motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. Too many streets, designed only for speeding cars, are unsafe for people on foot or bike and unpleasant for everybody. A key finding from the BCFF assessment was that "automotive traffic and speed are significant impediments to biking and walking, especially for older or physically disabled residents." In urban planning and highway engineering, "complete streets" are designed and operated so that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities are able to safely and comfortably move along and across a street. An effective policy can prompt transportation agencies to restructure their procedures, accommodate all users on every project, rewrite design manuals to encompass safety for all users, and create data collection procedures to track how well the

streets are serving all users. These activities support CDC strategy #17 (infrastructure supporting bicycling) and #18 (infrastructure supporting walking).

The Boston Transportation Department, a variety of advocacy groups, and neighborhood coalitions will be important partners in pursuing a complete streets strategy. Activities will include:

- Continued work by the Boston Complete Streets advisory group.
- Trainings by WalkBoston for communities on Complete Streets to build advocacy capacity.
- Identifying opportunities in neighborhoods to apply the guidelines to address concerns and opportunities.

(2) Expand programs of Community Centers to provide more fitness opportunities for adults and youth. The extensive network of over 40 Community Centers across the city represents a major resource that can be used to meet community fitness needs but offer limited programming. The BCFF plan calls for increased community representation on Center boards so that programs meeting neighborhood needs and preferences will be developed.

(3) Support the conversion of under-utilized urban space into space that provides improved opportunities for physical activity. The BCFF will work with community coalitions in the focus neighborhoods and elsewhere in Boston to identify potential parcels and specific uses (underutilized parks, school yards, church land). This links to CDC Strategy #16 (improved access to recreational facilities). A particular focus of this work is to link concerns and opportunities in the East Boston and Mattapan focus neighborhoods, and other areas of the city, to public and private resources and expertise so that real progress can be made. Activities will include:

- Advocating with city departments and elected officials to identify parcels for potential conversion to more useable space.
- Connecting community with resources and expertise (including advocacy groups such as Boston Natural Areas Network and Friends of the Parks, philanthropic resources and other potential allies).
- Advocating for spaces in new and existing public housing developments to be used for more attractive and meaningful spaces for physical activity (rather than non-usable landscaping).

c) Who will be responsible / d) Expertise

(1) BCFF Fitness Committee, the Boston Center for Youth and Families, Walk Boston and community coalitions in East Boston and Mattapan: wide range of expertise on fitness, walking, bicycling, recreational opportunities, city planning mechanisms and the specific concerns of the neighborhoods. (2) BCFF Fitness Committee with advocacy and city agency partners (e.g. Boston Natural Areas Network and Department of Neighborhood Development), with the 2 community coalitions. Expertise: as above.

e) Champions: BCFF partners, including BCYF, other agencies and advocacy organizations, neighborhood residents.

f) Timeline: Community coalitions begin work in Month 1 (continuing activities from planning phase). Neighborhood work plans by Month 6. Walk Boston training by end of Year 1. Under-utilized space identified by year 1 and 2 redeveloped by year 3. Activities will be ongoing through the project period.

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