

MEMORANDUM

TO: King County Council

FROM: Acting Food Policy Council of Seattle/King County (AFPC)

DATE: December 27, 2007

RE: Support and Recommendations for the 2008 King County Comprehensive Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Public Review Draft of the Comprehensive Plan and participate in the comprehensive planning process.

To provide background for our comments, the Acting Food Policy Council of Seattle and King County (AFPC) works collaboratively to address the complex and diverse needs of citizens, farmers and the environment with the goal of helping to improve the local and regional food system. The Acting Food Policy Council brings together experts in agricultural policy and farming, public health, research, business, government, and anti-hunger programs to coordinate efforts to improve the community's food system. We also offer expertise in an array of issues as seemingly unrelated as water, accessibility, health, labor, and climate. Our overarching mission is to promote policies that benefit our food environment and the health of our communities.

This memo provides recommendations for policies related to improving the food system in King County. Our comments are organized by key components and issue areas of the food system as follows: production, processing, distribution, sales/marketing, waste, water, access, labor, climate/sustainability, and coordination. Within each of these areas, two sections indicate 1. Policies included in the draft plan that we support as is and 2. New policies proposed by the Acting Food Policy Council.

Finally, we believe that a strong effort to address regional food system issues could best be coordinated through an officially sanctioned advisory body that focuses on these issues. The Acting Food Policy Council would serve these efforts more effectively with such recognition.

For more information, please contact Tammy Morales, Acting Food Policy Council for Seattle and King County, 206.396.1276.

Acting Food Policy Council of Seattle/King County

Support and Recommendations for the

2008 King County Comprehensive Plan

Production

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R-105 Uses related to and appropriate for the Rural Area include those relating to ~~((farming))~~agriculture, forestry, mineral extraction, and fisheries such as the raising of livestock, growing of crops, creating value-added products, and sale of agricultural products; small-scale cottage industries; and recreational and small-scale tourism uses that rely on a rural location are also appropriate.

R-554d In addition to enhancing the Farmlands Preservation Program, the county should develop more innovative solutions and incentives to keep agricultural land affordable for active farming.

R-554e The County should work with farmers to better understand the constraints to increased food production in the county and develop programs that reduce barriers and disincentives to growing food crops.

R-554f King County should prioritize its programs to help build and support a sustainable, reliable, equitable, and resilient local food system.

R-554g King County procurement practices should be modified to increase purchases of locally grown fresh foods for agencies with large-scale institutional food needs.

R- 554h King County should promote local food production and processing to reduce the distance that food must travel from farm to table.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

Rationale: Due to reasons ranging from the tax code to land costs, fewer people are choosing a farming livelihood.

A. King County should facilitate farm transitions by developing programs to keep farmland affordable for the next generation of farmers.

B. King County should evaluate tax incentives, including, elimination of sales tax on agricultural equipment and the creation of tax credits or rebates on personal property tax and sales tax for non equipment farm capital investments.

C. King County should ensure the continued availability of viable farmland and access to adequate water resources through farmland preservation and protection.

Processing

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

ED-127a King County supports programs and strategies to help preserve and enhance businesses in rural areas focusing on the rural economic clusters of agriculture (including livestock), forestry, and other compatible rural businesses.

ED-127d King County should partner with other Puget Sound counties and businesses to analyze the need and possible sites for regional agricultural (including beef and poultry) and forest product processing facilities that may require regional demand to make them economically feasible and also explore options and incentives to encourage entrepreneurs to invest in various forest and food production portable processing facilities that can serve the region.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

Rationale: Small and mid-sized farmers face barriers in marketing their fresh and minimally processed food products.

King County should continue to actively work with local and state health departments to address various on-farm processing and handling needs for farm products, including meat and value-added products.

Distribution

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

None in this section.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

Rationale: Small and mid-sized farmers face a lack of critical infrastructure.

King County should enhance the viability of small scale producers by addressing infrastructure needs including warehousing, distribution and cold storage.

Sales/Marketing

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

None in this section.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

Rationale: Farmers markets and other direct marketing opportunities are economically advantageous for farmers and communities.

- A. King County should partner with appropriate jurisdictions to ensure long term access to markets such as farmers markets and institutions for farmers.
- B. King County should plan for current and future farmer markets by guaranteeing land tenure for markets.
- C. King County should continue to support and expand the Puget Sound Fresh marketing programs and campaigns such as Eat Local for Thanksgiving.
- D. King County should continue to support innovative initiatives, such as the Puget Sound Fresh and Farm Link Programs, to promote and enhance agriculture in King County.
- F. King County should work with farmers and farmers markets to develop the capacity to accept electronic forms of payment for food.

Waste

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R-553a King County supports innovative technologies to process dairy and other livestock waste to reduce nutrients and to create other products such as energy and compost in the Agriculture and Rural Area zones.

R-553b The county should develop incentives that support local food production and processing to reduce energy use, increase food security and provide a healthy local food supply.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

Rationale: Food in the waste stream contributes significantly to landfills, transportation costs, and greenhouse gas emissions.

- A. King County should examine successful food recovery and food waste removal programs and develop pilot programs on a county-wide level.

B. King County should help encourage and facilitate on-farm composting; including produce and carcasses.

Water Issues

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R- 554a The county should work with federal, state, local and private agencies to ensure adequate water for the needs of agriculture.

R-554b King County should use pilot or demonstration projects and multi-agency collaboration to develop a new suite of allowed practices that will provide options for landowners whose existing operations are affected by alluvial fan deposits. These should provide timely and cost-effective relief from debris and the associated changes to the watercourse along with protection and/or restoration of fish habitat within these areas.

R-554c King County should find mechanisms to reduce flood impacts to agriculture operations and to assist the agricultural community in meeting the federal, state and local requirements for flood hazard management in order to promote and protect agriculture in King County.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

None in this section.

Access Issues

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R-415 Pedestrian connectivity, where consistent with rural character, should be encouraged to promote walking and bicycling and to improve public health within Rural Towns and larger Rural Neighborhood Commercial Centers.

R-416 King County should explore ways of creating and supporting community gardens and other similar community based food growing projects to provide and improve access to healthy food for all rural residents.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies

Rationale: Many residents of King County face malnutrition, hunger and obesity, and resulting negative health outcome such as cardiovascular disease and colon cancer. These issues could be addressed

through exploring ways to improve access to low-cost, highly nutritious foods for all residents, including through the emergency food system.

- A. King County should examine the equitable distribution of access to food in rural areas for seniors, low-income residents, and those with disabilities.
- B. King County should increase access to farmers markets and other food outlets in the rural areas.
- C. King County should implement new strategies for improving access to food such as mobile food pantries and electronic benefits transfers.
- D. King County should continue to support outreach and education to increase food stamp participation rates in the county.
- E. King County should increase public participation opportunities with regard to food system coordination and function.
- F. King County should increase and improve transportation options to address food access.
- G. King County should encourage food gardening by supporting educational programs including community gardens in new housing developments within the Urban Growth Area and rural areas.

Labor Issues

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R-541 On-site housing for farm employees should be allowed where this can be accomplished without unnecessarily removing land from agricultural use or conflicting with other public interests. King County should develop guidelines to allow on-site housing for farm employees, including guidelines that account for the restrictive covenants on properties in the Farmland Preservation Program.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies:

King County should ensure working conditions protect farm workers and other food system workers.

Climate/Sustainability Issues

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

None in this section.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies

Rationale: Current proposed climate-related policies do not include the role of food system improvements in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

- A. King County should decrease its ecological footprint including carbon impact through food system improvements.
- B. King County should work with farmers to increase the efficiency of on-farm production, processing, and transportation of agricultural products.
- C. King County should encourage and allow use of energy alternatives for on-farm production including mobile biodiesel facilities, biodigesters, solar and wind technologies.
- D. King County should include farms and farm-related activities in the goals of the Office of Economic Development.
- E. King County should work with partner organizations to provide education and tools to increase soil fertility and product diversity.
- F. King County should encourage the long term health and viability of local agriculture through farm management practices, habitat and species diversity, water quantity and quality protection.
- G. King County should encourage food gardening by supporting educational programs and including community gardens in new housing developments within the Urban Growth Area and rural areas.

Coordination Issues

1. AFPC supports these policies as is:

R-502a King County should work with other counties to help maintain and enhance commercial agriculture and forestry by addressing challenges common across the region.

2. AFPC proposes the following new policies

Rationale: King County should ensure horizontal and vertical consistency in food system planning and coordination.

- A. King County should partner with jurisdictions within King County and educational institutions to ensure county-wide improvement in food system functionality.
- B. King County should develop a comprehensive disaster preparedness plan to ensure safe access to food and water to residents during natural disaster or other emergency situations.

C. King County should designate the Seattle/King County Food Policy Council as an advisory body to the King County Council to serve as the coordinating body for food systems issues.