

small farms and food systems

King County Food and Fitness Initiative



*Neighbors in deep discussion at a TEAM
Delridge community meeting.*

Photo: M. Anderson

The King County Food and Fitness Initiative

(KCFFI) envisions healthy places, where the built environment--the places we live, learn, work and play--and the food system--how food gets from farm to table--support healthy communities.

Goals:

- 1) Develop a participatory community collaborative.
- 2) Produce a community action plan to realize the KCFFI vision for system change.

Program Description: The Small Farms and Food Systems Program at WSU King County Extension (WSU KCE) is taking steps to realize a healthier, more sustainable and equitable food system for King County by working with community partners on the King County Food and Fitness Initiative. With a systems-based approach we foster stronger and mutually beneficial connections among all food system stakeholders along the food system from growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, to consuming and disposing of food and work within the focus communities of Delridge and White Center to plan for a healthy future.

Situation:

“The prevalence of poor diet and physical inactivity has created a national health crisis. Too many people in our communities suffer the effects of obesity and type 2 diabetes and other related conditions, especially in low-income neighborhoods. Poor nutrition and physical inactivity may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death in the United States.”

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation has funded the Food and Fitness Initiative in nine locations across the United States including Seattle and King County. Each community has received a 30-month planning grant with the potential for long-term implementation support. Hundreds of passionate individuals and organizations in King County are working to make it easier to eat well, access locally grown food, and live actively, spurred by data showing that half of county residents are overweight and that low-income people and people of color are disproportionately affected by overweight, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

In King County, Washington State University King County Extension and Public Health Seattle and King County are co-convening a 50-plus member Collaborative that is working across multiple sectors and communities—from transportation to public health, from agriculture to education, from youth to faith and business communities – to develop a Community Action Plan for improving the systems that determine how communities are built and what food is available in our neighborhoods. By working together this collaboration will advance integrated, sustainable, and practical solutions that will serve as models for positive change for all communities.

KING COUNTY EXTENSION ~~ MID-YEAR REPORT ~~ JUNE 2009

Community Impacts

The greatest impact to date has been the development of numerous relationships among individuals (500+) and organizations (59) who have not previously worked together through outreach at meetings, forums, and community based events. New alliances are increasing people's understanding of opportunities and challenges for improving the built environment and the food system, and for integrating improvements in both realms.

Policy Impacts

Commitment and support from many KCFFI Partners contributed to passage of both the state Local Farms, Healthy Kids bill, in March 2008, and the City of Seattle Local Food Action Initiative in April 2008.

2009 Program Accomplishments

In 2009, the KCFFI reached several significant benchmarks toward creating a community action plan to increase access to healthy food and safe spaces for physical activity. Teaming up with community groups within Delridge and White Center has enabled KCFFI to engage residents in the planning process. Together our collaborative partners, leadership council and communities face the assets and barriers to a healthy built environment and food system with a stronger understanding of systems thinking.

- In January, Thrive, Eat, Act, Move (TEAM) Delridge formed for the purpose of gathering community feedback on strategies for the Community Action Plan.
- In February, the KCFFI Leadership Council approved a Community Engagement plan that outlines expectations for community outreach. KCFFI staff, co-conveners and Leadership Council members attended a Cultural Competency training hosted by Visions Inc. and the White Center Food & Fitness Advisory Committee was formed.
- In March, TEAM Delridge hosted a large community meeting co-facilitated by youth and community members (over 70 residents attended) to determine food strategy priorities. The White Center Food & Fitness Advisory Committee gathered 400 food-related surveys that contributed to the selection of several food system priorities. Several youth and adult KCFFI members attended the annual Food and Fitness networking conference in San Antonio, TX.
- In April, the KCFFI Leadership Council worked with the Food Empowerment Education & Sustainability Team (FEEST) to identify initial fitness strategy priorities and TEAM Delridge hosted a large community meeting to determine fitness strategy priorities. White Center collected 500+ community fitness surveys.
- In May, participants identified three main strategic areas and tactics:
 - School Food & Fitness* - Focuses on before and after school tactics, highlighting integration, joint use agreements, safety, nutrition education, school gardens, and safe routes to school.
 - Safe Spaces to Be Active* - Guided by equity and safety this strategy seeks to create safe, inviting, easily accessible destinations and public spaces that serve the community. Focuses on walkability, bikeability and completeness of streets.
 - Healthy Retail* - Focuses on accessibility of fresh, affordable, healthful foods. Goals include revitalization of the White Center business district as a family-friendly shopping hub, and the development of an urban center (including a grocery store) at the Louisa Boren School site. Initial focus is on pilot programs for healthy restaurants and corner stores.

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<http://www.kcffi.org>

Watch a short video and listen to what youth are saying about the Food and Fitness Initiative at

<http://king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/KCFFIYouthCoordination.html>