

Community Food Security Coalition
Community Economic Development Committee Meeting
(Oakland, California — at CFSC annual meeting)
November 7, 2011

Co-chairs:

Katherine Pigott (Waterloo, Ontario) & Ken Meter (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Board liaisons:

James Johnson-Piatt (New York, New York) & Tammy Morales (Seattle, Washington)

Notes by:

Nick Wojciak & Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

OPENING

- Meter gives some basics on the committee
 - CED is topic of interest for many CFSC members
 - Working group formed at Vancouver conference (2006)
 - Formally named a Committee of CFSC in December, 2010
- What is CED?
 - CED is more than just profitability; incorporates triple-bottom-line development
 - Fosters health, wealth, building local capacity, & social capital
 - Promotes long-term solutions
 - “Economic Development” & “Community Development” imply less comprehensive approach
- This meeting includes: Public health workers, city planners, academics, food justice advocates, and others
- Meter outlines purposes of meeting — to address three questions
 - As you make the case in your communities that food is part of the answer for local development, what success have you had?
 - What obstacles are you encountering?
 - What issues should we address in future teleconferences?
- Pigott discusses what CED in past CFSC conferences
 - CFSC should incorporate CED into its approach so that it is part of what CFSC does
 - Working group has proposed there should be more workshops on CED at the conference, in workshop sessions and in plenary meetings
 - Money needs to be raised for staff and to carry out activities
 - Committee identified a need for ongoing training sessions, teleconferences, & webinars

SUCCESS STORIES

Jan McDonald, Rochester Roots (New York)

- Urban Agriculture feasibility study done for the City of Rochester, New York
 - 676 stakeholders at table, including low income residents, educators, architects, city officials, school officials
 - Food looked at as a system
 - Started with the questions (influence modeling): “if urban ag and community gardens were a focus of the city how would that effect your well being?”
 - Results: It would positively effect: jobs, the ecosystem, healthcare, public safety, schools, and other issues
 - Worked with private company to develop metrics
 - Study was sent to the City of Rochester
 - The study is now integrated into city of Rochester master plan, and a food systems learning center was designed for school system (still searching for a location)
 - Brought schools and the city into joint discussion
 - Holistic view helped realize the success of the progress
 - Used a good metrics system that measured demographics, health, & economics, among other things
 - One particular example is that it provided metrics for the economic impact of community gardens

Phyllis Shuman, Office of the President of the City Council, Seattle, Washington

- Struggle to get office of economic development to focus on food, which competes with aerospace and other industries
- Urban ag business forum
 - 100 people showed up
 - Urban ag people don’t generally look at themselves as business people
 - Office of economic development talked about business services to micro business (marketing/loans)
 - Brought up issue of land use codes
 - Helped connect entrepreneurs with infrastructure
 - Idea of urban ag business development association (urban ag chamber of commerce)
 - Started urban ag business directory
 - The directory assists businesses and allows communities to have access to these businesses
 - Can function as a tool for forming cooperatives
 - Meter asks “What brings economic development staff into the discussion?”
 - Seattle has received many CPPW grants
 - The city has elected officials with interest in urban ag
- Food serves as incentive to connect people to farmers
 - Not a policy issue, but a neighborhood issue

James Johnson-Piatt, Urbane Development

- Discussed commercial urban farm business incubators
- Jobs and money are what catch the attention of city planners

- It is important to clarify that subsidies requested are not for household gardens but profit-building businesses
- How can multipliers be created?

Carol Coren, Rutgers Food Innovation Center

- Discussed technological advancement's place in urban agriculture
- Abandoned car dealerships (and other brownfield locations) already have plumbing and loading dock infrastructure, making good places for redevelopment

Fiona Ruddy, Detroit Eastern Market Corporation

- 43-acre Public market, both retail and wholesale, open every Saturday since 1981 that has been taken over from the city by a nonprofit corporation. The market is surrounded by retail food businesses
- Vision: healthy urban food hub for Detroit and metro Detroit
- Successes:
 - Tuesday market in addition to Saturday
 - Building a community kitchen to incubate small businesses
 - Michigan economic development and Detroit economic development officials are starting to prioritize food
 - For example, the Detroit ag and food business network, which connects food business and economic development officials
 - Includes businesses in the eastern market district, slaughterhouses, grocers, econ development community, city government
- Meter adds that Dan Carmody (President of Eastern Market Corporation) makes an excellent case to investors about the uncertainty of the economy. We don't know if we are investing for a more prosperous future, or investing in ways that will promote survival in a far more constrained future

Alicia Harvie, Farm Aid

- Farm Aid sees itself as a cultural change agent
- Theme is "Rebuilding Americas economy with family centered food systems"
 - Issued report on job creation and wealth creation throughout the country, rooted in food systems that are based on family farm agriculture
 - Covers problems with industrial ag, local multiplier effects, and case studies of successful models
- Both rural and urban communities can benefit from initiating CED strategies
- Example: Shepherd's grain, a wheat farmers cooperative. Sets ecological standards, provides sustainable livelihood for farmers, wants to stay local, and relies on urban centers for sales

Erica Hall, Healthy Solutions, DC

- Has master's degree in CED, works as legal and general counsel on issues of corporate governance, advocacy and legislation
- Importance of connecting CED with urban ag has been central to work
- Venues that connect CED to urban ag / public health/ marketing, etc. are important
- Economic development and educational opportunities need to be connected
- Agriculture is viable path, allows for a good connection to youth development and addressing racial issues

- Immediate job creation not critical if paths are being created to that job creation

Laura Ridenour, Sustainable Connections (Washington State)

- Asked Erica Hall about statement that immediate job creation is not critical for attention from CED professionals
- Hall says that it depends on the audience and how they connect all of the components and value them
- Meter adds that it depends on timing as well
 - 5 years ago this was a different discussion — less room to make this case when people perceive larger economic opportunities are available
 - As economy has faltered, urban ag is more attractive to the discussion with economic development professionals
 - economic multiplier is essentially a measure of social connectivity; without building that connectivity, it is difficult to build the economy

Urban Agriculture risks

- One participant asked, “Is there risk (specifically in Seattle) with putting urban ag on the radar, and having possibly too much government involvement?”
 - Shuman (from Seattle) responds that she doesn’t see any risk, but that depends on the strength of the relationship with city government. Networking with farmers also can reduce risk
 - Coren says that other risks are: pest management, zoning issues, neighborhood views on animals such as bees, energy system demands, and need for alternative energy
 - Meter mentions that in the 1920’s Orange County, California, raised “beneficial insects” for pest control in the orange crop, rather than using pesticides

James Johnson-Piatt

- 95% of new Class A office buildings are registered for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), greatly because it is a money saver
- Commercial urban farming in Philadelphia
- Urban ag is a way to mitigate retrofitting sewer system and storm water vents. Soil holds water and decreases volume

Economic impacts

- Urban ag can be seen as public benefit
- Work with public officials to understand these benefits
- “Why Local Linkages Matter” (Seattle study by Viki Sonntag) is a resource
 - www.sustainableseattle.org/.../45.../170-local-food-multiplier-study

Smaller communities may have an easier time working together, but not always

- Challenges in building urban ag systems: zoning, pest management, hard to build concrete relationships due to being busy and competitive
- Where can shared community space for value adding can be accessed?
 - Food business incubator network is being organized

Carol Coren

- Jodi Raskins, good contact for business lending and urban ag
- Urban ag isn't easily classified by federal programs, few government grants available

Joint-use agreements

- Can be hard to access, lots of red tape. Commercial kitchens in community centers tend to be under-used
- It is possible that kitchens are available in churches and schools?
- Grace in DC
 - Currently using church kitchens
 - To increase accessibility, may be important to reach out to groups using joint use to build a partnership and connection to figure out how to access kitchens

OBSTACLES

New York

- Governor not receptive to food-based economic development
- Biofuels being put in space intended for food storage

Local food policy council

- One has had difficulty getting an audience with economic development officers
- Johnson-Piatt, who works/has worked with economic development agencies, suggests finding high-end people in different sectors to help get an audience. Ask very focused, definitive questions once audience is secured, have best practices to show it works somewhere else. Case studies are critical, as is having business people involved
- Connecting municipal agencies is important and may help address the issue of engaging economic development officials in discussing CED and urban ag
- Another suggestion is to perform a stakeholder analysis, to see who has access to officials, network your way in
- Have public meeting to gain support and connection to officials, invite the press, publicly invite officials and possibly frame discussion around the officials and their office to give them incentive to attend

Financing

- Difficulty to develop collateral, equity financing in food projects
- Co-ops are easiest way to develop equity
- Informal lending circles are making deals, often not reported
- SEC reporting requirements make offering formal equity shares difficult & expensive
- La Montanita fund in New Mexico makes loans to new farm and food businesses to produce for co-op and other outlets
- California Farm Link reportedly raised \$4.5 million starting with no assets from banks who are working to fulfill their obligations under the Community Reinvestment Act