

*****4 Food System Questions for Seattle Mayoral Candidates: McGinn Responses*****

1. In 2008, Seattle passed the Local Food Action Initiative, and followed that in 2012 with the Seattle Food Action Plan, intended to drive an intentional path forward to improving local food systems in our region. Given the breadth of opportunities described in these plans, what would you specifically prioritize and move forward? How will you engage the larger community in this process?

Building on the work that started in 2008 with the Local Food Action Initiative, since the start of my administration the City has been moving forward and supporting food policy efforts. We have made great progress in moving forward many of the identified priorities, including convening and interdepartmental team, streamlining permitting and reducing fees for farmers markets, assessing land available for urban agriculture, and developing a food action plan. We have increased local, healthy food in our food support system for childcare and senior meals, and integrated food system planning and policies into many City policies and activities, including the Comprehensive Plan and our neighborhood planning process.

The Food Action Plan was developed in 2012 as 5-year roadmap for the City's role in improving the food system. The strategies in our Food Action Plan went through a prioritization process before being selected for inclusion in the plan, which included criteria such as the ability to be implemented in a short timeframe, their relationship with existing work within the City and in the region, and the level of resources required to implement, and the importance placed on them in our outreach with the broader community. I intended the Plan to drive action in City departments, and all of the recommendations are implementable within the Plan's 5-year time frame. In prioritizing which to take on first, we look at the impact of each recommendation on the population as a whole as well as on low-income communities and communities of color that are most impacted by diet-related diseases, resources available, alignment with other initiatives, and our ability to leverage partnerships to bring them forward.

The most important thing is that these efforts lead us toward fundamental change at a system-wide level. I rely on our close working relationship with many in the food policy community through participation on the Regional Food Policy Council as well as other working groups. I would welcome continued discussion with the food policy community about which of our identified policies and programs will allow Seattle to move the needle in building a strong and resilient food system that provides access to healthy food for all Seattle residents and supports our region.

Awareness at the departmental level of the importance of different food-related issues and goals is also essential. I believe that our Food Systems interdepartmental team, which has now been meeting for several years, is an important center for departmental-level activity. Led by Sharon Lerman, the City's Food Policy Advisor, their workplan guides implementation of the Food Action Plan. They are also a center for cross-departmental collaboration. Mayor's office staff, as well as representatives from City Council, participate in this team. Our engagement work has at least three focuses – inclusive outreach to people that have been underrepresented, working with key stakeholders that are experts in their particular field, and reaching out to a broader circle of people in order to shift public awareness of issues.

Prior to releasing the Food Action Plan, we held several Listening Sessions where stakeholders and the public could engage in a conversation about what is most important to them -- whether it's related to growing food locally and sustainably and in more locations, strengthening the food economy, reducing food waste, or providing healthy food for more people throughout Seattle. The insight we received from the community in these sessions informed the actions that went into the Plan.

In addition to the public input process that led to the Food Action Plan, I have reached out to local food economy stakeholders directly, through face to face roundtables and meetings. And, in a couple key areas we've listened to the public and have results to show. We heard from low-income Seattle residents that they want to eat healthy, local food, but that cost is a key barrier. We have reflected that input through budgetary support for programs like Fresh Bucks; this year we increased support in my proposed 2014 budget for the Fresh Bucks program to \$100,000. Over 2500 people have used Fresh Bucks this year, and based on surveys of people using this program, Fresh Bucks has resulted in an impressive increase in the consumption of fresh and local fruits and vegetables among low-income residents.

There is always more we can do to increase outreach to the neighborhoods that are not as organized, who may also be low income and/or people of color, in culturally-appropriate ways. It's essential that we do this, in fact, since it is frequently the case that these populations are most at risk for diet-related diseases. For this type of outreach we have to go to where people are, in their own communities, talk to community leaders, and seek advocates that can help educate from within their communities. We are currently working with the Seattle Women's Commission and colleagues on the City Council to further explore food access issues specific to low-income women, and to identify strategies to address these issues. This type of ongoing outreach is critical as we implement the Food Action Plan, to ensure that we are implementing it in a way that is addressing the needs of those most at risk for food insecurity and diet-related disease.

At the same time, there is also a well-established group of people that are passionate about food, about growing food, about reducing our carbon footprint and our waste, and buying locally. We engage with these stakeholders by participating actively in the Regional Food Policy Council, participating in events and meetings with community gardeners, urban farmers, parents, and food entrepreneurs, In order to engage more people in the food system and reach our goals, these partnerships are essential. Leveraging the interest of diverse communities throughout Seattle is important in order to expand local food purchasing, food entrepreneurship, and healthy eating.

2. How does the food system fit with your goals for livability, climate change, and social justice in all of Seattle's neighborhoods? What tools would you utilize for advancing your goals (e.g. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, neighborhood plans, zoning, Interdepartmental Teams, securing sites for farmers markets, food and beverage purchasing policies, farmland TDR programs, farmland carbon impact trading, healthy corner stores, community gardening)? What resources would you commit to seeing these goals implemented?

The food system is fundamentally connected to livability, climate change, and social justice. Community gardens and orchards, P-patches and farmers markets, neighborhood food stores sidewalk cafes, and food trucks are all a part of what make neighborhoods vibrant and communities livable. The food we eat is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, with the majority of emissions occurring during the production phase. Reducing meat and dairy consumption and increasing consumption of whole, unprocessed foods are actions that everyone can take to decrease the carbon impact of their food, and our actions to increase access and promote consumption of fruits and vegetables promote health while also working towards our climate goals. For social justice: obesity and health related diseases are directly linked to access to healthy food, and this is one of four specific focuses of the Food Action Plan. Food inequities disproportionately affect low-income residents, children, seniors, and communities of color. We must strive, long-term, for a significant adjustment to what are now the social determinants

of someone's health – so that regardless of race or income, we all have a good chance of leading healthy and productive lives.

The tools and resources that we can use to achieve these goals are many. Here are some highlights:

- Ensuring family-friendly walking, biking, and transit access to healthy food is a big priority of mine. I have allocated additional funding several times in the past four years for multi-modal transportation, and proposed new funding sources as well. Most recently, I allocated an additional \$14 million in neighborhood transportation investments, and \$14.8 million for increasing road safety near schools (in 2013-2014). Food access has been incorporated into the Bicycle Master Plan, and other transportation planning efforts are including assessments of healthy food access as well. Our upcoming Freight Master Plan provides another opportunity to include food system issues as we plan our transportation system.
- Other planning efforts like the Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Strategic Plan, and neighborhood planning all address food. As a result, food access and food economy issues have been incorporated into recent neighborhood plans, including the Rainier Beach and Bitter Lake/Haller Lake/Broadview neighborhood plans.
- We amended our Comprehensive Plan in 2012 to include policies related to food access, food production, and food processing and distribution. The major Comprehensive Plan update underway provides an opportunity to further integrate food priorities.
- City code is another tool that the City has already used to allow urban agriculture in most zones, as well as the ability to sell food produced on-site at a farm stand. We have also expanded the allowable number of city chickens and other small animals, and allowed some fruit trees on City right of way.
- Purchasing policies are another key way to leverage the City's power by putting our money where our mouth is. The majority of the dollars the City spends on food go to programs aiming to reduce hunger among food insecure residents. We've taken steps to increase healthy and local options through these channels, by starting programs like the Farm to Table program that links local farmers with the childcare and senior meal sites that we contract with to provide food to low-income kids and vulnerable seniors. My proposed 2014 budget includes \$136,000 to expand this successful program to more childcare and senior meal sites. We are also looking at opportunities to collaborate with other major institutional buyers--universities, community colleges, public schools, food banks, meal delivery services, hot meal programs, etc -- that together may be able to increase demand enough to create new marketing channels for locally produced food.
- We have shown strong support to farmers markets by reducing fees and streamlining permitting. Our Office of Economic Development provides a 'one stop shop' for all City permits related to farmers markets. We have also assisted existing farmers markets to maintain viable locations in the face of development or construction on current sites. We have convened a task force to identify ongoing challenges to the viability of farmers markets, and develop recommendations for proactively addressing these challenges. I look forward to reviewing and implementing the recommendations of this task force when they are presented.
- We can't have local food without farms and farmers. That's why we developed the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP) for South Lake Union and Downtown which is expected to result in the conservation of approximately 25,000 acres of regional farms and forests through purchase of development rights by developers. We are continuing to develop our thinking around the foodshed and identifying additional strategies the City can take to help preserve local farmland.
- Seattle's Climate Action Plan calls for community efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing meat and dairy consumption and increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables. We support this work through programs like P-Patch, that engage residents directly in growing their own food, which leads to increased fruit and vegetable consumption; cooking and gardening education at our community centers for kids, teens, and adults; and community initiatives, like the Local Lunchbox project supported

by our Community Climate Projects grants, which provides in-store suggestions for low-carbon, kid-friendly lunches for parents to pack, and Community Kitchens, supported by the Neighborhood Matching Fund. Work is underway to consider how to increase support for community-level efforts like gardens, community kitchens, food forests, education, and social norm change around healthy food. We may support these efforts through our Neighborhood Matching Fund, through City partnerships, or through staff resources. Other projects may benefit more directly from City budget resources.

3. What strategies will you use for increasing local food production, processing, and retailing to address the growing consumer demand for local food?

Seattle has an entrepreneurial spirit, and food is no exception. We are home to countless restaurants, retailers, food processors, and producers who prioritize use of local food. I value Seattle's unique the food identity – it's one of the things that makes this region special, and that draws people to live in and to visit our City.

Urban food production has seen a lot of growth recently, thanks in part to the City's leadership and support. After making it possible to grow food in most zones and sell food produced on-site, we looked at what assets the City had to further support our growing urban farming community. We are about to roll out our first round of applications for the Seattle Farms pilot program, which will lease City land to urban farmers. This pilot program has done the necessary ground-truthing to figure out which parcels might be available for urban farming entrepreneurs, and as we learn more about the impact of these efforts on local food production, we will continue evaluating available land.

We will continue collaborating with other jurisdictions, such as King County and the Regional Food Policy Council, to strengthen relationships with local farms and work on local food production on a foodshed-wide basis. Our support for farmland preservation shows how much I value the need for local food production in the region, as well as in the City. We've made efforts to expand marketing opportunities for local farmers, such as through the Farm to Table program, by opening our Community Centers and City buildings as drop sites for Community Supported Agriculture, and making City land affordable and accessible for farmers markets. We can support innovative new local food production, processing, and retail businesses through economic development support through our Office of Economic Development, by providing support in permitting and location issues, and reaching out through workshops, training, and relationship-building events (such as the roundtables mentioned above).

We've also been working hard to support low income, immigrant, and refugee community members by using inclusive outreach to recruit gardeners in our P-Patch program. The P-Patch Market Gardening Program and Large Tract program provide opportunities for low-income residents to grow food and sell it through farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture, and other channels. Market gardens and farm stands have been established at both New Holly and High Point, which also provides a fresh produce access point in these low-income communities. New models for gardening like the UpGarden P-Patch and the Beacon Hill Food Forest are important to support and then expand.

Through the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, Seattle will have 28 new or expanded P-Patches, for a total of 90 P-Patches by the end of 2013. This was possible because of partnerships with volunteers, community organizations, and leveraging other funds -- meaning the original \$2 million in funds (which would have supported six projects) has allowed for 22 new and expanded gardens.

In the meantime we are still considering what we can do to support retail environments that include healthy foods in more areas of the city. We consider food retail closely as we conduct neighborhood planning and other place-based work. We work closely with businesses interested in increasing access to healthy foods in underserved areas of the City to facilitate the permitting process and reduce barriers to opening retail outlets that will increase healthy food access in underserved areas. We have worked to make food production a priority in housing by creating incentives in the Seattle Green Factor for food production.

4. Finally, Seattle already has innovative and nationally significant food system resources such as the Interdepartmental Team on Food, Food Policy Advisor, Regional Food Policy Council, and programs such as P-Patch, food waste reduction at SPU, and locally sourced foods for childcare meals. Given this resource base, how do you foresee using them, and towards what tangible goals will you be working?

I will continue working toward the goals laid out in our Food Action Plan – getting more healthy, local, affordable, sustainably produced, and culturally appropriate food to more people; expanding opportunities to grow food in the City and the region; strengthening the local food economy; and preventing food-related waste. I will focus on strengthening and scaling successful programs, as well as starting new programs that help us to reach these goals.

The tangible steps we take towards these goals are laid out in the Food Action Plan. I will continue to use the resources of the Food IDT, Food Policy Advisor, Regional Food Policy Council, as well as the strong community support and activity, and many other agencies and organizations we see in Seattle working toward these goals, to move my food priorities forwards. These are the people who are in touch with national best practices and can suggest new and innovative policies and programs – things that might not have been done before – that can add to the framework that has already been laid out in our Food Action Plan and will help us reach our goals. In order to meet these goals, we need to prioritize, sustain, and innovate. I will continue to prioritize programs that are working well and serve as banner programs, including those you mention. Farm to Table, a program to get locally-sourced foods into childcare and senior meals, is now supported by City funds. I will be working to increase the sustainability and reach of the program. Our nationally recognized P-Patch program has added 28 new gardens in 2013. With that phenomenal growth, now is the time to ensure that the program is providing the support needed to keep gardens active in growing food and community, meeting the Seattle community's priorities in how we support food growing in the City. These, and many other programs that we have developed over the years, need continued support.

Even programs that are highly successful can still be improved -- for example, the restaurant composting program implemented years ago is still not widely enforced. And, while our composting program is one of the most successful in the nation, composting in multifamily housing can also be improved. And we can look beyond composting as well – really taking a hard look at how we can prevent food waste in the first place. We are on our way toward the nation's first Food Forest, to be located on public land -- how can we build on that success and encourage other communities to do the same, or to use other parkland for food production?

We will also continue identifying ways to leverage programs throughout City departments that might not be food-related but can advance our food goals. Can the families and education levy be used to support better nutrition for kids in school? How can we use public art to educate about healthy food? And we need to continue assessing and refining our current programs. Are they fully meeting our needs? Are there ways we could combine efforts with others in the region to broaden our impact or take a more systemic approach?

I will continue to utilize the resources at my disposal, including the many talented staff who work on these issues within the City, as well as our partners in organizations and agencies throughout the region, to prioritize policies and programs that advance our goals, sustain and scale successful programs, and innovate in new and different ways to further advance our reach.