

Local Food System Preliminary Mapping Project

Project Background

Within the Bozeman Climate Plan, *Solution N. Cultivate a Robust Local Food System* highlights the critical importance of a robust local food system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build community resiliency. To better understand the role of local government and identify strategies to bolster the local food system, prior to undertaking the 4 action items identified in Solution N, the City of Bozeman has undertaken a preliminary mapping project to more fully understand the local food landscape in the region.

A Robust Local Food System

How do we define a robust local food system? A robust local food system, as envisioned in the [Bozeman Climate Plan](#), is a system that embodies resiliency, sustainability, and equity. It is a system that can adapt and thrive in the face of challenges, such as climate variations, disruptions to the food system, and economic shifts, all while ensuring long-term environmental and community health. It prioritizes equity in access, benefits, and opportunities for all participants, from food producers to consumers. For the purpose of this project, the local food system is defined as activities within the Gallatin Valley.

Project Goals

- **Learn About the Local Food Landscape:** Deepen the City of Bozeman's understanding of the current food system landscape and how City activities intersect. Identify gaps, opportunities, and potential barriers to food production, processing, distribution, access, and waste recovery.
- **Cultivate Partnerships:** Build relationships and identify potential partnerships or collaborations with diverse constituents across the local food system.
- **Identify Opportunities:** Distill practitioner insights into recommendations for potential next steps that the City could pursue, establishing a basis for future projects and actions.

Project Approach

The Local Food System Preliminary Mapping Project involves several key steps by the project team, including:

Steering Committee: Form a small, external Steering Committee to provide guidance.

Document Review: Review existing City plans and policies, identify intersections with food systems.

Constituent Interviews: Conduct a series of interviews with experienced practitioners from various facets of the food system in Gallatin Valley.

Final Report and Presentations: Distill constituent interviews and document review into a final report and presentation, to include preliminary map of existing assets and key entities (private, nonprofit and public sector), key insights, and recommendations for the City of Bozeman.

Process Overview

An external Steering Committee, composed of diverse local food system experts, was established to guide this Preliminary Mapping Project. This committee represents multiple facets of our local food system including larger scale conventional farmers, small organic farmers, ranchers, meat processors, business development support, food system specialists, nutritionists, and more.

The project team, external Steering Committee members, and city staff from various departments participated in a collaborative workshop to kick off the project and identify focus areas to guide the interviews. Six core topics and five key questions for interviews were identified. Through this process and additional input from Steering Committee members, the project team established an initial list of people to interview in group sessions and one-on-one formats. The list of potential interviewees evolved as practitioners identified additional individuals in the community with experience and knowledge valuable to understanding the core topics and key questions.

Core Topics

1. Food Access

Consistent physical and economic access to nutritious foods is critical for people to live healthy, active lives. A sustainably and equitably nourished community contributes to reaching goals outlined in City of Bozeman guiding plans such as the [Strategic Plan](#), [Climate Plan](#), and [Belonging in Bozeman Plan](#).

2. Resilience in the Face of Disruption

The City wants our community to have adequate food in the face of disaster. As the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, local food systems play a pivotal role in responding to disruption. To increase our resilience, the City needs to understand the current capacity to supply food through disruption.

3. Community Wellness, Education, and Culture

Food systems do not exist in a vacuum. Social and cultural factors influence local food systems, and local food systems influence norms, behavior, and social cohesion. Understanding the connections between local food systems and wellness, education, community norms, different lived experience and diverse cultural perspectives will help increase resiliency, sustainability, and equity.

4. Production

Farmers, ranchers, and growers are the foundation of local food systems, and have an intimate understanding of the challenges related to food production. The City of Bozeman seeks to be informed by their experience responding to shifts in demand for local food, navigating housing and workforce challenges, addressing distribution and processing barriers, pursuing funding opportunities, barriers to land access, adapting to climate change, and collaborating with private, public, and nonprofit partners.

5. Food Pathways

Processors, distributors, institutions, restaurants/chefs, grocers, financiers, and other food system experts hold essential knowledge and experience with the ecological, social, and economic factors that influence

food systems — and visa-versa. Interviewing a broad range of practitioners actively working in our community will result in grounded findings and practical recommendations.

6. Ecological Sustainability

It is widely understood that agriculture influences soil health, carbon cycles, and other ecological systems. The City of Bozeman seeks to understand how local food systems in the Gallatin Valley can contribute to reaching Bozeman’s climate goals and supporting environmental health in the region.

Key Questions

- A. **Assets.** What exists? What are important assets in our community?
- B. **Challenges & Opportunities.** What are the gaps, barriers, vulnerabilities, and opportunities related to the key topics identified?
- C. **Role of the City of Bozeman.** Which gaps, barriers, vulnerabilities, and opportunities connect to City activities?
- D. **Next Steps.** What next steps can the City of Bozeman take to address the gaps, barriers, vulnerabilities and opportunities related to the key topics identified? How can the City support ongoing progress and success of private, nonprofit, and public partners? How will the City determine and prioritize the opportunities that will have the most impact?
- E. **Metrics.** What key performance indicators would be the most valuable to better understand the current local food system, help inform City priorities, and track ongoing progress?

Project Team

- Ali Chipouras, City of Bozeman Sustainability Specialist
- Natalie Meyer, City of Bozeman Program Manager
- Kate Burnaby Wright, Consultant
- Maclaren Latta, Consultant

Steering Committee

- Christina Angell – Root Cellar Foods, Owner
- Jake Feddes – Feddes Family Meats/Amsterdam Meat Shop, Owner
- Laurie Little Dog – Lived Expert; Bozeman Health Family Birth Center; MSU Student
- Mary Stein – MSU Sustainable Food Systems and Bioenergy Systems, Program Leader (retired); Buffalo Nations Food System Initiative, Program Manager
- Matt Rothschiller – Gallatin Valley Botanical/Rocky Creek Farm, Owner/farmer
- Mattie Griswold – Food and Nutrition Security Independent Consultant
- Melissa and Travis Stuber – Gallatin Grown, Owner/Farmer
- Rachele Sartori – MSU Extension, Nutrition Education Director
- Sam Blomquist – Prospera Business Network, Food & Agriculture Program Director

	Project Timeline
2023 July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate project. • Start review of existing plans and policies. • Refine project approach.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish project Steering Committee. • Prepare for the September workshop
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host workshop with City of Bozeman staff, Gallatin County staff, and project Steering Committee. • Collaborate with Steering Committee on the interview plan
October November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interview plan, initial prioritization of interviewees. • Continue document review.
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize interview plan, interviewee list.
2024 January February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct Interviews.
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start developing recommendations and compiling the final report. • Develop final report draft. • Steering Committees review final report draft.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations (ex. Interview participants, Sustainability Citizen Advisory Board, local food system community.) • Finalize report