Food Policy Blueprints

In 2012, the Washington State Department of Health contracted with PSRC’s Regional Food Policy Council to work on a policy or systems change that would increase equitable access to healthy foods in the Puget Sound region. The Regional Food Policy Council chose to develop policy recommendations to local jurisdictions to support healthy food access and the local food economy through planning, zoning, economic development, and procurement policies.

The Regional Food Policy Council identified five initial topic areas to address with this project:

- Comprehensive Plans
- Urban Agriculture
- Farmers Markets
- Local Food Procurement
- Rural Farmland Preservation

These food policy blueprints provide recommendations for local governments interested in addressing the local food economy and food access through policy and programs. The recommendations focus on examples from the Puget Sound region to show steps some local jurisdictions have already taken.

The blueprints aim to address challenges and opportunities for local communities. Challenges include health disparities and access to healthy food, preserving agricultural resources, and ensuring resiliency in the food system during emergencies. Food system planning can create opportunities to grow the local food economy and provide other community benefits.

The intent is for these resources to grow and change over time as the Council incorporates new recommendations, policy areas or examples.

About the Regional Food Policy Council

The Regional Food Policy Council brings together community, government, business and agricultural interests to work on integrated and sustainable policy recommendations to strengthen the regional food system. It was established in September 2010 at the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). PSRC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties and is focused on ensuring a thriving central Puget Sound region now and into the future through planning for transportation, growth management and economic development. The Regional Food Policy Council has a diverse membership of local jurisdictions, businesses, institutions and community organizations.

Members of the council and PSRC staff are available to provide technical assistance to jurisdictions considering any of the recommendations.

Resources and reports on various food policy topics are available online here: http://www.psrc.org/growth/foodpolicy/resources-topic/
# The Blueprints

## Farmers Markets

### Background

Farmers markets serve as an important community gathering place, economic development opportunity and connection point between producers and consumers. Farmers markets sit at the intersection of many important policy issues: nutrition and health, environmental protection, food security, economic growth, and community development. While farmers markets can provide significant benefits, urban markets are often challenged by complicated, expensive permitting; lack of stable, long-term locations; and underfunding.

Both locally and nationwide, local governments have taken steps to remove barriers and improve access for farmers markets. This can include establishing a clear code definition for farmers markets, amending codes to allow farmers markets in appropriate zones, allowing markets on city-owned property, streamlining permitting, and establishing a program to sponsor farmers markets. Jurisdictions may also consider supportive steps they can take to facilitate acceptance of electronic payment and food assistance benefits at farmers markets.

### Recommendation: Streamline permitting and fees to remove barriers to establishing and maintaining a farmers market.

Several local jurisdictions have identified licensing and fee schedule improvements to streamline the permitting process for farmers markets. The cities of Gold Bar and Seattle have both considered how to support their farmers markets by streamlining or exempting markets from fees, licenses, or permits. The City of Gold Bar exempts operators of farmers markets from business licenses, while the City of Seattle completed a process in 2009 to streamline market requirements and fees. MRSC has collected other state and local approaches on their [Farmers Market page](#).

### Local Examples: Streamlined Processes

**Gold Bar**

5.16.020.C.9.1 - Business Licenses

The following shall be exempt from the licensing provisions of this chapter and are not required to comply with the licensing requirements of this chapter: Businesses operating at a "farmers" market or other city-sponsored or -approved activity as long as the activity does not occur more than once [1] time per week for more than five [6] months of each calendar year, and provided that the name, address, and telephone number is submitted to the city on a city business license application form, in advance.

**Seattle**

Streamlined fees and permitting: [Seattle Farmers Market Ordinance](#) (2019)

### Other Resources

- [King County Farmers Market Report – King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks](#) (2010)