THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY FOOD EQUITY COUNCIL

Prince George’s County has a 71% adult obesity and overweight rate—the second highest in the State of Maryland—and nearly half of the county’s youth (48%) are overweight and at risk for obesity*. Research shows that poor access to healthy foods and low levels of physical activity as main causes for obesity in Prince George’s. To help reverse the trends of obesity and reduce related chronic diseases, FEC members work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify deficiencies and promote innovative solutions to help transform the County’s food system into one that improves public health, ensures environmental sustainability, and spurs sound economic development.

WAIT, WHAT’S A FOOD SYSTEM?

- “The food system is a series of interlocking processes that combine: production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste recovery, that together create the complex process by which a population is fed. The food system is the process that food undergoes to reach our plates. It relies on actors who contribute to the food system with labor, policy or education.” (Holt-Gimenez, et al, 2011).

- Food Policy Councils coordinate the multiple sectors and actors that impact and are impacted by the food grown, distributed and consumed in communities.

- Food Policy Councils can focus on both a POLICY agenda (reviewing and making recommendations to decision-makers on laws, ordinances, etc.) and PROGRAMS (e.g., funding strategies and project development).

OKAY BUT WHY IS IT CALLED A FOOD EQUITY COUNCIL?

For the Prince George’s County Food Equity Council, the bottom line is people – not just food. Food equity means being able to find healthy, affordable, sustainable, culturally-appropriate, safe food in all neighborhoods. It also means working toward justice and economic opportunity from seed to fork.

This is the first food policy council in the country to be called a Food Equity Council, showing Prince George’s County’s leadership in promoting equity through food system change.

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Stay Connected With Us

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Cultivating justice and economic opportunity from farm to fork.
Policies, programs and potential partners in food often operate in “silos,” with structural gaps and a disconnected decision-making process that leads to inefficiencies, inequalities and instability in the food system.

- Hunger, obesity, diet-related disease and illness, rising food costs, food contamination, “food deserts”, loss of farmland and lack of rural development are all by-products of the current system.
- Food Policy Councils are a deliberate, coordinated attempt to challenge the current structure and close the gaps to create healthy, vibrant food economies and communities.

There are over 150 active Food Policy Councils at regional, state and local levels throughout the U.S. Examples include: Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Council (OH), Montgomery County Food Council (MD), Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council (PA), Muscogee Creek Nation Food and Fitness Policy Council (OK), Southern Maryland Community Food Council, and Michigan Food Policy Council.

Food Policy Councils serve as a democratic platform to elevate the voice and connectivity of farmers, grassroots organizations, low income residents, business leaders, health advocates, educators and others who are often not at the table when food, farm, anti-hunger, nutrition and community development/land use policies are being developed.

WHAT WILL THE PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY FOOD EQUITY COUNCIL DO?

- Develop and advance comprehensive policies and programs to address the social determinants of food equity and related health effects.
- Integrate food system planning into all County economic and community development.
- Ensure the availability, affordability and accessibility of healthy, sustainable, culturally appropriate food for all who eat in Prince George’s County.
- Expand the reach and impact of nutrition programs for low-income people including federal nutrition assistance programs and emergency food assistance.
- Create countywide awareness of the role healthy food plays in the health and wellbeing of residents.