



Baltimore City Food Resilience Strategy

- 1) **Support Immediate-Term Food Assistance:** With a quarter of Baltimore’s population experiencing food insecurity, it is vital that assistance programs provide access to supplemental meals and food.
 - **Maximize the impact of federal meal programs:** During the school year, students can receive up to two meals and a snack daily through federal nutrition programs. Unfortunately, not all children have equal access to meals out of school or during summer, and many families struggle to provide a healthy adequate diet. As a result, the federal Afterschool and Summer Food Service Programs provide free meals to children to help bridge that gap. Similarly, Eating Together and Meals on Wheels provide meals to seniors. Failing to maximize the efficiency and reach of these federally reimbursed programs leaves potential funds unaccessed, and children and seniors unnecessarily hungry.
 - **Support food pantries as part of the comprehensive food environment:** Food pantries can be run by many organizations – religious institutions, schools, community centers, and others – but most food pantries in Baltimore are at least partially served by the Maryland Food Bank. Food pantries supplement the food budget of many Baltimore families and their roles should be considered in the scope of the neighborhood food environment.
 - **Prevent food insecurity caused by emergency situations:** BFPI has worked with many government agency partners to incorporate formal protocols into the City’s Emergency Operations Plan related to food distribution and access in times of emergency. The Office of Sustainability is piloting Resilience Hubs in vulnerable communities to serve as a resource during times of emergency where residents can seek food, water, access to electricity, basic medical care and information. BFPI advises on the food components of this project.
- 2) **Conduct an Assessment and Develop a Long-Term Food Resilience Plan:** Moving beyond immediate food needs and emergency response, Baltimore leads the country in assessment and preparation for long-term disruptions to the food system. The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is conducting an assessment of resilience in Baltimore’s food system. The assessment will inform the development of the City’s *Food System Resilience Plan*, a disaster risk reduction strategy to enhance the resilience of urban food systems. It will address community adaptive capacity and examine the food system more broadly to include input from local organizations, residents, food sellers, farmers, government and other sources.
- 3) **Expand Homegrown Baltimore to Serve Food Desert Neighborhoods:** With large tracts of vacant and underutilized land, Baltimore has incorporated food production into the urban food environment and uses the Homegrown Baltimore Strategy to promote and expand urban agriculture and related activities. Baltimore enacted many urban agriculture-friendly policies related to animal husbandry, hoop houses, and farmers markets. The upcoming zoning code rewrite includes several additional provisions around agricultural use and on-site sales. The overall goal of these initiatives and policies is to increase food sovereignty for Baltimore residents and create opportunities for food production in food desert neighborhoods.
 - **Increase urban agriculture on public land:**
 - i. **Increase the number of leases signed on City-owned vacant land** – To ensure continued access to land for farmers and productive use of underutilized land, the City has identified approximately

20 acres of vacant City-owned land that is suited for urban farming. So far, four seven-year leases have been signed with farmers for about five acres.

- ii. **Utilize existing planning processes to promote urban food production** – Processes such as the Green Network Plan, Project CORE, and INSPIRE provide opportunities for strategic demolition and/or acquisition to repurpose vacant properties. Communities should capitalize on the opportunity to cast a vision that includes food production through urban agriculture, community gardens or school gardens, if so desired.
- **Increase urban agriculture on privately-owned land:**
 - i. **Encourage use of the Urban Agriculture Tax Credit** – For farmers on private land, Baltimore City enacted a property tax credit to encourage farm viability and success in the first five years of production. Further incentives should be explored.
 - ii. **Conduct land tenure analysis to increase long-term land security** – While the City’s adopt-a-lot and land leasing initiatives are model short- and mid-term solutions, farmers need long-term land tenure in terms of decades rather than years. BFPI will support an analysis of land tenure strategies to ensure the future of urban agriculture in the city in context of near-term and future development.