

RESIDENT FOOD EQUITY ADVISORS

2017 PROCESS & HIGHLIGHTS



WHO ARE RESIDENT FOOD EQUITY ADVISORS?

Formed in 2017, Resident Food Equity Advisors (RFEAs) are a cohort of Baltimore City residents that inform food policymaking to provide context of lived experiences related to the data presented on the food environment. Sixteen advisors, representing all City council districts, were selected through an application and interview process in early 2017 out of a pool of 80 applicants; the cohort was intentionally selected to reflect the demographics of Baltimore City while being inclusive of all backgrounds and age groups. At meetings, RFEAs used their new knowledge, lived experiences, and voices to inform, advise and update the City's Food Retail, Sustainability, and Food Resilience Plans and policies.



"A committed group of individuals who are passionate about food issues put together to try to tackle head on some of the food issues and problems in their neighborhood. It's coming straight from the people of the neighborhood."

Anthony Francis
District 9
Resident Food Equity Advisor

HOW DO RESIDENT FOOD EQUITY ADVISORS BENEFIT?

In 2017, RFEAs attended monthly meetings for six months and were compensated for their time. Meetings were led by the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative (BFPI) and provided RFEAs the opportunity to connect with and learn from food and agriculture professionals in the City. Each month, meetings explored the different aspects of Baltimore's food environment including food access, food justice, nutrition assistance programs, equity in the food environment and food environment research. RFEAs provided tangible action steps for each topic discussion.

"I have benefited from this group by having been able to connect to so many great individuals across Baltimore City who are passionate about food related issues. With the information I have gained from this group I will be able to advocate for food policy issues and apply it to what I do with my work."

Valerie Fuentes
District 11
Resident Food Equity Advisor

"This group has brought a lot of awareness pertaining to food - provided data and vital factors we need to know to make a difference in the quality of life for others and myself. I can see me more helping with policies as it relates to food - to be involved or have an active part in the process."

Mary Brown-Bey
District 2
Resident Food Equity Advisor

2017 OVERVIEW

JANUARY 2017: FOOD ENVIRONMENT MAP & GROCERY INCENTIVE AREAS

RFEAs learned how maps are used to drive food policy in the City. Baltimore Development Corporation discussed the process and challenges to attract and retain supermarkets and grocery stores to the city.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- Create a dialogue between new food stores and communities prior to stores opening, including getting resident input on what foods to offer.
- Conduct community food assessments to understand shopping preferences of residents.
- Include an element of community engagement to qualify for the food desert incentive area tax credit.

FEBRUARY 2017: URBAN AGRICULTURE AND THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

BFPI oriented RFEAs to urban agriculture in the context of the City's Sustainability Plan and used their input to update the plan. RFEAs emphasized the need for access to land and training opportunities, specifically for Black and marginalized communities.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- Link public housing with public lots that could be used for urban agriculture.
- Provide a process for the "Adopt A Lot" program to extend into long term use of vacant land.
- Create education materials and outreach strategies for communities regarding urban agriculture opportunities.
- Define "local" for use in urban agriculture and educate communities about the definition.

MARCH 2017: CORNER STORES, BALTIMARKET, AND FOOD JUSTICE FORUM

BFPI explained the Healthy Food Availability Index tool to RFEAs in the context of corner and convenience stores in the City. Baltimore City Health Department informed RFEAs about the Baltimarket Healthy Stores Program, which many were not aware of. The presentations led to a robust discussion about corner and convenience stores.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- Include community engagement as a form of technical assistances to small food stores, including opportunities to engage when stores open or close, and the stocking of certain foods.
- Incentivize owners to live in the neighborhood where their stores are located, and incentivize Black-owned food retail.

APRIL 2017: FOOD ENVIRONMENT MAPPING, HFAI, COUNCIL MAPS, AND RESEARCH

The Center for a Livable Future (CLF) and BFPI presented council food environment maps to RFEAs for input. RFEAs provided lived experiences to each of the district maps.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- Provide RFEAs the opportunity to engage with their council members concerning the maps and their food environments.
- Integrate resident perspective, voice and quotes into the council district maps.

"I would like to see more accountability for nutrition. Hold corner stores more responsible for keeping their HFAI scores up. Making sure stores maintain a certain score."

Anthony Francis
District 9
Resident Food Equity Advisor

"Transportation is a big issue especially with the new Baltimore Link. This needs to be addressed. The elderly and seniors are at a disadvantage"

Ewan (Mike) Meiklejohn
District 7
Resident Food Equity Advisor

2017 OVERVIEW

MAY 2017: ONLINE SNAP, TRANSPORTATION AND RFEA NEXT STEPS

BFPI discussed the pilot for online SNAP in the City. RFEAs provided feedback to the pilot program for consideration.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- Consider the possibility of food packages being stolen if delivered when no one is home. Create secure neighborhood drop-off sites for package retrieval.
- Consider food safety if the package is left in the heat.
- Explore the ability to make purchases with a debit card if the purchase exceeds the EBT balance.

JUNE 2017: FOOD DESERTS, EQUITY, REFLECTION

RFEAs explored new terms for “food desert”. The processes and components necessary for equitable policymaking were discussed. BFPI explained how the Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) ruling would affect SNAP participation in the City and asked for RFEA feedback.

RFEA Suggested Action Steps:

- “Food deserts” were renamed “Healthy Food Priority Areas” on the materials released in January 2018.
- Future cohorts will anchor all discussion in the concept of an equitable food environment and how to build it.
- RFEAs will collect resident stories about SNAP and the ABAWD ruling.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MOVING FORWARD

At the final meeting, all RFEAs were asked what BFPI should be held accountable for. Responses influenced the developments of BFPI’s eight point Healthy Food Environment Strategy. A common response was holding corner stores accountable for stocking healthier options. RFEAs believe corner stores require technical support for this transition to be feasible, but believe all corner stores should be a source for healthy, affordable foods in Healthy Food Priority Areas throughout the City. With this, the 2018 RFEA cohort will focus each of their meetings and work outside of meetings on corner and convenience stores. RFEAs will provide community input into the development of corner and convenience food stocking policies.

“I would like the BFPI to continue to be accountable for getting food with high nutritional value into corner stores, and working with the owners to identify cultural bridge training that would enhance the shopping experience for both residents and store workers/owners.”

Adamaah Grayse
District 6
Resident Food Equity Advisor

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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