

**January 19, 2012**

**Working Strategic Planning document:  
To Create a Local Integrated Food Economy (LIFE)**

Prepared by the Berea Economic Advancement Team Sustainable Food Workgroup

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**Introduction**

While the primary goal of the Berea Economic Advancement Team (BEAT) is economic development and job creation through the development of a local food economy, the BEAT Sustainable Food Workgroup would like it to be recognized that ultimately the purpose of economic development is to increase the quality of life for all Bereans.

When addressing the development of a local food system it is important to factor in the safety and security of Bereans' food from potential threats such as changes in climate, energy and population. The advantage to developing a local food system for Berea is that it will not only become an important economic driver but it will also increase the safety and security of food for the people of Berea and their neighbors.

**Vision**

Berea is recognized worldwide as a unique, special place. We envision Berea's identity to include a robust culture and economy of local food that is available and accessible to all people. A Berea will support farmers now and into the next generation, endorse local food production through urban agriculture, and promote nutritious food for better health for all people, especially our children. Our efforts to secure our city's local food economy are embraced through the partnership of farmers, businesses, consumers and Berea's private and public institutions.

This vision is apparent by:

- Most single home yards have gardens for food.
- Community gardens for those without yards.
- Accessible educational resources for community members, such as free on-going training for producing, preserving and storing food.
- Local restaurants dedicated to using and showcasing local food.
- Berea's public and private schools using and showcasing local food in the cafeteria and classroom.
- Supportive regulations and policies, such as:
  - True agricultural zoning
  - A transition of land and farmers to food production
  - A comprehensive plan to safeguard soils and control erosion
  - Closing our nutrient cycles with city wide composting, waste management, reuse and recycling
  - Providing food security and safety

- A “Berea Brand”

## **Obstacles**

- Berea does not have a publically available community certified kitchen.
- Public perception, i.e. too expensive, availability, health, buying habits
- Cooperation, especially among farmers (i.e. at the farmers market)
- Non-commodity food production risky – no public support policies
- Lack of capital for private and public investment
- Seasonal production
- Lack of support (financial and educational) for entrepreneurs
- Local food is not viewed as economic development, as evident by lack of data

## **Goals/Strategic Plans**

1. Education and communication to raise public awareness
  - Weekly food facts in *Berea Citizen*
  - Outreach to schools
2. A 20 % increase in single family households producing food by 2017
  - Determine current # of households growing food
    - Community Food Security Assessment (CFSA)
  - Review current regulations, ordinances, zoning
  - Provide support mechanism to sell excess
3. A 400% increase in community gardens by 2017
  - Define community garden(s)
  - Assess number and location of current community gardens
  - Determine possible sites for new gardens
  - Provide assurance of use
    - Invitations to specific community members/groups
  - Review policies and regulations related to gardens
4. Create a plan for identifying, utilizing, and safeguarding soil
  - Assess soils in Berea
    - CFSA - quality testing, location of good soil
  - Support policies to safeguard soil
5. Create a curriculum for more educational resources and training for individuals, farmers, businesses, and institutions.
  - Assess current educational resources
    - CFSA
  - Work with county extension office, Berea College, ECU
  - Education through school outreach, internships

6. 500% increase in farmers' market sales by 2017
  - Assess current farmers' market – CFSA
    - # of farmers/sellers, customers, sales, etc.)
    - Identify potential farmers/sellers & customers and barriers to involvement
  - Strengthen communication between Berea College, farmers, and public
  - Work with farmers' market board to strengthen the market
    - Create marketing/publicity plan for the farmers' market(s)
7. Creation of aggregation point(s) for farmers and customers
  - Research on aggregation – CFSA
    - Models, regulations
8. Create a plan for Berea “branding”
  - Explore existing strengths in arts/crafts and extend brand to include local food production/sales
  - Research on local branding
    - CFSA
    - Focus groups
  - Provide participation incentives for farmers and businesses

### **Action Plan**

- Conduct a Berea Community Food Assessment
- Design other action plans to facilitate fact-finding and planning for each of the above strategic plans.

Other tasks for the BEAT LIFE group:

- Create a list of useful organizations and their capabilities
- Design the CFSA to meet our particular needs
- Recruit additional volunteers once specific tasks are defined