Food & Agriculture Opportunities in the George Washington Region

February 2017
Vision: strengthen regional food and agriculture by improving connections among economic, environmental, and social drivers that support sustainable regional and community food systems

- Why this effort? Why now?
- Why do community planners need to be involved?
- What are the needs?
- What are the opportunities?
### Economic Goals
- Strengthen economic sustainability and resilience of the regional foodshed
- Develop innovative food system business models; capture a larger share of retail food sales; maintain local agriculture & food jobs
- Promote agritourism & build farm-community connections
  - Promote “friendly” local policies and regulations
  - Create local economic statistics to monitor change and improve local decisions

### Agriculture Goals
- Build vibrant, interconnected agricultural base for food and healthy environments
- Preserve working lands at risk of land conversion due to development pressures
- Provide education and support sustainable environmental & economic practices
  - Lead collaborative responses to climate change among agriculture, natural resources, and development stakeholders

### Food Access Goals
- Reduce food deserts and improve fresh food access for all, including vulnerable populations
- Enhance food access for emergency preparedness and community resilience
- Build reputation as a critical agent for local, sustainable food in DC area
  - Build a robust food warehousing and distribution infrastructure
Who are the stakeholders?

### Stakeholder Groups

- NGOs
- Academia
- For-profit organizations
- Faith-based communities
- Healthcare providers
- Land conservation organizations
- Counties and Cities
- Local farmers and ranchers
- Food supply chain
- Food pantries
- Service providers
- Buyers
- Consumers
- Military

### Organizations

- George Washington Regional Commission
- University of Mary Washington
  - Virginia Community Food Connections
- Marstel-Day, LLC
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, & Ag Market Service
- Tri-County Soil & Water Conservation Service
- Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services
  - Many others
Food insecurity is pervasive local concern for low-income families
- 11.4% of local population is food insecure (Map the Meal Gap 2016)
- High local SNAP participation rate, but lower enrollment and issuance

Urgent need for improved food distribution networks
- Vulnerable populations with limited healthy food access
- No planning for food distribution plants
- Local producers unable to maximize operations and revenue

Obesity is a regional priority and can be offset by healthy food
- #1 regional priority for MWHC
George Washington Region
- Dramatic increase in locally grown food demand
  - 519% increase in direct to consumer sales 1997-2012
  - Growing local “foodie” population & increased interest in agritourism
- Rapidly changing conditions
  - 24% decrease in farm acreage 1997-2012
  - GW Region includes some of the fastest growing areas in the country
  - Trend for large industrial farms to persist, but loss of medium sized family farms as owners retire
  - Strategic conservation of working lands is vital, but more resources are necessary

GW Region Census of Agriculture Statistics
The Challenge

Urban Sprawl in Northern Virginia

Source: National Geographic

1991

42% development increase 1991-2011

Land Cover
- Developed
- Agriculture
- Forest
- Wetlands
- Open Water
- New Development

Source: NOAA ESRI Data and Map

Miles
Cost of Community Services (COCS) metrics gauge the fiscal effects of different kinds of land development on a community (American Farmland Trust)

- In Virginia, for every $1 of **residential** use tax revenue, communities typically spend $1.18 for associated services
- In Virginia, for every $1 of **agriculture** use tax revenue, communities typically spend $0.35 for associated services
- When farmland is converted to residential use, there is likelihood of a negative net fiscal impact for communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationwide (125 studies)</th>
<th>Virginia (6 studies)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.18 Residential</td>
<td>1.18 Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.44 Commercial</td>
<td>0.40 Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50 Agriculture</td>
<td>0.35 Agriculture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Fauquier County Cost of Community Services Study
Why this effort? Why now?

- Significant funding available for agricultural planning / viability
  - Regional characteristics match grant requirements: food deserts, low-income, development threat

- Changing conditions require action
  - Development permanently replacing farms
  - Low income census tracts and food deserts are changing
  - New distribution and retail channels change the food access landscape

- Emerging opportunities for food-based agritourism
What are the needs?

- Needs Assessment Plan
- Mobile food market / mobile pantry
- Hunger distribution web-map
- Food & agriculture agritourism trail
- Food hub study
- Community kitchen
- Economic impacts study
- Farmland conservation planning
- Incentive programs for producers
- Local policies to support agriculture
- Education and training
- Partial list only; many other needs
What are the opportunities?

- $70,000  Virginia Agriculture & Forestry Industries Grant
- $50,000  Private: Cultivating Healthy Communities Grant
- $100,000 Private: Food and Farm Communications Grant
- $500,000 USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program
- $500,000 USDA Local Foods Promotion Program
- $50,000  NACD Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant
- varies  Private: Oak Hill Fund Food Security Program
- $400,000  Private: Surdna Regional Food Supply Grant
- $700,000 USDA Small Business Innovation Grant
- $400,000 USDA Community Food Projects Grant
- $500,000 Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant
- up to $10m  USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Grant
- varies  USDA Community Facilities Loans/Grants
- varies  Chesapeake Bay Watershed Grants

1Matching funding required
Rappahannock-Rapidan Region

- 2015: Farm and Food Plan
- 2016: $250K USDA grant to promote locally grown food/agritourism

Rappahannock-Rapidan Farm & Food Plan
Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
October 20, 2015

Hudson Valley, NY

- 2010-2015: rich engagement and many privately/publicly funded studies
  - Food Hubs Initiative
  - Foodshed Plan
- 2015: $20 million grant for Agriculture Enhancement Program
There are unmet needs and tremendous regional opportunities for food and agriculture

The region is well-positioned for grant opportunities over time

Holistic planned approach is important to connect economic, environmental, and social benefits

More capacity and funding is needed to catalyze efforts
Questions?