

Summary of Johnson County Food Policy Council's 2015 Winter Forum
April 27, 2015

Farmers, policymakers, advocates, teachers, and community members gathered at the Johnson County Fairgrounds on February 7, 2015 to share a dialogue focused on local food and the County Poor Farm's (CPF) potential value to address agriculture and local food related issues. The public forum encouraged attendees to share their ideas and visions about how the County Poor Farm could enhance and strengthen Johnson County and our community food system.

Speakers provided background information regarding the history of the CPF and its current condition and use during the first half of the forum. During the second half of the event, attendees participated in a community visioning activity wherein the audience broke into groups and brainstormed ideas for the future of the CPF. Later, all participants had the opportunity to vote on the ideas they liked best. The following ideas rose to the top:

- Provide water source, water access, sewer and other required utilities that enable food production, housing and public gatherings at the County Poor Farm;
- Support development that allows for a live-and-work farm incubator focused on preserving and improving soil and water quality and supporting food production;
- Champion on-site food production with farm plots (<10 acres), including utilities and the ability to add structures such as greenhouses, root cellars, processing kitchens, coolers and storage. Any plan for the CPF should allow for poultry and livestock.
- Restore structures on-site for food production, processing and/or public gatherings;
- Generate renewable energy sources;
- Commission an inventory on native plants on-site and increase native plants on-site;
- Ensure the site is accessible to the public, with clear signage, entrances & exits;
- Create space for educational workshops, classes & demonstrations on sustainable food production and nutrient reduction by community organizations;
- In conjunction with the county conservation department and historical society, develop and install interpretive signs throughout to help visitors connect with the history of the CPF and understand the importance of local food production;

In addition, attendees were given a community visioning worksheet (attached) when they arrived as a framework to generate ideas. The first exercise on the worksheet asked

individuals to identify the top five local food issues they believe exist in Johnson County. Table 1 shows a sample of themes and frequencies that were observed.

Table 1 Issues Believed to Exist in Johnson County Regarding Local Food Production

Response	Percent
<i>Sustainability/Conservation Issues</i>	28.9%
<i>Lack of Knowledge of Local Foods; Desire to learn more & how to find local foods</i>	18.4%
<i>Food Equity Issues</i>	15.8%
<i>Land Access for new farmers</i>	10.5%
<i>Public Health Concerns</i>	7.9%
<i>Production Barriers</i>	7.9%
<i>Climate Issues</i>	5.3%
<i>Miscellaneous</i>	5.3%

The second open-ended exercise in the community visioning worksheet focused on how the CPF could address these issues. Responses include:

- The BOS should create a sustainable agricultural plan for the entire property.
- The CPF should have a greenhouse powered with landfill methane for season extension. There should be a composting system or a partnership with the City of Iowa City’s compost facility.
- The CPF needs trails with interpretive signs.
- The county should pursue an inclusive, holistic approach to the CPF that includes doctors, developers, and real estate agents to create wholeness and wellness.

Attached: Copy of Community Visioning Worksheet

PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE: LOCAL FOODS AT THE COUNTY FARM

Saturday, February 7, 2015 ● 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. ● Montgomery Hall, Johnson County Fairgrounds

COMMUNITY VISIONING WORKSHEET

This worksheet should be used to assist you in the visioning process, which will take place following lunch. Feel free to take notes on the back of this worksheet throughout the day to aid you in the visioning process. Question 1 can be answered throughout the day, but please wait to answer question 2 until you are in your visioning group. Please follow the instructions provided below. At the end of the day, you are free to take this sheet with you OR leave it here for the Food Policy Council to use as a tool as we move forward.

1. Below, please provide the top five local food issues you believe exist in Johnson County. Be as detailed as you would like and be prepared to share your issues with your visioning group.

2. Now, looking back at the five issues above, how can your group's topic address those issues using the County Poor Farm? The space below can be used to develop ideas, strategies, etc. Afterwards, as a group, you will select the five most important ideas you came up with to report out to the larger audience.