

Community Action Plan for York, Nebraska

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

January 2021



For more information about Local Foods, Local Places visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places>

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COMMUNITY STORY

“Come Grow with Us!” is the welcoming heading on the homepage of the city of York Website and it actively encourages people and businesses to consider living and thriving in York, Nebraska.¹ Reflecting on that widely shared sentiment among York residents, the city’s Website goes on to describe York as an exceptionally attractive place to live and do business given its “excellent workforce, quality of life, and low cost of living.”²

Even the city gateway signs reinforce the welcoming heading as visitors enter York (**Figure 1**). The fact that the city and so many York residents define themselves in such a positive way, reflects the strong sense of community and high level of optimism that is deeply imbedded into the region’s culture. It has lent itself to York’s success in creating a wide variety of community amenities and assets typically associated with larger metropolitan areas. These include its array of health care facilities and technologies; educational institutions, including a four-year college; high quality parks and recreation facilities; proactive participation of many community and faith-based organizations; a diverse business mix in a growing economy; and sustained pride in its historical legacy as an important strategic crossroads of commerce and agriculture.

York seeks to focus on its community assets and maintaining and improving it as a place for people and families to grow. However, the community has come to recognize that one of its best selling and most enduring features is its set of people-centric values that make it a great place for people and families to live and grow. These are the trademark of what will sustain York in the future as businesses and people seek quality of life elements in deciding where to live and grow.

Community leaders still value York’s significant crossroads history and strategic location, and don’t intend to minimize its importance in York’s history. Though in the past, that status often dominated York’s own outreach and outwardly expressed self-identity. The perception of its crossroads status has evolved over time, though is still frequently referenced in its efforts to attract new businesses to York. Today, York values its crossroads and community values as integral parts of York’s DNA, and celebrates both.

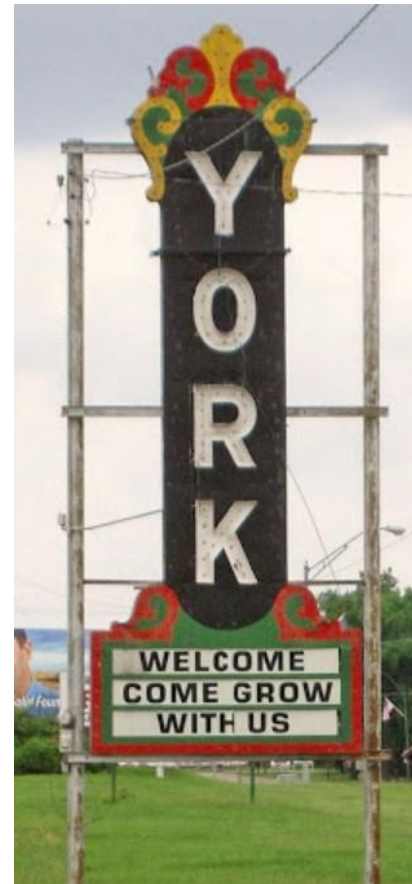


Figure 1 – York defines itself as a positive place to grow, whether as a right-size place to grow a family or a strategically located place to grow a business.

Photo Credit: D.J.Z.
<http://geographicallyyourswelcome.blogspot.com/2017/04/york-nebraska.html>

¹ City of York Website. <https://www.cityofyork.net/> Accessed Dec 12, 2020.

² Ibid.

York's crossroads history is important York's essence. Its geographic importance was born with the very first ripples of county's development, as highlighted by an infrequently visited Nebraska Historical Marker just west of York on state highway 93A. It marks the location of the Porcupine Ranch, the first of several road ranches in the 1860's, catering to early travelers and wagon freight train teams shipping supplies to miners and military posts out west.³ Travelers were following the Nebraska City – Ft. Kerney Cut-Off, an overland shortcut developed by the freight company Russell, Majors and Waddell as a strategic alternative to an existing primary western route that followed the ox-bow shaped meandering of the Platte River.⁴ The York area's first road ranch was strategically located. As a rest stop, it also provided a welcome mat to weary travelers, likely reinforcing early perceptions of the area as an appealing place to live and grow. People stopped and stayed, and soon some settled in the area. Succeeding stages of York's development built on its strategic geographic status. For example, Burlington & Missouri River Railroad's arrival helped to put York on the map as an important regional railway hub and crossroads.⁵ After the turn of the century, the earliest phases of U.S. highway development added pavement to York's crossroads status when old farm-to-market rural routes were transformed into the famed Meridian Highway 81, that passed straight through York.⁶ The Meridian Highway Association further fueled York's self-promotion as a strategic crossroads by highlighting the Meridean Highway as a strategic national and interational route, even lobbying to make it the official U.S. portion of the Pan American Highway, and referring to it as the "International Meridian Highway - Main Street of North America" On its letterhead.⁷ Later, the development of the intersecting U.S. Interstate 81, cemented York's strategic location and logistical crossroads importance. Businesses and the city's external marketing often highlighted the strategic value of York's crossroads location, and continues to highlight it today.

local businesses also capitalized on York's location as a key agricultural hub, strategically located in the center of the United States. For example York Cold Storage company, which recognized and celebrated York's as a strategic location. Opening in 1946, the facility coordinated with the chamber of commerce to promote York and its egg processing food preservation capabilities as being at the "Egg Center of the Nation" (Figure 2).⁸

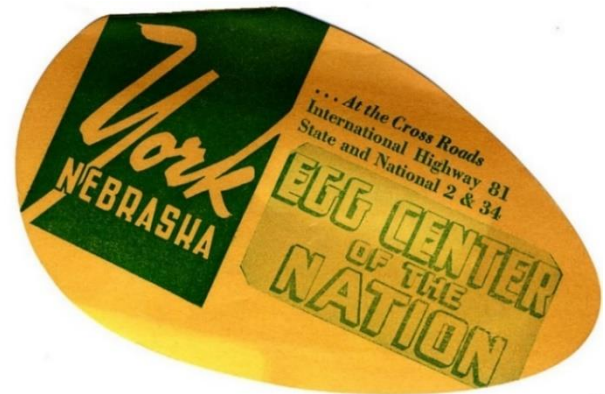


Figure 2 – Vintage York Chamber of Commerce promotional flyer marketing York as a strategic agricultural crossroads capable of processing and shipping eggs nationwide.
Photo source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/yorklib/3244556271/>

³ Nebraska Historical Marker: Porcupine Ranch and the "Nebraska City-Fort Kearney Cut-off" - marker's location [40.844740, -97.806825](https://www.flickr.com/photos/yorklib/3244556271/);

Marker Website: http://www.e-nebraskahistory.org/index.php?title=Nebraska_Historical_Marker:_Porcupine_Ranch

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Devco History of York – <https://www.yorkdevco.com/life/history>

⁶ Meridian Highway. Encyclopedia of the Great Plains. University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Website: <http://plainshumanities.unl.edu/encyclopedia/doc/egg.tra.020.xml>

⁷ P Nicholson, John Charles. President Meridian Highway Association. Letter dated March 7, 1928.

<https://www.kansasmemory.org/item/1659>. Accessed online via Kansas Memory, Kansas Historical Society on Oct 15, 2020.

⁸ Matt Spanjers, manager York Cold Storage. Business Spotlight – York Cold Storage. Lincoln Area Development Partnership. <http://www.lincolnpartners.org/business-center/the-right-resources/p/item/7601/business-spotlight-york-cold-storage>. Accessed on October 20, 2020.

Today, many agriculture sector companies continue to find strategic value in doing business in York. But, they also find value in York as a great place for employees to live and work. Central Valley Ag, Corteva Agriscience and Bayer Agri-Science, and along with several other agricultural-related companies make York home. Additionally, over 240 operating farms operate in York County, and commodity-oriented agriculture continues to be dominate in the the local economy.⁹

Besides agriculture, other business sectors also value York's strategic location and its quality of life. The city enjoys a healthy business occupancy, especially in the downtown central commercial district, as well as in the York Industrial Park.¹⁰ The presence of several major employers in York is at a level many other rural communities would envy. Some of the largest manufacturers employing York residents include Collins Aerospace, C-Tec Inc., CornerStone Building Brands, Klute Inc., and Cyclonaire.¹¹

Adding to the local mix are other employers offering services less typically found in many rural communities. For example, York General Health Care Services, which is York's largest employer, serves York and the surrounding rural region with a high level of care usually associated with facilities located in larger metropolitan areas.¹² In nearby Henderson, healthcare provider Henderson Healthcare offers many health and senior services to York County residents, and employs many people from York. Other important local employers include the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women; Nebraska State Government field offices; as well as energy companies such as Nebraska Public Power and Green Plains Energy, which specializes in bio-fuels.¹³

York also benefits from the presence of educational institutions such as the York School District and historic York College, a four-year college with nearly 400 undergraduate students living on campus. Their presence reinforces York as an educational center, which adds to York's appeal to many people who might want relocate to York and raise a family there.

Even with it's relatively healthy economy, strong businesses activity, and so many community assets, community leaders continue to seek new ways to build on York's successes, framing a community story that is focusing less on the crossroads history and more on York's most enduring characteristics as a great place with a supportive community culture that makes it such a positive place to live and grow. The community of just over 7,800 residents is actively taking steps to do a better job of telling that story, and exploring ways to ensure that its positive quality of life story applies more equitably to all of its residents.¹⁴

A starting point for improving the story for all York residents is found in York's 2018 draft comprehensive plan. The plan thinks broadly about how to improve quality of life in York, and also about the places that

⁹ USDA Census of Agriculture, 2012: York County https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Nebraska/cp31185.pdf. Accessed Oct 15, 2020.

¹⁰ City of York Website. <http://www.cityofyork.net/department/index.php?&structureid=76> Accessed October 3, 2020.

¹¹ York Development Corporation. Website: <https://www.yorkdevco.com/business/major-employers>

¹² York Development Corporation Website.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/city/York-Nebraska.html>. Based on 2017 Census data. Accessed September 3, 2020.

make York a great place. For example, the plan focuses on downtown revitalization as a major part of York’s economic development strategy, but that also pays special attention to downtown as a place designed for all residents that includes ceremonial gathering spaces, a pedestrian friendly transportation hub, and serves overall as the “civic soul” of the community.¹⁵ The plan spells out specific revitalization catalyst projects to:

- enhance downtown traffic flows that convey downtown as a destination;
- establish downtown as a neighborhood offering jobs, housing, culture and services; and
- continuously offer catalyst projects and improve the appearance and function of downtown while increasing self-sustaining private market investment.¹⁶

Some catalyst projects already have had a significant positive impact in downtown. For example, a recent Nebraska Department of Economic Development Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) award funded two downtown façade improvement programs.¹⁷ Such projects, as well as other efforts to improve streetscapes, promote walkability, manage vacant lots and abandoned storefronts can add to a more vibrant downtown experience and encourage increased foot traffic to downtown businesses. The community is paying special attention to downtown streetscapes and other infrastructure improvements as part of its efforts to make walking and biking more appealing as transit options that also encourage a more active lifestyle, contributing to residents’ improved health and quality of life.¹⁸

Additionally, The city has invested in programs and projects that promote more physical activity in a community setting. A good example is York’s investment in parks and recreation facilities, such as the York Ballpark Complex and the York Family Aquatic Center. Both are world-class public facilities that cater to families and all age groups.

Other ongoing community planning efforts are focusing on preserving and improving existing community assets that contribute to York’s overall quality of life, such the historic York Auditorium, and the York Children’s Museum, which is housed within the Auditorium.¹⁹ The Auditorium, which was built



Figure 3 –York Community Auditorium a downtown community asset housing the York Children’s Museum and host to many community events. Photo Credit: York News Times

¹⁵ York 2018 Comprehensive Plan (draft). p116
https://rdgusa.com/sites/planyork/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/05/2018_04-York-Draft-Plan_Web.pdf. Accessed Oct 15, 2020.

¹⁶ York 2018 Comprehensive Plan (draft). p116.

¹⁷ Nebraska Department of Economic Development Website. <https://opportunity.nebraska.gov/nebraska-department-of-economic-development-announces-community-development-block-grant-cdbg-recipients/>. Accessed Oct 16, 2020.

¹⁸ York Draft Comprehensive Plan, pp 86-88 and p 124.

¹⁹ For more information on the York Children’s Museum visit: <http://www.yorkareachildrensmuseum.org/>

in 1940 by Nebraska architects Harry Meginnis and Edward Schaumberg as a Work Progress Administration funded project, will benefit from recent city-approved funding to modernize its aging systems, increase accessibility and initiate a new era of use. **(Figure 3)**²⁰.

Even as York has made itself as a great place to live and grow, it does face challenges that can make it more challenging for some residents to realize York as such. For example, while not as widespread as other communities, York does contend with rural poverty concerns, with 9.7 percent of York County population living in poverty.²¹ For residents with limited economic means, it can be a daily challenges to provide for even their most basic food and shelter needs. A unique community-wide housing stock shortage complicates matters. York faces a limited supply of housing catering to middle or higher income tenants, and and the larger stock of rental housing available to lower income residents, may actually reflect that many of these units are substandard and cannot compete for the higher income tenants given units' average condition and lower quality.²² A recent housing study in York suggests that the community's housing market is undervalued, which can further drive down availability of descent quality rental units for those who can't afford home ownership, and it can stifle construction of new housing stock for those who can afford it.²³ York's high median income can also make it more difficult for those seeking housing assistance to qualify for it. In addressing housing stock needs, York's comprehensive plan's goal to make downtown a neighborhood and mixed-use commercial district may help provide new housing development opportunities that can improve access to affordable decent-quality housing options.

Likewise, low-income residents face challenges in putting food on the table, and those who struggle economically face challenges finding affordable fresh produce and other healthy foods on a regular basis, tending towards cheaper, less healthy processed food options. A poorer diet, combined with other social determinants of health degrade community-wide health outcomes, such as a higher diabetes prevalence and higher healthcare costs. In York this warrants additional attention, considering the county has a 37 percent obesity rate.²⁴

The community is making it a it a priority to improve local health outcomes and help all York residents. York County General Hospital, Four Corners Health Department, and others have completed local health assessments, planned for, and invested in programs to treat patients as well as share information on health issues like diabetes, encouraging people to take preventative healthcare measures to improve and

²⁰ David Murphy, Edward F. Zimmer, Lynn Meyer, Place Makers of Nebraska: the Architects [http://www.e-nebraskahistory.org/index.php?title=Meginnis %26 Schaumberg, Architects](http://www.e-nebraskahistory.org/index.php?title=Meginnis_%26_Schaumberg,_Architects) Accessed Oct 1, 2020; York City Council Approves Contract for Auditorium. KRVN.com: <https://krvn.com/regional-news/york-city-council-approves-contract-for-auditorium-and-community-center-project/> Accessed Oct 15, 2020.

²¹ 2020 Community Needs Assessment. P 59. BVCA Partnerhip. [http://bvca.net/How We Help/CommunityAssessments/2020%20CNA.pdf](http://bvca.net/How_We_Help/CommunityAssessments/2020%20CNA.pdf)

²² York Draft Compresnsive Plan p 109. https://rdgusa.com/sites/planYork/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2019/05/2018_04-York-Draft-Plan_Web.pdf Accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

²³ York County Housing Study. p12. https://www.yorkdevco.com/media/userfiles/subsite_28/files/rl/2016finalhousingstudy.pdf. Accessed Oct. 15, 2020.

²⁴ County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. 2020. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/nebraska/2020/rankings/york/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>. Accessed Oct. 25, 2020

maintain their health, including through healthier diets.²⁵ There is also an effort to encourage more healthy food options at the downtown York Farmers Market, as well as making it more accessible to all residents, including lower income residents.

In 2019, when a construction project began on the downtown courthouse building, the York Farmers Market, which was utilizing the courthouse greenspace, was forced to relocate temporarily to a different site. While inconvenient, the relocation served as an opportunity for the farmers market to explore its role in the community, as well as engage community partners to rethink its designated green space (**Figure 4**). New site enhancements could help the farmers market improve accessibility for all York residents. For example, it has considered ways it might improve accessibility onsite by adding improvements that meet Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements. Furthermore, if done right, onsite design improvements could support the York



Figure 4 – York, NE downtown Courthouse green space. Photo credit: Lisa Hurley

comprehensive plan goals to create a more walkable and bikeable downtown. From the vendor perspective, site redesign elements ideally would make the market more appealing with vendor-friendly improvements that make it easier to set up stands, unload produce, and increase booth visibility. Attracting more customers is key, and redesign could include a permanent space for live entertainment, public artwork, or other elements to add vibrancy to the market. Additionally, adding onsite technology to make it possible for vendors to accept electronic debit cards from residents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which would improve low-income residents' access to affordable healthy food options, and also help boost vendor sales.

An increase in downtown farmers market sales and greater interest in local foods could also have a positive spillover effect on downtown revitalization. When coupled with other efforts such as business incubation programs supporting local value-added food processing entrepreneurs. With enough food entrepreneurs potentially seeking access to a shared commercial kitchen, that could help reactivate a vacant space downtown, or help offset the costs of upgrades to an existing kitchen facility, such as the one in the York Auditorium.

Improvements to the farmers market and to the York's overall local food system can help jumpstart many placemaking goals for the downtown, improve local health metrics, keep more money in the local economy, and better serve those most in need within the community. Local Foods can have a positive impact on Local Places, and many different planning efforts and projects need to come together to ensure it does. They are all interconnected and The success or failure of any one of them impacts the others

²⁵ To learn more about Four Corners Health Department health programs visit: <https://fourcorners.ne.gov/>. An example on diabetes education from the York General Hospital wellness programs: <https://www.yorkgeneral.org/patienteducation/>

Fortunately, community leaders in York have made local food system development and improvements to the farmers market site a key part of York’s downtown revitalization efforts. With that in mind, Lisa Hurley, Director of the York County Development Corporation (DEVCO), applied to the Local Foods Local Places program in 2018, on behalf of the York County Development Corporation and several other York partners seeking to work together more closely to improve local health, rethink the farmers market site, support downtown revitalization, create local entrepreneurial job opportunities through a stronger local food system, and facilitate improved access to healthy local foods.

The Local Foods, Local Places program is designed to support to local community driven efforts like those of York, with a focus on creating:

- More economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses.
- Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- Revitalized downtowns, main streets, and neighborhoods.

The Local Foods, Local Places program is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) Agricultural Marketing Service. York was one of 16 communities across

the United States selected to participate in the program in 2020. After being selected, York formed a Local Foods, Local Places Steering Committee, which planned for the technical assistance. The committee is comprised of a wide variety of community partners (**Figure 5**). They were supported by a technical assistance team comprised of multiple federal and state agency partners, and other regional or financial organizations (**Figure 6**). The Steering Committee and technical assistance team together planned for a community workshop and led local outreach, emphasizing their desire for strong public participation in the workshop to seek residents’ input into draft Local Foods, Local Places Community Action Plan goals proposed by the steering committee. The goals, which are listed in Action Plan Section below, focus on the farmers market, access to healthy food, and improving health outcomes for all York residents.

York LFLP Steering Committee

- Lisa Hurley – Chair - York County Economic Development Corporation
- Hon. Barry Redfern – Mayor, city of York
- Cheree Folts – city of York Parks & Recreation
- Heather Hultgrien - York County Health Coalition and Southeast Community College York Regional Learning Center
- Jim Ulrich – York General
- Laura McDougal - Four Corners Health Department
- Chrystal Houston - Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District
- Hon. Ron Mogul – York City Council
- Stacie Turnbull – York College
- Chris Payne – York General
- Madonna Mogul –
- Marie Krausnick - Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District
- Chris Blanke – Four Corners Health Department

Figure 5 – York, Nebraska Local Foods, Local Places Steering Committee Members.

Public input is critical to forming goals that work best for the community. York’s civic-minded culture and strong public engagement helped the steering committee to improve on the draft goals and will help the community more fully realizing the potential benefits of its Local Foods, Local Places efforts.

Strong public engagement is nothing new in this region of Nebraska. More than 160 years ago, Nebraska City citizens participated in an 1860 “mass meeting” provided their input and endorsement on the push to develop the newly proposed Nebraska City - Fort Kearney cutoff.²⁶ In the next century, the York Progress Committee called a “mass meeting” in 1938 for for a community discussion on building the York Community Auditorium.²⁷ In this century, the Local Foods, Local Places public workshop benefited from a long tradition of civic engagement in York. It’s that tradition that helps make York such a great place to live and grow! . The remainder of this report and appendices document the engagement process, the workshop activities, and most importantly, the outcome: a community-driven action plan shaped by strong community engagement, to achieve York’s goals.

Technical Assistance Team

- **John Foster and Lauryn Coombs – Workshop co-facilitators** - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – HQ Office of Community Revitalization
- **Darlene Byrd** - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – HQ Office of Community Revitalization
- **Penny Herrell** – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7 Land, Chemical and Redevelopment Division
- **Sara Rakes** – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- **Ron Batcher** – U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Services.
- **Sasha Pokrovskaya** – U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Americo Vega-Labiosa** – U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Elizabeth Yearwood** – U.S. Small Business Administration Nebraska District Office
- **Brian Coyle** – Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
- **Sarah Smith** – Nebraska Department of Education
- **Liz Cody** – Southeast Nebraska Development District
- **Skylar Falter** – University of Nebraska Lincoln Buy Fresh Buy Local program
- **Tanya Crawford** – University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension , 4H and Youth Development Program

Figure 6 – Technical Assistance Team supporting the York Local Foods, Local Places Steering Committee

²⁶ Charles Boyd Mapes, The Nebraska City-Fort Kearny Cut-Off as a Factor In The Early Development of Nebraska and the West. University of Nebraska – Lincoln, 1931.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=historydiss> Accessed on Oct 2, 2020.

²⁷ Building the City Auditorium. Gene Fischer. January 2013 & Sept 7, 2019. YorkNewsTimes. https://yorknewstimes.com/news/local/building-the-city-auditorium/article_d1c0df48-d0ac-11e9-b92f-fbb0b8ccdd9a.html. Accessed Oct 5, 2020.

ENGAGEMENT

The technical assistance engagement process for Local Foods, Local Places typically has three phases, illustrated in **Figure 7** below. The plan phase consists of three preparation conference calls with the steering committee and technical assistance team to clarify goals and arrange workshop logistics: The convene phase includes the effort’s capstone event—a two-day facilitated workshop. The act phase includes three follow up conference calls to finalize a community action plan and strategize on how to maintain momentum generated during the workshop. The community workshop was held online over a three-day period from August 26-28, and the activities those days are described below. Prior to the COVID pandemic the workshops took place within the community. During the pandemic all workshops in 2020 were virtual, being hosted online. Workshop exercise results are summarized in **Appendix A**, workshop sign-in sheets are provided in **Appendix B**, a workshop photo album is provided in **Appendix C**, a data profile in **Appendix D**, funding resources in **Appendix E**, and general references in **Appendix F**.

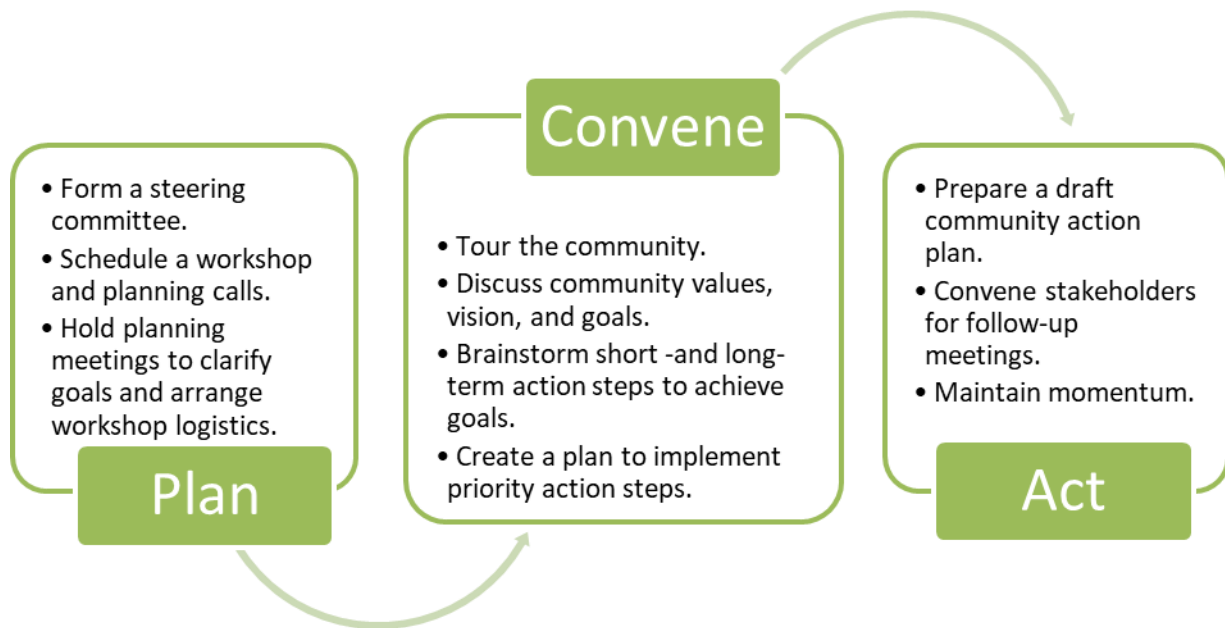


Figure 7 - Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance process diagram.

COMMUNITY TOUR

In a typical year, the Local Foods, Local Places local steering committee hosts a pre-workshop tour for local and visiting state and federal partners to gain a better sense of what is happening on the ground in the community and to meet with, and learn from business owners, community revitalization champions, and residents. The COVID-19 pandemic prompted a decision by the program sponsors to pivot to a virtual workshop format in 2020. That meant that the typical onsite tour took did not take place in person. Instead the facilitation team and steering committee worked to develop an online tour of York during the opening session of the Local Foods, Local Places workshop. The local steering committee chair, Lisa Hurley, led the virtual tour, taking workshop participants to different downtown and other key sites in York including local food system assets, economic revitalization projects and placemaking amenities. The tour was delivered via a powerpoint slides and included several interesting imbedded presentation videos²⁸.

The tour opened with an introduction on why the community applied to the Local Foods, Local Places program. Lisa emphasized the importance of Collaboration, Partnerships, Diversity, Growth. She also highlighted the potential for the Local Foods, Local Places planning process to:

- Create economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses;
- Talk about a shared kitchen space for the community;
- Diversify participation and diversify farmers market products;
- Source more food locally;
- Explore opportunities for indoor market and extend market season; and
- Improve communications and coordination.

After the introduction, the first stop on the virtual tour was downtown York. There, Lisa highlighted downtown assets such as the York Community Auditorium, downtown retail business district, memorial sites, and open spaces such as the existing downtown farmers market site that is being re-envisioned while it has been temporarily unavailable due to construction. She highlighted many activities that already take place downtown, such as the “Balloon Days” festival, which draws visitors state-wide, and the York Farmers Market, which temporarily relocated to the green space on the grounds of the Kilgore Memorial Library. The tour included a video interview with Sadie Wright of York Relay for Life who also coordinates the farmers market. In the video Sadie noted that in 2020 the farmers market averaged 18-20 vendors per week offering home goods baked goods, as well as in-season produce. The market as also included several food trucks.

Next on the tour, Lisa highlighted the role of York Public Schools in the local food scene. The school district has offered hands-on learning experience for students interested in animal science, horticulture,

²⁸ A copy of presentation slides is available at:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEFzzP3T2M/f8geNFvSi8J13juoR5Qznw/view?utm_content=DAEFzzP3T2M&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=homepage_design_menu. Accessed on Dec 12, 2020.

plant science, as well as crop science, pest management and precision farming.²⁹ Connecting with youth serves an important role in ensuring continuity of future generations interest in agricultural careers and also in revitalizing the local food system. Continuing in the education vein, Lisa next highlighted the importance of York College historically to the community, as well as its close work in supporting regional agriculture through its natural sciences program.³⁰

Lisa then took virtual participants to the eastern outskirts of the city to the York Ballpark Complex site. Just east of the complex sits an innovative project called Project GROW, which is a collaboration between the city of York and the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District (**Figure 8**). In 2008 city had purchased farmland to convert into a well field that supplies York residents with drinking water. In 2017 the Upper Big Blue Resource District approached the city with a project proposal that could improve soil conditions in order to improve natural filtration and enhance the water quality of the well field. The resulting Project GROW (Growing Rotational crops On Wellfield) on 160 acres of the well field introduced proven crop rotations, pollinator habitats, a berry orchard and community gardens to improve soil health and water quality.³¹ The project represents a innovative way to contribute directly to the local food system while improving water quality environmental metrics.



Figure 8 – sponsored by Upper Big Blue Resource District, Project Grow focuses on improving water quality for city well fields. Its community gardens can potentially fill supply gaps in a local farmers market offerings. Photo Credit: Lisa Hurley

Being a virtual tour, the group then easily sailed over the town to the southern-most tip of York near its iconic water tower and the modern-day highway crossroads location, which is the interection of U.S. Interstate 80 and Highway 81. The water tower, which colorfully celebrates York’s Balloon Days Festival, marks the primary gateway to York, and also the the I-80/Hwy 81 Business District. This corridor hosts a variety of retail and commercial enterprises that cater to both residents and out-of-town travelers. The city’s Holthus Convention Center is located in the corridor and hosts trade shows, Crossroads Junk and Vintage Market, weddings, and several seasonal events. The city is interested in improving walkeability and bikeability between downtown and the convention center and other parts of the 80/81 business corridor.

Jumping back to the North side of town, the city is heavily promoting its 34-acre industrial site on the North side. The tour highlighted the heavy commercial agricultural activity present in the industrial area, including the York Cold Storage facility.

²⁹ For detailed information on The York High school agricultural curriculum visit: https://yorkpublic.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Ag-Curriculum-Descriptions_03232011.pdf. Accessed Dec. 12, 2020.

³⁰ York College Natural Sciences program: <https://www.york.edu/natural-sciences.html>. Accessed Oct 25, 2020.

³¹ Project Grow. Upper Big Blue Resource District. <https://www.upperbigblue.org/programs/project-grow> accessed Oct. 25, 2020

The tour finished with “Welcome to York County Nebraska!”, a nicely-done video produced by the York Economic Development Corporation that highlights the many different assets York offers that make it an ideal place to do business, live, and grow!³²

VISION AND VALUES

As highlighted in the tour section above, the York Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance workshop pivoted to an all virtual format in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The meeting opened virtually, with some of the challenges of a virtual Learning curve. In Session 1 of the workshop, facilitators first had to overcome some technical glitches, but soon everyone was able to navigate between meeting rooms, became expert in using chat features, and occasionally would forget to unmute their computer microphones when talking! Once established, the facilitators welcomed everyone in the opening session! They then asked each person to introduce themselves and also share a favorite childhood memory of a local food. Introductions took some time, and maybe took even longer in a virtual setting, but the facilitators wished to activate peoples’ voices through the introductory exercise. Plus it helped to connect people with some positive food memory deep in their memories to help generate productive thinking as they envision the local food system in the future.

After introductions, Lisa Hurley, the primary point of contact from York, presented an overview of why York applied to the program, and what she hoped the community would get out of the technical assistance process. She led the virtual tour of York and spoke about the importance of the downtown farmers market, the opportunity to rethink the green space next to the Court House, the success of the temporary location at the library and of the community’s overall efforts to revitalize downtown and improve the availability of local healthy foods at the farmers market and throughout the community.

After she finished, the facilitation team then introduced participants to the Local Foods, Local Places program with a short presentation. The team highlighted the program’s elements and the benefits of a strong and inclusive local food system. They also shared examples of other communities pursuing food system and placemaking efforts similar to those in York.

York workshop participants were then presented with a straw set of four Local Foods, Local Places goals developed by the steering committee. The steering committee developed the straw goals to elicit feedback, but emphasized the importance of community feedback to ensure that the goals made sense from the community perspective. Input would help to modify the goals, or even replace them if needed. The final resulting goals are presented below in the Goal Summary section of the report.

After some discussion about the goals, York workshop participants participated in a brief “big-picture” visioning discussion and what kind of York they would hope to see in the future. Visioning the future

³² Welcome to York County! Video. York Economic Development Corporation. <https://www.placevr.net/portfolio/?listing=17&keyword=&featured=&cat=&sort=featured#modal-popup> Accessed Oct. 25, 2020

helps put the goals into context of a community-wide vision for York, and aligns the goals towards a mutually agreed upon point on the planning horizon where the community members would like to go.

BRAINSTORMING AND ACTION PRIORITIZATION

Sessions 3 and Session 4 of the workshop focused on brainstorming action ideas for how York could initiate short term and long term actions to achieve its action plan goals. The sessions followed on Session 2 in which the facilitation team presented case studies, sharing ideas, best practices and lessons learned from prior Local Foods, Local Places communities. The case studies were designed to to prime York workshop participants’ thinking ahead of the brainstorming exercise.

In Session 3, workshop participants separated into two breakout groups, each focusing on two of the four York Local Foods, Local Places community goals. Participants were asked to open an online shared Powerpoint document and find their name on a page similar to **Figure 9** below. The page listed the four goals on the right side to serve as a reference, and participants then brainstorm and fill out digital “sticky notes” with their ideas for each of the four goals. The facilitators would copy participants’ sticky notes into a summary page for each goal, grouping similar brainstorm actions together.

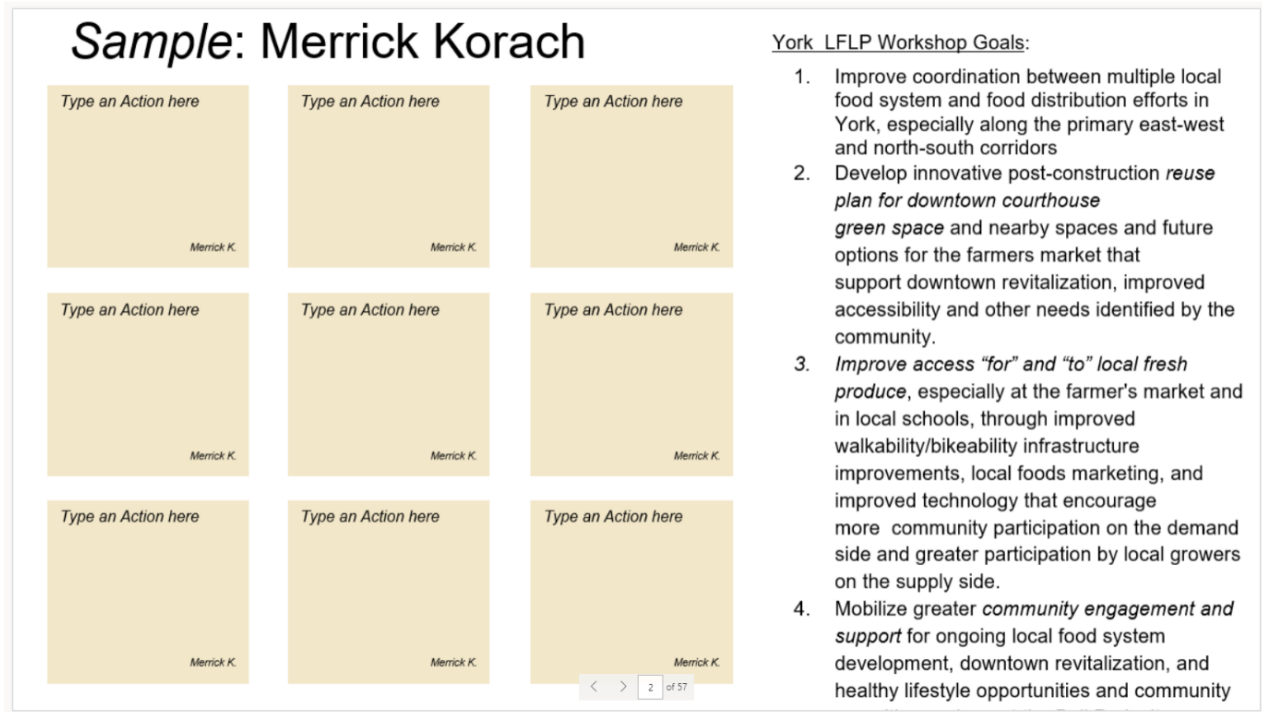


Figure 9. During the brainstorming session, workshop Participants used filled out digital “sticky notes” to generate ideas and actions supporting York LFLP goals.

After completing Session 3 participants took a break and regrouped later in Session 4 to prioritize the all of the brainstormed actions. The prioritization exercise helped participants determine which of the many actions to focus on first in order to make implementation of goals more manageable. The facilitation team accomplished this by asking workshop participants to take an online survey using the online survey platform SurveyMonkey (**Figure 10**)

Action Prioritization – Thumbs up!

4.
G1: Action Plan to reconvene in York every 60 days (potluck post-covid?) to share news and updates from stakeholders on this call.

one thumb two thumbs three thumbs four thumbs five thumbs six thumbs

Figure 10. Example Goal 1 question above shows how workshop participants prioritized brainstorming actions by rating between one to six “thumbs up!” for each action or clusters of similar actions grouped by facilitators.

Between sessions all brainstorm actions were loaded into the online survey, with similar or overlapping actions grouped for voting. Participants then rated each action or group of actions with a minimum vote of one “thumbs up” to a highest rating of six “thumbs up.” Figure xx shows a sample Goal 1 action receiving five “thumbs up.” The facilitators then generated a voting report listing the average rating for each questions based on participants scores (**Figure 11**). The full list of all brainstormed actions and their average ranking scores is listed in **Appendix A**.

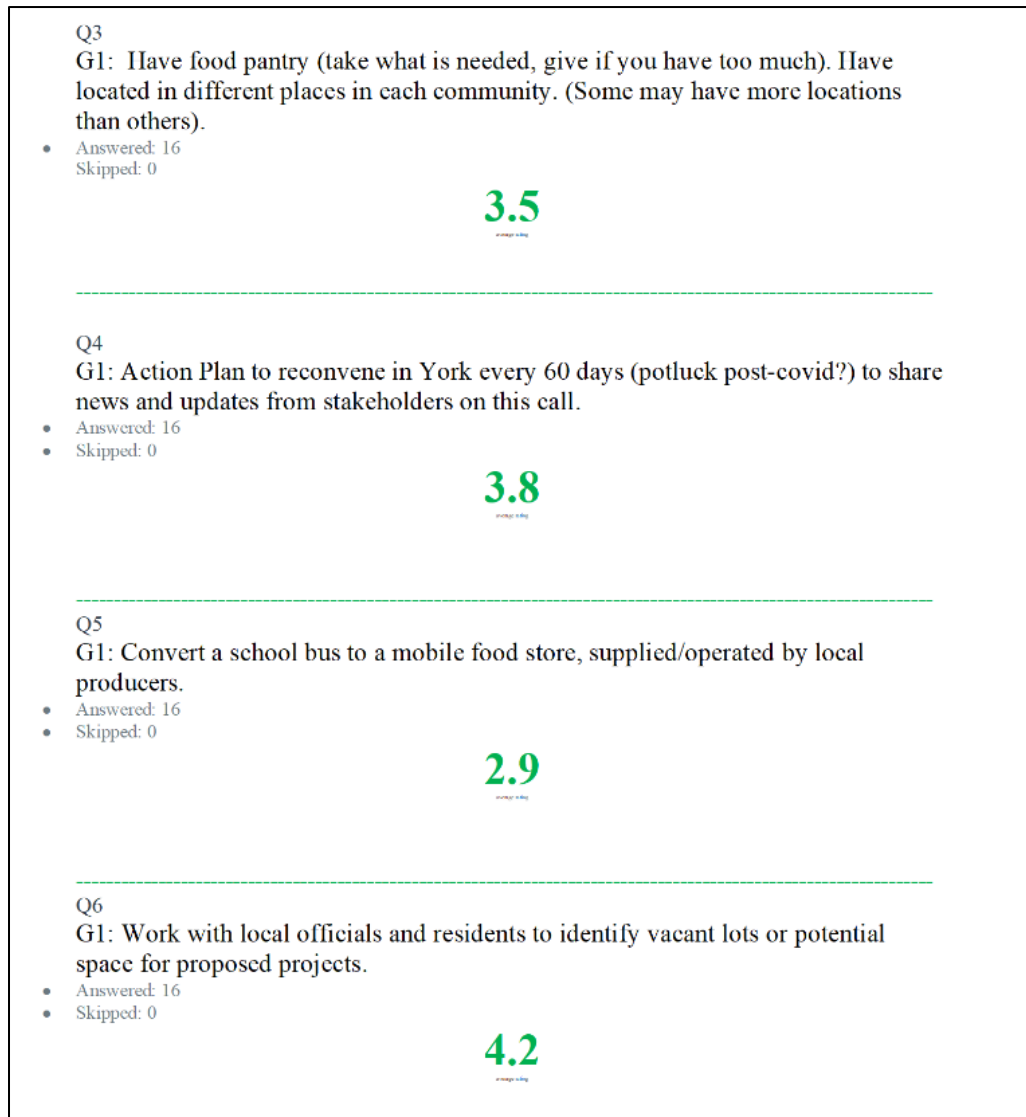


Figure 11 - Facilitators generated a report showing the average rating, between one to six, for each brainstorm action. Higher average ratings highlighted which actions participants favored focusing on first.

ASSET MAPPING

York Workshop attendees participated in a mapping exercise using the online crowd-sourcing mapping tool called Social PinPoint, which allowed them to collectively highlight York’s existing assets that can help advance the community’s placemaking and food system goals, as well as identify potential gaps. Participants hovered over one of the legend icons in the online tool and clicked and dragged it over the map to create a new map pinpoint and then type in information about it (**Figure 12**). Participants plotted and inventoried the following categories: favorite places the community wants to grow and support (blue); areas that feel need fixing or improvement (red); sites with potential for new opportunities (yellow); food system supply elements – where food (or seed) comes from (light green); food system access elements – where people get their food (dark green); and food system knowledge – where people can learn about growing, selling, preparing food, etc. (purple). Sites were added to a legend (**Figure 13**).

The Social Pinpoint online program does not number each pinpoint to match with a numbered legend, but does let users to click on individual pinpoints listed in the map to see a pop-up box displaying the site specific information participants added. Users can also scroll in or out on the map to see assets at the downtown, city-wide, and regional level. This is helpful since many local food system assets may be located outside of town. In some cases, the asset lists are small, suggesting either a limited number of those assets in York, or possibly a lack of community awareness about the existence or scope of existing assets. All three mapping levels are displayed in **Appendix A**. The URL link to the Social Pinpoint map for York is: <https://eprpc.mysocialpinpoint.com/lf1p-york#/>

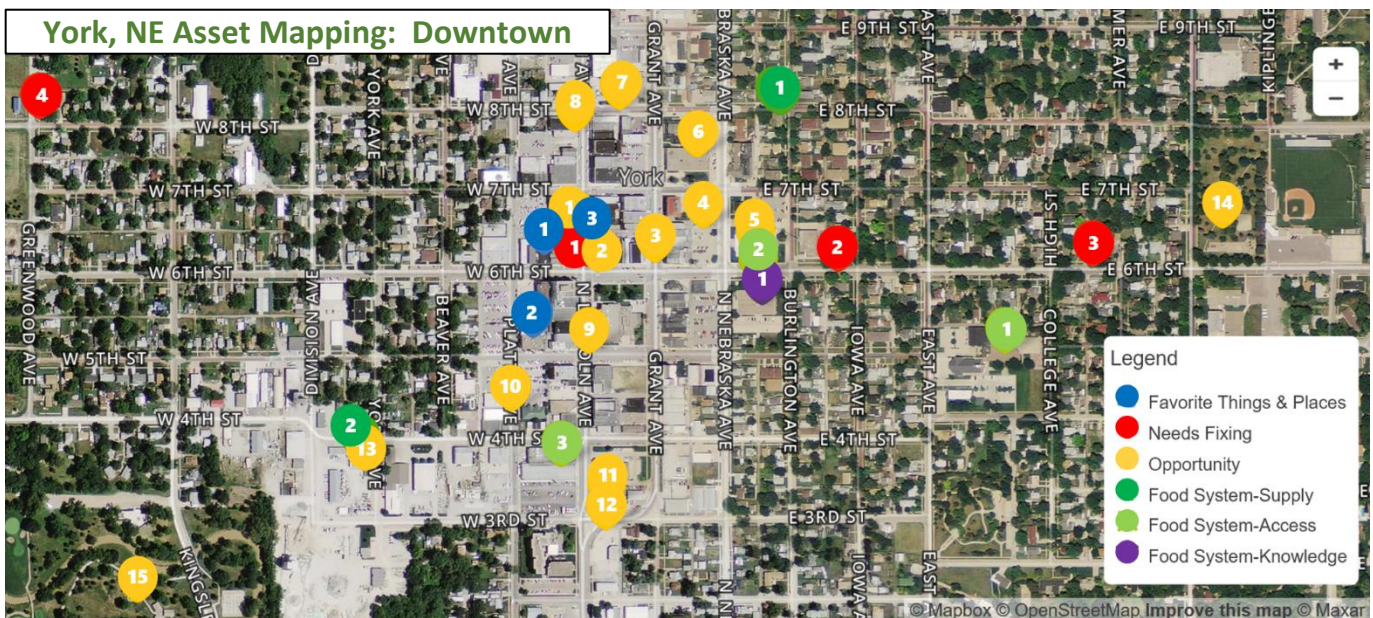


Figure 12– Asset Mapping of Downtown York, NE, created during Local Foods, Local Places Workshop held August 27, 2020.

Legend - York, NE Asset Mapping: Downtown

Opportunity

1. Peterson Petals has sold items such as pickles and Bloody Mary Mix. Potential resource for those looking to get items out into the market
2. Mr. Dukes Mercintile has been a store for local grown/processed food. Potential resource.
3. Opportunity for more greenery and friendly pedestrian access, including sidewalk repairs/renovations.
4. Downtown location for people to bring their farm fresh eggs, produce, meat etc. to be sold, like a consignment store (potential expanded use at Mr. Dukes)?
5. City-owned parking - could be used more for downtown events
6. Auditorium - being remodeled. Could close street to expand farmers market. Plus hold markets, educational, or other activities inside.
7. Community Center
8. Local Food Promotion Program for commercial kitchen
9. Ag producers interested in value added may apply to the Value Added Producer Grants.
10. Opportunity for outdoor dining in downtown?
11. Potential brewery
12. Could become more attractive [at E 3rd St. and N Lincoln Ave.]
13. A new locale type grocery store, like Fresh Thyme in Lincoln
14. Miller Seed & Supply has sold locally produced items, such as honey. Potential resource/partner for growers
15. Pavilion for vendors to sell at Farmers Market. Kids can play in the park, live music, and lots of shade!
16. Harrison Park is in a lower-income census track. Could potentially be a drop off spot? Or community garden

Favorite Places and Assets

1. Sip N Stroll
2. Chances 'R'
3. Community events happen primarily on Lincoln and adjacent streets - Courthouse was a central space before construction

Food system Supply

1. Local church community garden
2. Miller Seed & Supply

Food system Knowledge

1. The library holds various classes

Needs Fixing

1. ADA issues throughout downtown
2. Needs way-finding
3. Sidewalks east/west on 6th Street needs good sidewalks
4. Lack of pedestrian access for much of west York/walkability needs/lack of growing ability or community gardens.

Food system Access

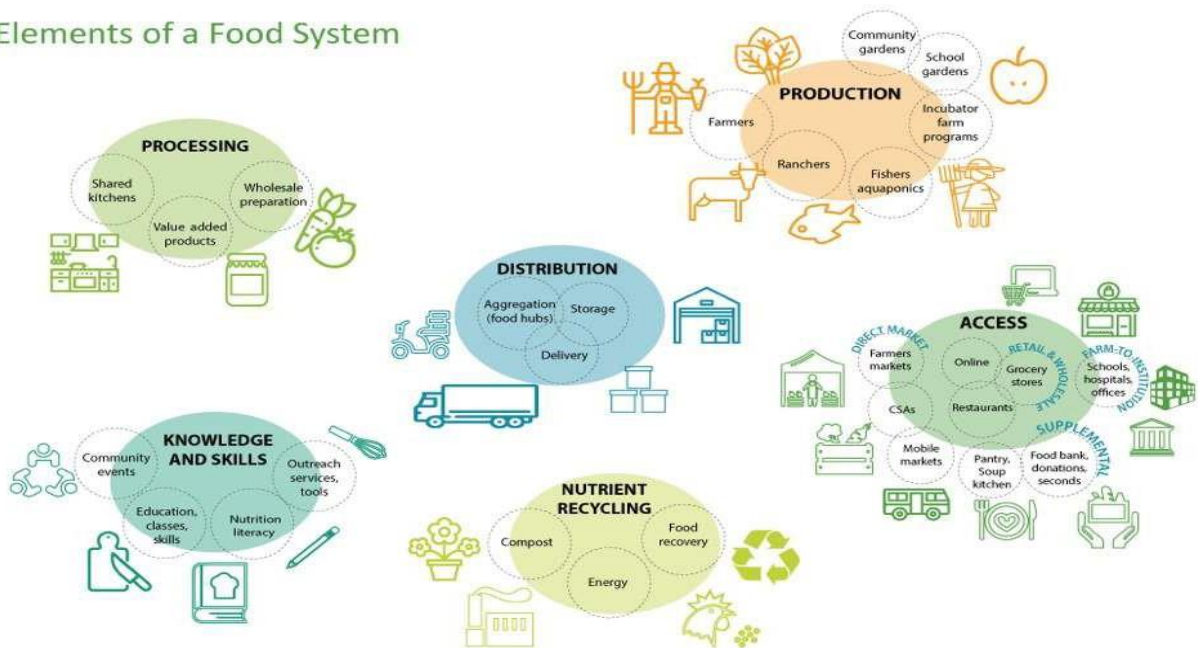
1. School food access
2. Current location of the York Farmers Market
3. Grand Central Foods Grocery store

Figure 13– Legend: Asset Map of Downtown York, NE, created during Local Foods, Local Places Workshop held August 27, 2020.

YORK FOOD SYSTEM DIAGRAM MAPPING

In a separate breakout group exercise, participants mapped local food system assets in York and the surrounding region using a Food System Diagram (**Figure 14**). The diagram is a conceptual map visualizing the local food system and its main components: Production, Processing, Distribution, Access, Knowledge and Skills, and Nutrient Cycling. Participants listed assets they could think of for each food system element, or missing assets they would like to see. The exercise highlighted which food system elements have more assets and which have less, and may uncover the extent to which local residents are aware of existing assets. For example, the sample asset list beneath the diagram shows a relatively short list of all of the York food processing assets identified by the break-out group. Fewer assets may represent an opportunity to build out additional assets in the future, or a need to better communicate about exist ones. After the exercise, participants reported out to the plenary room participants on what they listed. The complete list of assets for each of the food system elements are listed in **Appendix A**.

Elements of a Food System



Legend – Identified York Food System Assets: Processing

1. Dorothy Balaban – Jams Jellies York Henderson, Lincoln farmers market, licensed kitchen.
2. McClean Beef – raise process cattle [In 2021 opening processing facility for cattle and pigs], sell at York farmers market.
3. Meat processor – process wild game, cattle Henderson Meat Processors.
4. Lots of individual residents canning for their own purposes.
5. There is no commercial kitchen for shared space in York
6. Rented restaurant kitchen space in Henderson
7. York Church kitchens allow members to use kitchen space for personal use.

Figure 14 – Workshop participants used the Local Food System Diagram, which visually demonstrates the key components of the local food system, in a process mapping exercise to identify foody system assets and gaps in York. The legend below the diagram lists participants' mapping of food processing assets. The full list of York food system assets can be found in Appendix A.

GOALS & ACTION PLAN TABLE – YORK, NEBRASKA

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES

The group exercises and discussions during the York workshop were designed to facilitate the development of a Local Foods, Local Places action plan, which guides the local community in implementation of the vision and goals they have established. The action plan is organized around four goals that were identified by the Local Foods, Local Places steering committee, refined during the workshop, and finalized in follow-up conference calls. During the workshop, participants brainstormed possible actions to help achieve each goal, prioritized those actions, and then provided details on how to complete the highest-priority actions under each goal. The action plan outline below lists each goal and supporting actions. Following the outline, more detailed action tables clarify the purpose of each action, measures of success, timeline for completion, roles, and possible sources of support and funding.

YORK GOALS SUMMARY :

- **Goal 1 – *Improve coordination* among local food system vendors, growers, food distribution organizations, and buyers in York County.**
 - Action 1.1 – Research other food policy councils regionally and how they initiated the process to form their group.
 - Action 1.2 – Reach out to farmers market vendors, producers and growers about forming a committee (volunteers).
 - Action 1.3 – Develop a plan to build a partnership of current food suppliers to establish and maintain support for an indoor, year-round farmers market where community members can bring their food/garden produce, like a consignment store.

- **Goal 2 – Develop innovative *plan for old and current farmers market sites and nearby spaces* to incorporate into a downtown master plan that fully utilizes local food system development to advance downtown as a neighborhood, downtown revitalization, improved walkability and bikeability, and community character as identified in the York Comprehensive Plan.**
 - Action 2.1 – Research entertainment, speakers and other options to enhance vibrancy and customer appeal at future farmer’s markets. Determine related physical site lay-out needs.
 - Action 2.2 – Utilize Four Corners Health Department walkability grant to identify areas of pedestrian improvements including connecting to multiple modes transportation, and start making corrections.

- **Goal 3 – *Improve access “for” and “to” local fresh produce* at downtown farmer's market, in local schools and elsewhere through improved technology and other food system enhancements that**

fulfill untapped community demand, and improve reliability of local food supply through greater local grower and farmer participation.

- Action 3.1 – Research feasibility of implementing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program at the farmers market and determine implementation costs, steps and vendor interest.
 - Action 3.2 – Create farmers market survey for: 1) vendors; and 2) community members to understand barriers and incentives for attending the market.
 - Action 3.3 – Establishes “Producer/Business Spotlight” at farmers market.
- **Goal 4 – *Expand community engagement and marketing* to to mobilize greater support for local food system development, community gardens, town revitalization, and interest in healthy lifestyle opportunities and community amenities such as at the York Ballpark Complex.**
- Action 4.1 – Research market feasibility of Commercial Kitchen/Food Hub/Convenience store in remodeled Auditorium or other location.
 - Action 4.2 – Identify locations for additional community gardens and provide support.
 - Action 4.3 – Increase advertising/ of local food/local farmers/ markets using various marketing platforms.

YORK DETAILED ACTION TABLES

GOAL 1: *Improve coordination among local food system vendors, growers, food distribution organizations, and buyers in York County.*

The York Local Foods, Local Places workshop participants identified an important need to improve coordination amongst all stakeholders of York’s local food system, with immediate emphasis on those participating in a variety of independent food distribution efforts locally. There are many independent efforts active in York, but no mechanism or body in place to improve county-wide local food system efficiencies or to better identify gaps and systematically address them within the local food system. Workshop participants envisioned this goal to also benefit an array of local food system activities, as well as local projects addressing health, wellness, small business entrepreneurship, downtown revitalization programs efforts, and civic programs. Outreach to vendors, growers, and farmers is particularly important to sustaining farmers market sales and maintaining a consistent food supply to various distribution efforts. A key element of outreach is to make the business case for local growers and farmers to expand operations into non-commodity local food production, and assisting them in planning planting and harvesting so it matches with buyer demand and timing for purchasing local foods.

Action 1.1: Research other food policy councils regionally and how they initiated the process to form their group.

What this is and why it is important	Learn about best practices, what has worked well regionally. Also benefit from understanding lessons learned from others' experiences in order to improve our process.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document how other food groups formed and what worked well, focusing on their guidelines and how they formed. • Tailor best practices and lessons learned towards York's committee formation process.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research other efforts by regional committees within 3 months. • Hold meeting of lead and supporters on research steps.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional research – Lisa Hurley • Co-lead – Tanya Crawford
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Farmers of America (Heartland Chapter FFA, York FFA Chapter, Centennial FFA Chapter) • Blue Valley • York County Development Corporation • Margaret Miligan (UNL – buy fresh buy local program – farming and grant knowledge - passionate) • City officials/county officials – elected and staff level. • Angela Tonniges – producer • Chamber of Commerce • Aubrey Saltas • Sally Ruben – Chamber (Master Gardener) • Nicole Wetjen (potential lead for committee) • Birgie Scott Neiman (retired garden center owners) Master Gardener also • York College – Victoria Miller, YC student, provide research assistance • Liz Cody, Americor volunteer - & intern offered • Sadie - McClean, though considering harvest schedule. Need to follow up with Lisa.
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher's time - (York student: up to 5 hours a week available with some direction). • Time of those interviewed • Computer Access/Virtual meeting capability

Action 1.2: Reach out to farmers market vendors, producers and growers about forming a committee (volunteers).

What this is and why it is important	A food committee/food council's success depends in part on active participation of local farmers, growers and farmers market vendors. Getting them to participate depends on being organized and requires someone to initiate the outreach process.
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Action 1.2: Reach out to farmers market vendors, producers and growers about forming a committee (volunteers).

Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee created. • Committee decides governance and guidelines (e.g., defining the scope of local food, such as York-county-only produce or statewide produce). • A target level of buy-in from farmers market or local growers (e.g., 50 percent).
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Shoulder tapping” - make requests of volunteers within one month of workshop (i.e., by Nov 1). • Commitments to be on the council – January meeting to introduce how other communities are doing this. • During the winter months, initiate project for planning for next year. • Host a initial committee meeting by early January. Find out when growers/producers can meet and in support of a council.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debora Heskett will contact new farmers market manager to see if they would consider leading committee (Madonna’s replacement from Relay for Life). • Proposed committee chair.
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heartland FFA Chapter, York FFA Chapter, Centennial FFA Chapter • Master Gardeners • Angela & Sadie • Tanya Crawford, UNL-NE Extention • York County 4H Clubs • David Kretz, Aladdin Food Service
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants Time • Meeting Location or virtual meeting platform • Meeting organizer time

Action 1.3: Develop a plan to build a partnership of current food suppliers to establish and maintain support for an indoor, year-round farmers market where community members can bring their food/garden produce, like a consignment store.

What this is and why it is important	<p>Build a partnership of food suppliers and others that will lead to the establishment and maintenance of a year-round farmers market with more consistent offerings. Expand supply chain by supporting a larger network of individual backyard growers who can use a consignment model. More consistent produce and value-added healthy food offerings at the market can help boost customer interest and increase vendor sales revenue. A year-round presence will also offer spill-over benefits to nearby downtown merchants and downtown revitalization efforts.</p>
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Action 1.3: Develop a plan to build a partnership of current food suppliers to establish and maintain support for an indoor, year-round farmers market where community members can bring their food/garden produce, like a consignment store.

Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written partnership/year-round farmers market plan. • Establish and open permanent year-round market and services. • An established partnership with 50 percent participation of current farmers market vendors and a set target of consignment backyard growers participating.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnership plan within six months after initial food committee meeting.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadie Wright • Stacie Turnbull - York College • Tanya Crawford - NE-Extension York County • Committee (takes over lead role once established)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations and informal networks needed to reach backyard growers • Churches • School • Victoria Miller – York College • Center for Rural Affairs Birgie and Scott Neiman • Jenny Harrington-Newton • Angela • Master gardeners • David Kretz, Aladdin Food Service • Senior Center
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time for planning • Partnership commitments • Temporary winter market site • Permanent winter market site (building & supplies) • Possible permits • Operating budget & taxes

Full List of Goal 1 actions – The list below includes the full list of actions and ideas supporting Goal 1 that were generated by York LFLP workshop participants during the workshop’s action brainstorming exercise. The righthand column lists the average rating workshop participants voted for each action during the action prioritization exercise. Participants rated each brainstormed action with a “thumbs-up” score between one and six, with a minimum score of “one thumb up” (least favorite) up to “six thumbs up” (favorite). Facilitators clustered similar brainstormed actions for prioritization voting, so average scores for each action appear the same within a cluster. Clustered actions are highlighted blue. Actions that were selected by each workshop breakout group for the LFLP Action Table above may have been modified by the workshop from their original format in brainstorm list below.

Goal 1 Brainstormed Actions	Average Rating
• Create/find a list of local growers.	4.6
• Set up a website where producers can work together to promote, sell or distribute their goods.	4.6
• Connect growers with local businesses who are willing to sell product.	4.6
• Set up a meeting with local farmers, ranchers, schools, and grocery stores to identify resources available to use and when they are available.	4.6
• Gather producers, farmers and ranchers to discuss their distribution and access needs.	4.6
• Identify what the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Produce Safety Alliance will allow for any of these actions.	3.9
• Have food pantry (take what is needed, give if you have too much). Have located in different places in each community. (Some may have more locations than others).	3.5
• Action Plan to reconvene in York every 60 days (potluck post-covid?) to share news and updates from stakeholders on this call.	3.8
• Convert a school bus to a mobile food store, supplied/operated by local producers.	2.9
• Work with local officials and residents to identify vacant lots or potential space for proposed projects.	4.2
• Provide these services all year round not just in the summer.	4.8
• Have current food suppliers partner to open an indoor, year-round farmers market where community members can bring their food/garden produce, like a consignment store.	4.8
• Establish a committee to oversee and help organize the distribution efforts. G1: Clearly identify individual or committee to the lead project .	4.4
• Action Contact Lincoln and Omaha Food Policy Councils to discuss launching York County Food Policy Council.	4.4
• Identify if there is interest in a food policy/coordination group.	4.4
• Coordinate a group/person to serve as primary liaison between food system & distribution.	4.4
• YCHC, Blue Valley and Four Corners continue communication on when/where food distribution sites are available.	4.2
• Educate the public on how anyone can drop off fresh produce to the correctional facility.	4.2
• If we’re distributing food outside of York County, develop along highway systems.	3.4
• Analyze if another market is needed in the 80/81 area.	3.4

Goal 2: Develop innovative plan for old and current farmers market sites and nearby spaces to incorporate into a downtown master plan that fully utilizes local food system development to advance downtown as a neighborhood, downtown revitalization, improved walkability and bikeability, and community character as identified in the York Comprehensive Plan.

The participants of the Local Foods, Local Places workshop initially expressed interest in a post-construction reuse plan for the courthouse green space relevant to the farmers market, but during workshop discussions, there was strong support to consider permanently settling into the green space by the York Kilgore Memorial Library, being utilized temporarily during construction. The actions below reflect workshop discussion on how to improve community access to the farmers market regardless the location. For example, by implementing U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), could increase farmers market participation of residents in need. The discussion also focused on ways to to improve the farmers market regardless which location is ultimately selected. For example, making the event more appealing by adding or re-introducing live entertainment onsite. Final site selection may spur additional discussion on site-specific improvements and creative ideas for repurposing the courthouse green space if the farmers market does not return to that space permanently.

Action 2.1: Research entertainment, speakers and other options to enhance vibrancy and customer appeal at future farmer’s markets. Determine related physical site lay-out needs.

What this is and why it is important	Create a more vibrant scene at the farmer’s market with the intention of Increasing foot traffic to farmers market vendor stations. Options coule include lower-cost live music via school performers, non-music events, as well as hot foods or food-related demonstrations.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restart of entertainment. Farmer’s market entertainment schedule created.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of 2021 farmer’s market season.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sadie Wright
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Madonna Mogul York College arts Dance studios Singers & other talent Yorkshire Playhouse

Action 2.1: Research entertainment, speakers and other options to enhance vibrancy and customer appeal at future farmer’s markets. Determine related physical site lay-out needs.

Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone • Time • Possible dollar resources
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Action 2.2: Utilize Four Corners Health Department walkability grant to identify areas of pedestrian improvements including connecting to multiple modes transportation, and start making corrections.

What this is and why it is important	Expand bike path system to encourage more physical activity. Increase pedestrian access and ADA accessibility to interstate to promote wellness, pedestrian safety, and wayfinding
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attendance to downtown activities/farmers market. • Increase pedestrian safety. • Lower number of walkers on hightways.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment completed by 2021.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Blanke - Four Corners Health Dept committee (grant steering committee)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York County Transportation (Vans) • City of York, Public Works Department • York County
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Nebraska - Lincoln (Extension) • Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services • Nebraska Department of Transportation

Full List of Goal 2 actions – The list below includes the full list of actions and ideas supporting Goal 1 that were generated by York LFLP workshop participants during the workshop’s action brainstorming exercise. The righthand column lists the average rating workshop participants voted for each action during the action prioritization exercise. Participants rated each brainstormed action with a “thumbs-up” score between one and six, with a minimum score of “one thumb up” (least favorite) up to “six thumbs up” (favorite). Facilitators clustered similar brainstormed actions

for prioritization voting, so average scores for each action appear the same within a cluster. Clustered actions are highlighted blue. Actions that were selected by each workshop breakout group for the LFLP Action Table above may have been modified by the workshop from their original format in brainstorm list below.

Goal 2 Brainstormed Actions	Average Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify space to expand farmers market as it grows. Potentially closing 6th street and expanding across street towards auditorium. 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan to make DT roads two-way and not one-way. 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact city about expanding the market across to the auditorium via closing 6th St. 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Produce Safety Alliance will allow for any of these actions. 	3.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that YC college students are aware of opportunities, such as the farmers market. 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks ways to provide education or entertainment options within the farmers market to increase traffic. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement SNAP program at Farmers Market 	4.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access by securing approval to for York residents to use SNAP funding for market produce (not sure if this was discussed). 	4.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorm on how to reintegrate the courthouse square into downtown activities. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create re-plan for maximizing post-construction space with local event green space and a commercial kitchen incubator in nearby building. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more green space in the downtown area. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to utilize auditorium moving forward. Can we use it for market to extend market later in the year? Is that a need? 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide these services all year round not just in the summer. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand farmers market to all year. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how to expand farmer’s market opportunities to later in the year. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a downtown business association/group/committee that can communicate with the farmers market community. 	3.5

Goal 3: Improve access “for” and “to” local fresh produce at downtown farmer's market, in local schools and elsewhere through improved technology and other food system enhancements that fulfill untapped community demand, and improve reliability of local food supply through greater local grower and farmer participation.

Improving connections between local growers and food producers to the retail side of the food distribution equation can help make non-commodity local food sales more attractive to producers by helping them to plan their planting and harvesting to better match up with buyer demand and timing for purchasing local foods. Better communication amongst all players more equitably distributes risk among buyers and sellers. Marketing tools and events can reinforce positive connections and also serve to increase awareness about local food offerings.

Action 3.1: Research feasibility of implementing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program at the farmers market and determine implementation costs, steps and vendor interest.

What this is and why it is important	Foods that should be accessible to SNAP recipients should be able to access more local fresh and healthier foods options, more than just boxed prepared or frozen or junk foods. Access to healthier local foods is important to wellness, and money spent on food stays in town, benefiting the local economy.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend training and use it to identify the process for applying to and implementing SNAP in the farmers market, identifying steps for implementation. Findings shared with current farmers market managers and supporting cast who are key to implementation. SNAP benefits application process initiated.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2020 for training. October 2020 for reaching out to farmers market manager.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aubrey Saltus
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center for Rural affairs has SNAP training. Relay for Life contact Sadie Wright, Farmers market coordinator (looking into SNAP benefits) Margaret Milligan UNL Buy Fresh Buy Local
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Training Course

Action 3.2: Create farmers market survey for: 1) vendors; and 2) community members to understand barriers and incentives for attending the market.

What this is and why it is important	Through a survey or other onsite information gathering technics, research how reisdents spend more money at the market, what forms of socializing they like, and what else about the farmers market they enjoy. Also gain a better understanding on customer foot traffic to each vendor and which vendors are satisfied with their sales level and revenues at the market. A survey can also help determine ideal operating hours a closing hour (e.g., 5:00 -7:00 pm; sales slow down after 6:00 pm, etc.).
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten percent of famers market customers and vendors complete survey. • Longer term - attendance increase at market.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadie Wright (Relay for Life) plans to draft survey in 3 months.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadie Wright (Relay for Life)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Hurley (York Economic Development Corporation) • Madonna (Chamber of Commerce)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Marketing Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers Market Design/Layout (Sasha, USDA) • Farmers Market Promotion Program (Americo, USDA) • U.S. Department of Agriculture Covidhub response - tool to count attendees (university partnership)

Action 3.3: Establishes “Producer/Business Spotlight” at farmers market.

What this is and why it is important	A spotlight or other ways to highlight local foods at the farmers market, including through a culinary cook-off, social media challenge marketing, food demonstrations, food and cooking inrormation sharing, or food preparation and cooki8ng classes, help connect potential buyers with their local foods.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it implemented? Start of the spotlight.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2021 (Farmer Market) maybe earlier

Action 3.3: Establishes “Producer/Business Spotlight” at farmers market.

Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Turnbull (York College)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Hurley (York Economic Development Corporation) • Derek Dauel (York County Development Corporation) • Audrey (Henderson Market)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanya Crawford - (York Extension Office) • Spotlighters (growers, etc.) • York College Marketing class

Full List of Goal 3 actions – The list below includes the full list of actions and ideas supporting Goal 3 that were generated by York LFLP workshop participants during the workshop’s action brainstorming exercise. The righthand column lists the average rating workshop participants voted for each action during the action prioritization exercise. Participants rated each brainstormed action with a “thumbs-up” score between one and six, with a minimum score of “one thumb up” (least favorite) up to “six thumbs up” (favorite). Facilitators clustered similar brainstormed actions for prioritization voting, so average scores for each action appear the same within a cluster. Clustered actions are highlighted blue. Actions that were selected by each workshop breakout group for the LFLP Action Table above may have been modified by the workshop from their original format in brainstorm list below.

Goal 3 Brainstormed Actions	Average Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop moving the Farmer’s Market to the Fair Grounds during the fair. Know your audience. They aren’t there for fresh goods. 	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider moving farmer’s market from Thursday to Saturday. From our experience, sales during the week decline rapidly after school starts. This could allow more customers to come to the farmer’s market. 	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a farmers market that is just local farmers and their produce. 	3.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Produce Safety Alliance will allow for any of these actions. 	3.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine food needs for diverse populations. 	4.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a commercial kitchen for minimal processing run by a select group of trained individuals. This would relieve time constraints and provide conveniences for families, college students, and school cooks 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore feasibility of commercial kitchen. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to provide food growing opportunities at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women. 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a drop-off/pick-up location for abundant produce. 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When our community garden becomes open each spring, encourage those using to take advantage of farmers market as way to unload un-needed produce. 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at ways to make farmers market more student friendly - offering small packages of foods (whole cucumber vs. sliced cucumber). 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with college to create another way to get foods to or people to foods. Like an Uber concept for food. 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> York College Greenhouse in the Snow, to provide fresh food options for YC students during the summer. 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People donate extra garden produce to schools. 	4.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research the need for community gardens in all of our 17 County communities. 	4.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Garden in Henderson. 	4.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the after-school program. 	4.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have FFA groups teach younger kids about plants, how and where to grow them. Work with FCS class on how to prepare food grown. 	4.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local youth organization to grow and maintain a community garden. Promoting giving back to your community and utilizing unused spaces around the community. 	4.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask schools how they would like to be involved or are already involved in food production and education. 	4.9

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify master gardeners, beekeepers, and others with food production knowledge who would be willing to teach what they know in free community classes at the library. 	5.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a growers-resource organization that would allow for seed sharing, training, mentoring, etc. 	5.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach people how to use and cook with fresh and local products. Show them how easy it can be. 	5.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide classes and education on how to grow, preserve and prepare fresh produce. G3: Offer recipes at the Farmer's Market that people could make using food from local vendors. 	5.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve access for and to local fresh produce through marketing, communication efforts (i.e., newsletters, social media, backpack program, church bulletins). 	3.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide local fresh produce year-round with a greenhouse. 	4.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide these services all year round not just in the summer. 	4.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify areas with reduced access and survey those individuals as to the barriers they experience in access. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend fresh produce/meat vouchers, through the YCHC and/or other community partners, to low income families, along with info on utilizing SNAP at the farmer's market. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fresh produce delivery vehicle (collaborate with York Transportation Services?) w/ donations from food pantry to areas with less access. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial access is there through WIC, SNAP, and SFN but a dependable work force isn't. Stress the importance of local food, farmers, and the rewarding aspects of raising food. 	4.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for grants to create and expanded the bike path system, especially out towards the interstate. This would include pedestrian access between interstate businesses. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send out request to local, state and federal partners to ask to be alerted to funding opportunities to create bike/walking trail to remove hazard of travel on busy roadway. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize Four Corners Health Dept. walkability grant to identify areas of improvement and start making corrections. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create walking and biking trails from downtown to the ballpark. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on creating wayfinding signage to direct walkers, bikers and cars to various sites. 	4.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit downtown revitalization plan to convert to one-way streets to two-way streets to improve walkability. "Greening" plan could help provide shade for market vendor 	4.5

Goal 4: *Expand community engagement and marketing* to mobilize greater support for local food system development, community gardens, town revitalization, and interest in healthy lifestyle opportunities and community amenities such as at the York Ballpark Complex.

Greater community engagement, support, and active participation are key elements for any local food system to succeed. Workshop participants quickly recognized the need for greater community engagement in York, and more thinking on how to engage residents of all demographic backgrounds so to inspired them to actively contribute to, and benefit from in local food system efforts. York is not unique in addressing community engagement, but may have some interesting ideas to spur involvement that other communities can learn from.

Action 4.1: Research market feasibility of Commercial Kitchen/Food Hub/Convenience store in remodeled Auditorium or other location.

What this is and why it is important	These food assets can strengthen several facets of the local food system and serve small businesses seeking to get licenses to sell value added food products. It also reinforces the investment in remodeling the Auditorium, reducing vacant downtime related to the investment made in the building structure.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document or email with feasibility findings. • Decision by steering committee on whether commercial kitchen is needed or not.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Turnbull (York College) • Dave Kretz (Aladdin Food Service)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisa Hurley (York County Development Corporation)
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Marketing Service -(Sasha) - Free Market Design Assistance • Grant Funding (U.S. Department of Agriculture & COVID programs) • Local Food Production Program (U.S. Department of Agriculture- Sasha) • U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agriculture Marketing Service Value Added Producer Grant • U.S. Economic Development Administration (grants) • Center for Rural Affairs

Action 4.2: Identify locations for additional community gardens and provide support.

What this is and why it is important	Some areas are underserved and lack stable access to produce. Community gardens can help fill gaps in local food supply chains.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many people utilize the community garden. • Having access to a community garden available to more of the County.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 months
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanya Crawford (Extension Office) • Chystal Houston (Natural Resource District)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master Gardeners • York Gardening Club
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City/County support to for community garden • Giving grow (organization that trains growers) • Local churches (e.g., 1st Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran)

Action 4.3: Increase advertising/ of local food/local farmers/ markets using various marketing platforms.

What this is and why it is important	Utilize various local, and sometimes free platforms to get the word out about the farmers market, vendors, and local food system opportunities using several communications formats (e.g., radio, twitter, FaceBook, Instagram). Increased marketing and public education can help increase consumer foot traffic and drive an increase in grower and vendor sales.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased market attendance . • Page traffic/engagement.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March 2021
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stacie Turnbull, York College • Nick DiToro, York College Marketing class, York College PBL

Action 4.3: Increase advertising/ of local food/local farmers/ markets using various marketing platforms.

Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCC (Southeast Regional Center marketing classes) • Derek Dauel(York County Development Corporation) • York County Development Corporation • Henderson Chamber • York Chamber • Nebraska Extension (University of NE) Office • Farmers market vendors • York, Heartland , Centennial FBLA Chapters
Needed resources and possible sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • York Chamber (Small Buisness week) • York County Development Corporation sharing social medai

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Goal 4 Brainstormed Actions	Average Rating
• Provide educational resources and or classes on how to grow and or market locally grown food products.	4.0
• Continued education on the benefits of fresh/local food.	4.0
• Provide increase marketing, sharing the reasons why buying local is important.	4.0
• Promote activities on Twitter.	4.0
• Use free advertising platforms like Facebook to promote the local farmers and the markets. Use the radio!	4.0
• Schedule open meeting to report to community LFLP process and report out. Seek community input on next steps. Post invite around town and on Facebook.	4.0
• Create a fresh food market at the high school. Kids could grow food at home gardens/greenhouse and sell to other kids/community.	3.3
• Have a location for where people can do outdoor exercise as a small group (i.e., yoga).	3.2
• Survey growers at farmer’s markets to see if they are interested in expansion and what resources they need to expand.	4.5
• Survey community: would a community commercial kitchen get used enough to make it financial feasible? Is there a need for this resource?	4.5

• Offer cooking classes for healthy meals	4.1
• Create a community garden area on the west side of York.	4.2
• Research the need for community gardens in all of our 17 County communities.	4.2
• Create community gardens.	4.2
• Create a community garden in Henderson.G4: Community Garden in Henderson.	4.2
• Add signage at ballpark and pool to let people know about the nearby community garden plots and how they can get involved.	3.3
• Having people mentor others on planting, growing, harvesting, canning (Passing on knowledge).	4.7
• Assist producers/growers who want to diversify and grow.	4.7
• Create a farmers market as a destination to not just provide food, but also provide entertainment and socialization for the community. Have music, food contests and festivals. Promote on FB, local paper and with flyers. Would there be chamber support? How about Nebraska Tourism?	4.3
• Provide these services all year round not just in the summer.	4.0
• Identify what the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Produce Safety Alliance will allow for any of these actions	4.1
• Research downtown locations where a community kitchen could help with revitalization as well as offer additional local food production.	4.0
• Analyze if there is a need for distribution on the west (north) side of the City of York, or other communities in the County.	4.0
• Create a downtown business association/group/committee that can communicate with the farmers market community.	3.8

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

In the first months after the workshop, work was already underway in York to begin implementation of the action plan.

- The steering committee finalized a group of goals after the workshop
- The steering committee was already reaching out to growers and vendors to participate in a body to explore a more coordinated approach.
- York College initiated work of a local food system assessment and survey.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Workshop Exercise Results
- Appendix B – Workshop Sign-in Sheets
- Appendix C – Workshop Photo Album
- Appendix D – Community Data Profile
- Appendix E – Funding Resources
- Appendix F – Reference