



Access to Healthy Food in Washoe County

A FRAMEWORK FOR FOOD SYSTEM DESIGN

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Purpose for Developing a Framework

Indicators of community health such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and other chronic conditions are strongly correlated with nutrition. A comprehensive approach to improving nutrition in a community must include individual behavior change elements such as education, but it must also include improvements in the food environment, or what is commonly called the “food system.” This ensures that individuals have access to the foods they need to eat healthfully. A “food system” includes all of the entities and processes used in feeding a community, from production to distribution to consumption. A *healthy* food system would result in all residents in a community having access to affordable and quality healthful food.

In 2010, Washoe County policies and plans were assessed for how they address indicators of community health. The assessment revealed many policies that are supportive of good health such as physical activity and avoiding tobacco; however, across all sites, sectors, and community-wide, Washoe County lacked policies that promote healthy nutrition and access to healthy foods, and no policies outlined a healthy food system for Washoe County.

The purpose of this document is to fill this gap in community policies. It is intended to serve as a guide for creating a healthy food system in Washoe County and as a framework for community planning, sector-specific policy change, and decision-making. It describes the local influences on food in Washoe County, defines the components of our local food system, and establishes “big picture” goals for what access to healthy food in Washoe County would look like. Our goal is to ensure access to healthy food in Washoe County through policy, system, and environment improvements, and, as a result, inspire healthier nutrition, healthy weight, and, ultimately, improved community health overall. This document is intended to be a “living” document, not a static plan, but one that may adapt to meet future needs in our community.

Principles for Framework Development

This document was developed using the following principles:

- ▶ An awareness of the association between food, health, and the local economy.
- ▶ Recognition of the continuum of food access as well as the diversity inherent in each component of the food system itself.
- ▶ Recognition of the rich cultural context of our community.
- ▶ Recognition of the economic disparities that exist among members of our community.
- ▶ Utilization of the scientific evidence on effective food system design and recognition that future data collection and monitoring will be integral to success.
- ▶ Priority placed on strategies that produce long-term improvements to how residents access healthy food.
- ▶ “Out of the box” thinking on how to address obstacles to healthy food in our community with the intention of inspiring entrepreneurs and other community members to become involved in strategies for change.

Key Definitions

- ▶ **Food System:** A food system includes all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding the community: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, and consumption of food and food-related items. A food system operates within and is influenced by social, political, economic and environmental contexts.
- ▶ **Healthy food:** Food that can provide an individual with a balanced diet and includes mainly whole and minimally processed fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, eggs, dairy, meats, fish, and poultry.
- ▶ **Local Food:** The locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product.
- ▶ **Sustainable:** Something that can endure or is able to be maintained for long periods of time.

Determinants of Access to Healthy Food in Washoe County

There are numerous factors that influence access to healthy foods in Washoe County. All numbers listed below include the most recent data available.

- ▶ **Community Gardens** There are six documented community gardens and 14 school gardens in Washoe County. Of the six community gardens, only one has a formal plot rental scheme.



- ▶ **Community and Land Use Planning** In Washoe County community and land use planning is the responsibility of Washoe County, the City of Reno, the City of Sparks, and the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Agency. While the current regional plan addresses health as it relates to topics such as clean air, no portion focuses on food or food issues.



- ▶ **Consumers** Just over 24% of Washoe County adults report consuming fruits and vegetables 5 or more times a day. In addition 39.6% of Washoe County adults are considered overweight and an additional 20.3% are considered obese. In 2007 one in ten high school students reported not eating one fruit in the past 7 days and Less than a third ate fruit on a daily basis and 34.2% of Washoe County youth were considered overweight or obese in 2009.



Food Assistance



- ▶ **The Food Bank of Northern Nevada** serves Washoe County residents through partner agencies and six direct-service programs and served 153,612 in Fiscal Year 2010. Children (birth to age 18) currently constitute 46% of recipients. Additional food assistance is provided by eight other local agencies, such as Salvation Army (two Reno sites), Catholic Community Services, Nevada Urban Indians St., Vincent's Dining Room, Reno/Sparks Gospel Mission, Reno-Sparks Indian Colony and Washoe County Senior Services.
- ▶ **Government Food Programs** such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly the Food Stamp Program). Although SNAP enrollment in Nevada increased 192% from 2008 to 2010, Nevada remains among the bottom 10 states in serving the percent of the population eligible for the program. SNAP enrollment among eligible children in Nevada (54%) is lower than the national average 61.9%.
- ▶ **Meals on Wheels** provides home delivery of 122,000 meals each year to homebound elderly. Recent increases in costs now limit delivery of meals for the week from daily to once a week in Washoe County and limit the ability to increase the number of meals served.

- ▶ **Food at Home** Annual per capita purchase data showed that Nevadans consume 58 gallons of soft drinks (10th least among all states) and 114 pounds of sweet snacks (19th least), a three pound increase from 2006. Other 2006 data showed annual per capita fruit and vegetable purchases equaled 175 pounds (which translates to less than eight ounces or one cup a day) while prepared foods totaled 283 pounds.



- ▶ **Food Deserts** In 2008, there were 64 grocery stores, 136 convenience stores, and 1 food cooperatives in Washoe County. Only 29% of Washoe County zip codes had a “healthy food outlet,” defined as a grocery store, produce stand, or Farmers’ Market compared to the federal recommendation of 50%.



- ▶ **Food Insecurity** In 2010, food insecurity in Nevada children under 18 years of age was assessed at over 20% . The number of hungry children in northern Nevada tripled over the last four years, with almost 50,000 children needing emergency food assistance during the past year . Food insecurity is defined as the lack of nutritionally adequate, safe, and culturally acceptable food, available through non-emergency sources at all times.



- ▶ **Local Food Producers** Farmers Markets are now held at nine sites in the Reno/Sparks area. There are six separate Community Supported Agriculture providers defined as locally grown or raised food provided by advance subscription. There are 115 local growers supplying the Washoe County area. There are currently no local *Farm to School* Programs.



- ▶ **Restaurants** There were 336 full-service restaurants in Washoe County in 2008 and expenditure per capita in 2007 was \$1,205. There were 297 fast-food restaurants in 2008 and based on 2007 figures, Nevada spends the most per capita on fast food -- nearly \$940 per person per year. This was roughly 25% more than Texas, the second highest state.
- ▶ **Schools** For School Year 2010-2011, over 40% of Washoe County School District (WCSD) students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, compared with 46% of total students statewide and 65% nationally. WCSD also adopted a Wellness Policy in 2006 that provides guidelines on what foods and beverages can be sold or served during the school day, setting limits on sugar, fat, and sodium content. Compliance with the guidelines may be variable.
- ▶ **Transportation Issues** In 2007, Nevada ranked in the bottom 10 for households with no cars, low-income, which is defined as people with income less than 200% of the federal poverty thresholds, and proximity to grocery stores.



The Washoe County Food System



Goals for a Healthier Food System in Washoe County

Community Food Planning

- ▶ Establish regional planning priorities that support sustainable access to healthy foods for all Washoe County residents.

Food Production

- ▶ Increase access by Washoe County residents and groups to community land for the purpose of local food production (e.g., community gardens, community farmland, etc.).
- ▶ Encourage and support both urban and rural local food producers.

Food Distribution

- ▶ Remove barriers to offering locally grown and produced foods in pre-schools, schools, after-school programs, senior food programs, and other public settings.
- ▶ Increase the availability of locally grown and produced foods in supermarkets, restaurants, and other places where food is purchased.
- ▶ Promote food and beverage placement, space allocation, and pricing strategies that encourage healthy food choices.

Food Preparation

- ▶ Increase the use of healthy food preparation techniques in pre-schools, schools, after-school programs, senior food programs, and other public sector settings.
- ▶ Encourage healthy food preparation techniques within the private sector.

Consumers

- ▶ Change community norms regarding food choice-making from point-of-purchase to home preparation. This includes community education and policy change.

Public Food Programs

- ▶ Remove barriers to enrollment in public food programs in Washoe County.
- ▶ Establish minimum nutritional standards, including access to fresh fruits and vegetables, in public food programs.

Food and Nutrition Data Systems and Monitoring

- ▶ Establish a baseline food access assessment for Washoe County and develop goals for measuring food access improvements.
- ▶ Establish a permanent oversight body charged with monitoring healthy food access issues in Washoe County.

Applications for Access to Healthy Food in Washoe County

This document is intended to:

- ▶ Provide a vision for sustainable access to healthy food in our community.
- ▶ Guide policy changes in all sections of the food system that will improve access to healthy food.
- ▶ Educate those with limited experience with food systems.
- ▶ Raise awareness among all local policy makers that their decisions will have an impact on access to healthy foods.
- ▶ Provide the foundation and justification for funding to improve access to healthy food.
- ▶ Provide a foundation for additional research and will lead to the development of further action plans.
- ▶ Increase the coordination between food system sectors and provide opportunities for the creation of new collaboratives.
- ▶ Provide direction and serve as a model for other communities.

Development Process for Access to Healthy Food in Washoe County

The development of this document began in February 2010 when Washoe County received the national designation as an ACHIEVE community, which stands for Action Community for Health, Innovation, and Environmental Change. ACHIEVE is a collaboration between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and five national organizations to recognize local communities for their potential to improve nutrition, physical activity, tobacco avoidance, and other policies that prevent chronic disease. As part of the ACHIEVE process, a leadership team of influential community members and policy-makers in Washoe County was assembled to provide expertise to the project, and an assessment of current policies and plans related to chronic disease was conducted. The outcome of this process was a Community Action Plan that outlines the policy changes that need to be made to prevent chronic disease and improve the health of our community. It was determined that one of the first steps to improving nutrition in Washoe County was the development of a Healthy Food Plan.

To accomplish this, the ACHIEVE “Healthy Food Plan Workgroup” was formed, consisting of community leaders and other individuals and organizations involved in local food planning in Washoe County. The workgroup process began with a review of sample food plans, systems, and models from other cities and states, including other ACHIEVE communities. The workgroup then mapped the current food system in Washoe County, drafted “big picture” goals for improving each food system component, and collectively finalized this document. As needed, other voices in local food system design were contacted to provide subject matter expertise. Finally, the public was asked to provide input on the document.

Partners

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Join Together Northern Nevada	Washoe County Chronic Disease Coalition
KNPB Channel 5 Public Broadcasting	Washoe County School District
Local Food Network	Western Nevada College Specialty Crop Institute
Nevada Health Care Coalition	- Washoe County
Slow Food Reno	- Community Development
Transition Reno	- Library System
Truckee Meadows Tomorrow	- Public Works
University of Nevada, Reno,	- Regional Parks and Open Space
- School of Community Health Sciences	- Senior Services
- College of Agriculture, Biology and Natural Resources	
- College of Cooperative Extension	

Snapshot 2010 County Health Rankings "Access to Healthy Food"
2010 Food Atlas,
Feeding America Report 2010
2010 Hunger in America Study
NV Department of Education
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