Draft for City Council Consideration:

This plan has not been adopted by the Flagstaff City Council.

FOOD ACTION PLAN:

A FRAMEWORK FOR FLAGSTAFF'S FOOD SYSTEM

2026



PREPARED BY:

CITY OF FLAGSTAFF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments 3

Executive Summary 5

ABOUT THE PLAN

What is the food system? 7

How was this plan created? 8

How to read this plan 10

GOALS AND ACTIONS

Goal 1: Food Access 12

Goal 2: Economy 16

Goal 3: Resilience 20

Goal 4: Network Building 23

Next Steps 26

Glossary 28

Sources 30





CITY OF FLAGSTAFF LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Flagstaff humbly acknowledges the ancestral homelands of this area's Indigenous nations and original stewards. These lands, still inhabited by Native descendants, border mountains sacred to Indigenous peoples. We honor them, their legacies, their traditions, and their continued contributions. We celebrate their past, present, and future generations, who will forever know this place as home.*

*The City's land acknowledgement was created in partnership with the Indigenous Commission and the Flagstaff City Council. Adopted by Council in 2021, it recognizes the deep Indigenous history of this region and affirms the City's commitment to ongoing respect and collaboration.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE PARTICIPANTS

The creation of this plan was driven by the energy and insight of residents, growers and community partners. We are grateful for the time and knowledge shared through the community-wide survey, in-person forums, and policy workshops. Deep appreciation goes to the steering committee for their ongoing commitment—meeting throughout the project to refine the actions, ask thoughtful questions, and help shape the plan that follows.

Special thanks to the many local food system leaders who have been doing this work for years and helped shape the actions in this plan. Representatives participating in the policy workshops included but not limited to Coconino County, Flagstaff CSA, Flagstaff Family Food Center, Flagstaff Foodlink, Flagstaff Shelter Services, Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD), Lily of the Field Nursery, Northern Arizona Housing Solutions, Pinnacle Prevention, Rose Bird Gardens, Ruby Earth Gardens, Steady Harvest, Superyard Farms, Three Sisters Bean Farm, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, and Flagstaff residents.









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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food Action Plan: A Framework for Flagstaff's Food System outlines a shared vision for a healthier, more resilient food system for our community.

The plan identifies shared goals, objectives, and supporting actions that could be taken to strengthen food access; support local farmers, ranchers, and food businesses; increase the ability to adapt and thrive amid changing climate conditions; and build stronger networks across the community. In a time of unknowns, this plan helps identify priorities and where (if resources become available) we are ready to focus the resources.

Recognizing the evolving conditions and needs of Flagstaff's food system and building on long-standing community efforts, this plan establishes overarching goals and a structure for coordinated action rather than a prescriptive list of City-led initiatives. It provides direction for how the City and its partners can align policies, funding, investments, and programs to advance shared goals. Implementation will be a collaborative and adaptive process, with the City working alongside community partners to refine strategies over time. The City intends to share periodic progress updates with partners and the community, with a goal of annual updates as capacity allows.

Flagstaff's food system reflects the deep connections between land, water, culture, and people across northern Arizona. It is shaped by local challenges such as rising food insecurity, high food and housing costs, limited farmland, and increasing climate change pressures. The system's resilience is further challenged by growing demands on already stressed water resources. As Flagstaff plans for long-term water security and climate goals, the community will need to carefully balance the needs of food production and related operations with greenhouse gas emissions, financial costs, and overall resilience when evaluating strategies.



OUR FOOD SYSTEM VALUES

EQUITY
HEALTH
SUSTAINABILITY
FOOD JUSTICE
RESPECT
HUMAN RIGHTS

TOGETHER, THESE EFFORTS PRODUCED FOUR INTERCONNECTED GOALS:

FOOD ACCESS

Strengthen long-term community food security and equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant foods for all residents.

ECONOMY

Invest in building a thriving local food system where farmers, ranchers, food makers, and food businesses can sustainably grow, raise, process, sell, distribute, and share food for and with the community.

RESILIENCE

Protect and enhance the resilience of the region's food systems — including land, water, air, and people — amid the challenges of climate change.

NETWORK BUILDING

Strengthen existing and future food system coordination, partnerships, and City engagement to support current and new initiatives success.

Flagstaff's food system extends beyond city limits, with most local food production occurring across the wider northern Arizona region. Although this regional production cannot meet all local food needs, there is a strong need and opportunity to strengthen the regional food system to ensure reliable and affordable food access for all residents, support viable livelihoods for producers and food businesses, and build resilience to extreme climate impacts.

This plan focuses on bringing together the community to collectively address some of our pressing food systems challenges in the region. The plan was developed through a three-year process that brought together hundreds of residents, food system leaders, and organizations through surveys, focus groups, and community forums (see timeline on page 8). Their insights, combined with data from the Community Food System Assessment (CFSA) and alignment with other guiding documents such as Flagstaff's Carbon Neutrality Plan and Regional Plan 2045, shaped a shared vision and set of priorities for Flagstaff's food future. Together, these efforts produced four interconnected goals.

These goals are backed by forty-seven actions, including policies, programs, and investments that build on existing efforts and introduce new initiatives that can be carried out across sectors. The plan's success depends on the collaboration across the community. We welcome all community members, organizations, businesses, producers and institutions to move this plan into action.



WHAT IS THE FOOD SYSTEM?

The food system is the cycle that food follows as it moves from the land and water where it is grown, raised, or foraged, through processing, transportation, and distribution, to preparation, eating, and waste management. Each part of this cycle is connected, from soil, water, and labor to cooking, nutrition, and composting. Farmers, ranchers, food workers, businesses, schools, governments, nonprofits, and families are all part of this system. The food system also includes the stewardship of natural resources and the preservation of ecosystems that make food production possible. Each step has impacts and tradeoffs that connect health, economy, and environment across the community.

The food system is not only about the movement of food. It is also shaped by policies, funding, education, research, and community values. It reflects cultural traditions, social practices, and the choices we make about land, housing, transportation, and public health. Water security is also essential to the food system, sustained production, processing, and the ecosystems that enable these activities. A strong and just food system ensures that everyone has access to affordable and nutritious food, supports farmers and food businesses, protects the environment for future generations, and builds resilience to challenges like climate change. Building a stronger food system highlights the connections between access, economy, resilience, and collaboration and offers a pathway to improve health, support the local economy, and protect the environment for future generations.



THE FOOD SYSTEM

WHAT IS A FOOD ACTION PLAN? WHY DO WE NEED ONE IN FLAGSTAFF?

A food action plan is a vision that guides a community toward a stronger and more sustainable food system. It identifies clear goals and actions to improve how food is grown, distributed, and accessed, while protecting the land and resources that make this possible.

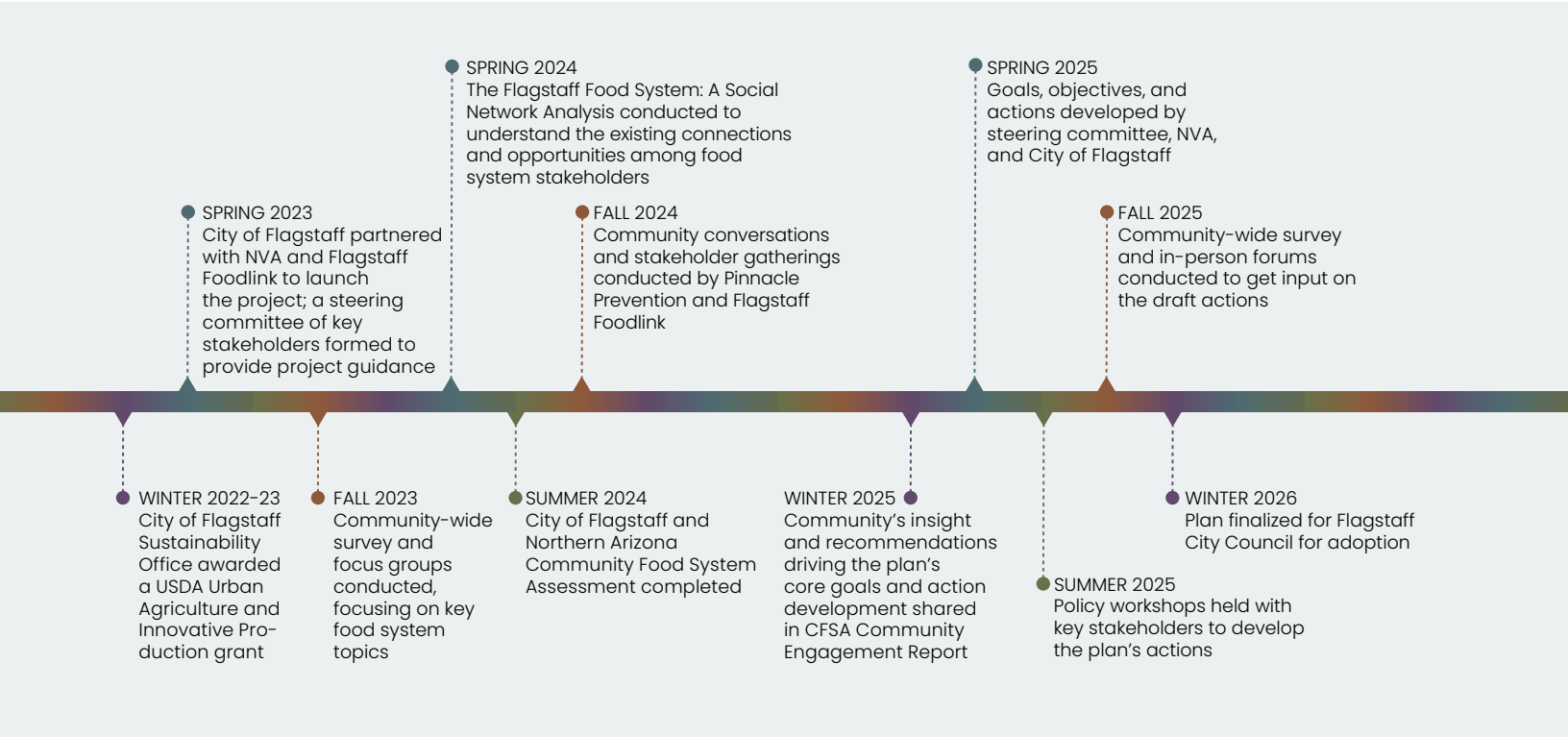
The plan's actions were informed and developed through ongoing community engagement across Flagstaff and northern Arizona, along with decades of experience and commitment from local partners. Together, this input shaped actions that address the region's food system strengths and unique challenges. The CFSA and planning process showed that while Flagstaff has strong local leadership, vibrant food networks, and interest in local agriculture, many residents still face barriers to accessing affordable, healthy food and that producers face obstacles related to land, water, and infrastructure. It is a tool for shaping a food system that supports health, equity, and resilience for everyone who calls Flagstaff home.

HOW WAS THE PLAN CREATED?

In 2022, the City of Flagstaff's Sustainability Office received a USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production grant to assess the regional food system and create a plan shaped by extensive community input.

The resulting goals and actions reflect community priorities, build on long-standing local efforts, and align with other plans and policies that shape the food system.

Community engagement included a steering committee of food system leaders, online surveys, focus groups, community forums, and policy workshops—all of which helped identify and prioritize the actions in the plan. Together with the CFSA and best practices tailored to Flagstaff's needs, this input shaped the final plan.



Another key step was making sure the plan aligned with other community priorities and policies, including City of Flagstaff's Carbon Neutrality Plan and Arizona Statewide Food Action Plan (see "Table A: Relevant food system report and plans" below). From this review, several important themes stood out:

- A strong local food system is key to building an equitable, resilient, and connected community.
- Climate-smart food production and infrastructure play an important role in caring for the environment and ensuring food security, especially as the climate changes.
- City policies and regulations need to support the growth of local food supply chains.
- Protecting sustainable open space is essential. This includes the conservation of local natural resources.
- Equity must be at the center of addressing and ensuring long-term food security.
- Local food entrepreneurs need support, along with training, to build a skilled workforce.
- Food waste in landfills is directly tied to rising greenhouse gas emissions and calls for scaling of strategies to address.





TABLE A: RELEVANT FOOD SYSTEM REPORTS AND PLANS

	Focus areas by plan goals			
	Food Access	Economy	Resilience	Network Building
Arizona Statewide Food Action Plan	X	X	X	X
Flagstaff's Climate Program	X		X	
Flagstaff Open Spaces Strategic Plan		X	X	
Flagstaff Regional Plan 2045	X	X	X	X
Northern Arizona Food Equity Report, 2024	X		X	X







Aligning this plan with existing strategies reinforces shared priorities, builds on established efforts, and strengthens overall coherence across initiatives.

In every goal area there are several cross-cutting themes:

Enhancement and support of existing partnerships and efforts:

- Strengthening existing collaboration and programming among organizations, government agencies, institutions, producers, and community groups
- Building new partnerships where there are gaps

Community education/resources:

- Strengthening knowledge, skills, and awareness among residents, students, businesses, institutions, and other key stakeholders
- Expanding public education and hands-on learning opportunities such as farming, cooking, and composting
- Improving access to culturally relevant education, technical assistance, and practical resources through resource hubs and shared information

Infrastructure improvement:

- Strengthening and expanding the infrastructure needed to support a resilient food system
- Advancing supportive policies, regulations, and zoning to enable food system infrastructure

Coordinated investments:

- Aligning financial, technical, and institutional resources to maximize impact
- Developing coordinated funding strategies, including pooling resources across public, private and philanthropic sectors

HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

Food Action Plan: A Framework for Flagstaff's Food System is a vision for building a more equitable, resilient and sustainable local food system. The plan moves from broad goals to supporting actions, offering a clear and actionable path forward. Four community-informed goals describe the future we want for Flagstaff's food system. Each goal includes objectives and actions that lay out specific steps, such as new and existing programs, policies, or investments, that will help reach the vision.

FOOD ACTION PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



FOOD ACCESS

Strengthen long-term community food security and equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant foods for all residents.

1. making healthy and local food more accessible
2. strengthening and scaling food rescue and redistribution efforts
3. empowering people to grow and prepare food
4. encouraging neighborhood design to support food access



ECONOMY

Invest in building a thriving local food system where farmers, ranchers, food makers, and food businesses can sustainably grow, raise, process, sell, distribute, and share food for and with the community.

1. supporting infrastructure development to strengthen production, storage and distribution
2. supporting farmers and food entrepreneurs with training and resources
3. strengthening local markets and promoting direct sales and institutional purchasing
4. supporting the expansion of viable and affordable land for farmers and ranchers



RESILIENCE

Protect and enhance the resilience of the region's food systems—including land, water, air, and people—amid the challenges of climate change.

1. expanding and promoting regional composting programs and services
2. researching best practices in climate smart agriculture, soil and water conservation, and energy and water efficient operations for the region



NETWORK BUILDING

Strengthen existing and future food system coordination, partnerships, and City engagement to support current and new initiatives success.

1. supporting new and existing food system programs, partnerships, and initiatives
2. strengthening community education about the benefits of a resilient local food system

GOAL 1: FOOD ACCESS

Food access means that people, families, and neighborhoods can get the food they want and need to live healthy lives.

Food access relies on food security, meaning everyone has enough affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally relevant food at all times. When people cannot access food, it is often due to broader challenges like low wages and generational poverty, high housing costs, limited transportation, or a history of exclusion that has left some communities with fewer opportunities. Ensuring food access and food security for all has been identified as a top community priority.

Northern Arizona's limited water resources and lack of suitable agricultural land create challenges for meeting the food needs of a growing population. Despite these constraints, there remains a critical need and opportunity to improve food access so that all residents can consistently obtain and afford healthy, culturally appropriate food. Strengthening partnerships, expanding effective programs, and supporting community-driven solutions are essential steps toward building a more resilient and equitable food system.

WHY IT MATTERS

Local data clearly highlights the food access challenge. About 13 percent of Coconino County residents are food insecure, compared to 10 percent statewide, and more than 14 percent of children do not have reliable access to food.[1] Many who qualify for benefits such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) do not receive them, and long distances to food pantries and grocery stores make access even harder for many residents, especially in rural areas where there are limited food access locations. Food insecurity does not affect everyone equally, and children and many racial and ethnic minority residents in Coconino County are more likely to lack consistent access to healthy food.[2]



Flagstaff has a mix of food outlets, from grocery stores and farmers markets to restaurants and a community supported agriculture (CSA) program.[3] Yet many residents still struggle with cost, convenience, and choice. Nearly half of surveyed Flagstaff residents said food is too expensive, and only one in five were satisfied with their grocery choices.[4] Some residents turn to growing, hunting, or fishing to help provide for their households, demonstrating the resilience of our community as well as the need for stronger systems of support. The emergency food system helps fill gaps, but with only sixteen food pantries in Flagstaff and a limited number of Flagstaff retailers accepting SNAP, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or Double Up Food Bucks, many families still face barriers to consistent access.[5]

Ensuring food access and long-term food security was identified as a top community priority. During the planning process, community members shared several key concerns, including the high cost of food with rising living costs, the need for more ways to buy local food, particularly with SNAP benefits, and concern of reliance on food banks and pantries.

THIS GOAL HAS FOUR OBJECTIVES:

(1) making healthy and local food more accessible

(2) strengthening and scaling food rescue and redistribution efforts

(3) empowering people with skills to grow and prepare food

(4) encouraging neighborhood design to support food access

Together, these objectives chart a path toward **food access** that is equitable, resilient, and supportive of every resident's well-being.



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: FLAGSTAFF FAMILY FOOD CENTER

The Flagstaff Family Food Center (FFFC) is a food bank and kitchen dedicated to alleviating hunger across Northern Arizona. Established in 1991, FFFC offers a range of services, including daily hot meals, emergency food boxes, and neighborhood food distributions, which provide free food for individuals and families in need. Through diverse food rescue efforts, community partnerships, and resource navigation, FFFC increases access to nutritious food while supporting long-term, equitable solutions to food insecurity.

FOOD ACCESS GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Strengthen long-term community food security and equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant foods for all residents.

OBJECTIVE 1: Support initiatives that increase the affordability and accessibility of healthy and/or locally produced foods in institutions (e.g., schools, hospitals) and community markets (e.g., farmers markets, grocery stores).	
FA-1.1	Encourage local institutions to track and report on use of healthy foods and reduce food waste.
FA-1.2	Coordinate with partners to sustain and increase the availability of nutrition incentive programs.
FA-1.3	Gather healthcare stakeholders to identify pathways for advancing food-as-medicine initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen and scale food rescue and redistribution efforts to ensure that excess adequate food goes to people.	
FA-2.1	Increase educational resources regarding city, county, and state-level policies, such as health codes, that impact food donation and distribution efforts.
FA-2.2	Expand education and outreach campaigns to engage households, organizations, and businesses.
FA-2.3	Support food rescue initiatives to strengthen connections across industries and improve redistribution efforts.
FA-2.4	Build capacity to develop infrastructure to safely and efficiently recover and redistribute surplus food.



FOOD ACCESS GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS continued

OBJECTIVE 3: Promote and support initiatives that empower people to grow, prepare, preserve, share, and compost food, including educational opportunities that build self-sufficiency and community resilience.	
FA-3.1	Support food and agriculture community learning centers in partnership with local, regional, and state stakeholders.
FA-3.2	Enhance and scale programs, partnerships, and resources that help neighborhoods and households grow food for themselves and their community.
FA-3.3	Support community education programs that provide hands-on learning for food preparation, preservation, and healthy eating.
FA-3.4	Support local initiatives that reflect and celebrate the diverse knowledge of our regional agricultural practices.

OBJECTIVE 4: Encourage neighborhood design to support food access and opportunities to grow healthy food.	
FA-4.1	Support innovative food distribution pathways and strengthen connections to grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food outlets.
FA-4.2	Encourage incorporation of food access strategies into all housing projects.
FA-4.3	Identify barriers to food access, urban agriculture, local food supply chain infrastructure, and community food projects.
FA-4.4	Evaluate land availability for agriculture, retail, distribution or food production uses.





GOAL 2: LOCAL FOOD, FARM AND RANCH ECONOMY

A thriving local food economy goes beyond simply growing and selling food—it involves building a system where farmers, ranchers, food producers, and supply chain businesses can succeed and where the community can easily access and support locally produced food.

Local farms, ranches, and food businesses play a vital role in northern Arizona's economy. While the region cannot produce all the food it consumes, there is significant potential to grow and strengthen this sector to better serve both producers and the community.

Building a resilient and equitable local food economy in Flagstaff includes investing in shared kitchens and food hubs, expanding training and business support for producers, and growing local markets through schools, hospitals, and community programs. It also means protecting land and water for future food production and uplifting the knowledge and leadership of Indigenous communities and small-scale farmers, who are central to the region's identity. Strengthening the local food economy helps keep dollars in the community, supports long-term livelihoods, and ensures everyone can share in the benefits of fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

WHY IT MATTERS

Flagstaff's food and farm sector is both rich in opportunity and challenged by real barriers. Coconino County has 2,057 farms and ranches, a decline of 8 percent since 2012.[6] Direct-to-consumer sales, like farmers markets and CSAs, grew by more than 60 percent from 2017 to 2022, showing strong demand for local food.[7] At the same time, only 1.8 percent of farms in Coconino County currently sell food directly to consumers.[8] The average age of all farmers in the region is sixty years old, raising questions about the future of the workforce.[9] Access to affordable land, reliable water, and essential infrastructure, such as storage, processing, and distribution facilities, are among the biggest barriers for those who want to start or expand food production near Flagstaff.[10]



The region's farms and food production, including the ability to process, distribute, sell, and share food, emerged as a major priority in community and stakeholder discussions. People emphasized the lack of facilities and infrastructure, the need to better understand and streamline regulatory processes, and the desire for shared spaces and resources, such as food hubs and commercial kitchens, to improve coordination among partners.[11]



THIS GOAL HAS FOUR OBJECTIVES:

(1) supporting infrastructure development to strengthen production, storage, and distribution

(2) supporting farmers and food entrepreneurs with training and resources

(3) strengthening local markets and promoting direct sales and institutional purchasing

(4) supporting the expansion of viable and affordable land for farmers and ranchers - particularly Indigenous and beginning growers

Together these efforts will build a resilient, fair, and connected food system where farmers, ranchers, food makers, and supply chain businesses can thrive.





COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: FORESTDALE FARMS

Forestdale Farms is a family-owned farm, specializing in leafy greens, root crops, and microgreens. Forestdale is imperative to our local food economy as they engage in a diversity of market channels, such as farmers market, schools, food banks, and local community organizations. They are one of the most productive farms in Flagstaff and unveil the possibilities of growing an abundance of food for our community, and showcase the support of such infrastructure and innovation.



ECONOMY GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Invest in building a thriving local food system where farmers, ranchers, food makers, and food businesses can sustainably grow, raise, process, sell, distribute, and share food for and with the community.

OBJECTIVE 1: Support infrastructure to strengthen production, storage, and distribution.	
E-1.1	Identify regulatory barriers for developing regional agriculture and food related businesses.
E–1.2	Develop educational resources for emerging agricultural and food businesses to understand and comply with regulations.
E-1.3	Facilitate partnerships to evaluate access and use of existing food production related land and facilities.
E-1.4	Conduct an economic feasibility study to assess the viability of a new food related businesses in the area.

OBJECTIVE 2: Provide current and aspiring food producers and entrepreneurs resources to start, grow, and sustain their businesses and expand opportunities to market and sell their food.	
E-2.1	Strengthen outreach and resource navigation for collaborative fundraising opportunities.
E-2.2	Expand and support food and agricultural workforce initiatives to build skills and expand apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training opportunities, including for different pathways such as at-risk youth and re-entry programs.
E-2.3	Support coalitions of food producers that foster peer-to-peer learning and explore opportunities to collectively aggregate inputs, products, facilities, and equipment.
E-2.4	Collaborate with local and regional partners to identify and advance shared infrastructure to serve new and existing growers.

OBJECTIVE 3: Strengthen local market development initiatives to boost the local food economy and expand awareness and access to locally grown, raised, and value-added foods.	
E-3.1	Expand opportunities for education, buyer–producer networking, tastings, and market promotion to strengthen connections across the food system and within specific sectors.
E-3.2	Increase awareness of and participation in farmers markets, farm stands, and community supported agriculture.
E-3.3	Collaborate with partners to develop local food branding that aligns with and leverages resources from the statewide Arizona Grown initiative.

ECONOMY GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS continued

OBJECTIVE 4: Support the expansion of viable and affordable land for farmers and ranchers - particularly Indigenous and beginning growers.	
E-4.1	Research mechanisms to connect agricultural and food producers with available land.
E-4.2	Partner with existing business development organizations to connect agricultural and food producers with technical assistance and business development resources.
E-4.3	Research best practices for zoning incentives, tax abatements, and other strategies to expand access for agriculture.



GOAL 3: RESILIENCE

A resilient food system protects the resources and traditions that allow food to be grown, shared, and accessed.

In Flagstaff, this means caring for soil, water, and air, while also honoring Indigenous knowledge and food sovereignty. Building resilience is about conserving resources, adapting to climate change, reducing waste, and supporting the cultural practices that connect people to land and community. Flagstaff and northern Arizona face increasing pressure from drought, wildfire, flooding, and extreme weather, making this work even more critical. Strengthening the food system requires climate-smart practices, improved infrastructure, and planning that supports the community's stability during disruptions.

WHY IT MATTERS

Farmers and ranchers face rising land costs, limited water, and extreme weather.[12] Distribution is slowed by long distances and limited infrastructure.[13] At the same time, Arizona wastes more food than any other state, and Flagstaff throws away nearly six million pounds each year.[14]

Water security is essential to Flagstaff's food system and overall community resilience. Reliable access to clean and affordable water supports every stage of the food system—from production to processing, preparation, and distribution. However, long-term drought and climate change are straining local supplies and increasing costs for producers and households. Currently, Flagstaff residents use about eighty-four gallons of water per person per day, a decrease over the past couple of decades, but the region still faces moderate long-term drought conditions.[15] The City of Flagstaff has made considerable investments in water security programming and infrastructure, including the development of a comprehensive water conservation strategy.

Addressing these pressures requires both climate-smart food production and strong systems for reducing waste. Ensuring that food production, distribution, and access can withstand and adapt to climate impacts is a clear community priority.[16] This is especially important given concerns that existing infrastructure and equipment are inadequate and inefficient in their water and energy use.



RESILIENCE:

the capacity of a community, business, or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from a disruption.[17]





THIS GOAL HAS TWO OBJECTIVES:

(1) expanding and promoting regional composting programs and services

(2) researching best practices in climate smart agriculture, soil and water conservation, and energy and water efficient operations for the region

These efforts depend on collaboration among leaders, institutions, and community members alike. By working together, Flagstaff can build a resilient food system that is adaptable, equitable, and ready for the future.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT:
TOWNSITE URBAN FARM

Townsite Urban Farm is an outdoor incubator space that provides a contemporary approach and model of urban agriculture. Since 2020, they have created a resilient community network through permaculture principles, collaborative learning, and social connectivity in the historic Townsite neighborhood of Flagstaff. Their operation includes a rainwater harvesting system that collects precipitation runoff from an adjacent restaurant and their own residence. They also host an Equipment Lending Program open to growers with limited resources.



RESILIENCE GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Protect and enhance the resilience of the region's food systems - including land, water, air and people - amid the challenges of climate change.

OBJECTIVE 1: Expand and promote awareness of City of Flagstaff composting services and programs.	
R–1.1	Increase the number and accessibility of residential drop-off locations throughout the city.
R–1.2	Provide education and technical assistance for households, businesses, institutions, and events to reduce, reuse, and recycle food waste.
R–1.3	Identify county and state regulatory barriers for composting operations.
R–1.4	Foster and attract investment in soil building and composting services.

OBJECTIVE 2: Research best practices in climate smart agriculture, soil and water conservation, and energy and water efficient operations for the region.	
R–2.1	Develop a localized, digital hub with technical guidance, funding opportunities (e.g., disaster relief, conservation programs), case studies, and regional research to help producers adopt climate-smart and conservation practices.
R–2.2	Convene food partners to discuss regional climate assessment to help inform on the changing climate and projected impacts.
R–2.3	Explore and adopt strategies and incentives (e.g., rebates, permitting) to expand use of energy- and water-efficient facilities, equipment, and technology across farms and food businesses.
R–2.4	Support regional aggregation hubs and help facilitate connections.
R–2.5	Encourage public–private partnerships to test scalable, measurable climate-smart infrastructure and transportation solutions.
R-2.6	Support initiatives led and informed by regional knowledge to grow and process crops and advance food security.

GOAL 4: NETWORK BUILDING

Strengthen existing and future food system coordination, partnerships, and City engagement to support current and new initiatives success.

No single organization can address food access, farm viability, or climate challenges on its own. Flagstaff can align resources, share knowledge, and strengthen collaboration by working together across sectors such as producers, community groups, schools, businesses, and public agencies that represent or encompass the diverse Flagstaff community.

WHY IT MATTERS

A social network analysis conducted with more than thirty food system organizations showed that Flagstaff has a strong core of central players, including the City of Flagstaff, Northern Arizona University, and several key nonprofits.[18] These groups provide leadership and hold many connections, but the analysis also revealed risks in relying too heavily on a few organizations.[19] To build a more resilient system, the analysis recommended broadening leadership, expanding collaboration with less connected groups, and creating new opportunities for information sharing, funding alignment, and community engagement.[20]

The planning process highlighted the importance of recognizing and building on the long-standing efforts of food system stakeholders in the region. Throughout the process, stakeholders emphasized the need for stronger collaboration, better coordination, shared resources, more public–private partnerships, and greater shared decision-making.





THIS GOAL HAS TWO OBJECTIVES:

(1) supporting new and existing food system programs, partnerships, and initiatives

(2) strengthening community education about the benefits of a resilient local food system

Achieving this will take shared effort across the community but especially the leadership of institutions, agencies, and coalitions. By building stronger networks, Flagstaff can create a food system that is more connected, inclusive, and effective in meeting community needs.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT:
FLAGSTAFF FOODLINK

Flagstaff Foodlink is a non-profit organization that supports the growing community of producers in Flagstaff's local food system. Foodlink is dedicated to providing local growers opportunities for networking, organizing, education, and funding. Beginning in 2004, they have created several community gardens; introduced Double Up Food Bucks to the farmers markets; and offered financial assistance through the Grower's Grant program. They also host the Farmer and Rancher Resource Fair and created the Coconino Growers' Coalition.



NETWORK BUILDING GOAL: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Strengthen existing and future food system coordination, partnerships, and City engagement to support current and new initiatives success.

OBJECTIVE 1: Support new and existing food system programs, partnerships, and initiatives.	
NB–1.1	Encourage alignment of future city and county plans with the Food Action Plan.
NB–1.2	Convene community leaders from existing food and agricultural groups to explore the development of a food policy council.
NB–1.3	Explore common indicators (e.g., food access, farm viability, waste diversion), drawing on existing data sources, to support periodic progress updates.
NB–1.4	Partner with local, regional, and statewide food system advocates to identify and advance food access advocacy priorities.
NB-1.5	Convene partners to enhance agricultural and food system curriculum, experiential learning, and hands-on growing.

OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen community education about the benefits of a resilient local food system.	
NB–2.1	Expand accessible, multilingual outreach and educational efforts promoting healthy food, soil and water stewardship, community resilience, and waste reduction.
NB–2.2	Work with community-based organizations to host workshops and listening sessions that gather resident input and co-create local food initiatives.
NB–2.3	Support events that highlight the region's diverse food cultures and honor indigenous, immigrant, and local contributions.

NEXT STEPS

This long-term plan is a framework for strengthening our local food system.

Making progress on this plan will depend on many groups working together, including government agencies, community organizations, farmers, ranchers, businesses, and community members. No single organization has the resources to carry out every action in this plan, and many actions are best led by the partners already doing this work.

The City of Flagstaff will support implementation of the plan by focusing on the following areas, as funding and dedicated staff capacity allow:

- **Strengthening partnerships:** Facilitating opportunities for people and organizations to convene, discuss shared priorities, and identify funding opportunities. This will include helping to establish a community-led food policy council or similar group.
- **Identifying priorities:** Working with partners to select a small number of near-term priority actions and to clarify which organizations are best positioned to lead them.
- **Measuring progress:** Tracking progress where practical, relying on data the City and its partners already collect rather than creating new reporting requirements.
- **Keeping the community informed:** Sharing updates through the City's Food Systems Program webpage and other existing channels, where partners are also welcome to share tools and resources.
- **Continuing current programs:** Maintaining and improving existing Flagstaff Sustainability Office programs, including community gardens, urban farm incubators, and food systems education, while exploring new initiatives as resources allow.
- **Supporting partner-led initiatives:** Sharing information about funding opportunities and state and federal policy developments, offering letters of support or other assistance where appropriate, and helping connect partners with resources that advance the plan's goals.









To begin putting this plan into action, an early step will be helping to convene a community-led food policy council or similar group, which could help identify a limited set of near-term priority actions, available resources and funding, and the organizations best positioned to lead each one.

CALL TO ACTION

Building a stronger food system requires shared effort, and community members can contribute in many meaningful ways.

- **VOLUNTEER:** Offer your time to support food banks and pantries, community gardens, farmers markets, school or community food programs, and gleaning efforts that recover surplus food.
- **DONATE:** Contribute food, funds, supplies, equipment, or other resources to local organizations, farms, and programs working to improve food access, support local food production, and strengthen community resilience.
- **BUY LOCAL:** Help strengthen the local food economy by shopping at farmers markets, farm stands, CSAs, and stores that carry locally and regionally produced foods.
- **ADVOCATE:** Stay informed about local food system issues, support community-led efforts, and encourage policies and investments that strengthen food access, local agriculture, food businesses, and regional resilience.

GLOSSARY

CLIMATE-SMART PRACTICES
Climate-smart practices are farming and food system methods that support productivity, help communities adapt to changing weather, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Examples include using cover crops and no-till farming, conserving water, planting trees, and using renewable energy.

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM ASSESSMENT
A community food system assessment is a structured evaluation of how food is produced, distributed, accessed, and consumed within a specific community. It identifies strengths, gaps, and opportunities across the local food system to guide strategies that improve equity, resilience, and long-term food security.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (CSA)
A CSA involves consumers who support a farmer financially by paying for a share of the farm's production prior to each growing season. The arrangement allows farmers to buy the seeds, transplants, and other inputs they need for the growing season and pay their farm labor without waiting until harvest to generate revenue. The customers will share in the farmer's successes or failures.

DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS
Double Up Food Bucks is a program that doubles the value of federal SNAP benefits spent at participating markets and food retail stores, helping people bring home more healthy fruits and vegetables while supporting local farmers.

EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM
The emergency food system is a network of organizations—such as food pantries, meal programs, and food banks—that provides immediate food assistance to individuals and families facing hunger. It serves as a critical safety net during times of crisis, helping communities meet urgent nutritional needs when traditional food access systems fall short.

EQUITY
Equity is the fair and just distribution of resources, access, and opportunity. It is the process of developing, strengthening, and supporting policies and procedures that prioritize the distribution of resources to those who have been historically and are currently marginalized.

FOOD ACCESS
Food access means having reliable, affordable, and convenient ways to get healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Barriers to food access can include cost, transportation, store location, and availability of healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate food.

FOOD SECURITY
Food security is when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to lead active and healthy lives.

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE
Food system infrastructure refers to physical structures, facilities, transportation networks, technologies, and organizational systems that enable the production, processing, aggregation, distribution, storage, food recovery, composting, and waste management, and access to food within a region or economy.

RESILIENCE
Resilience is the capacity of a community, business, or natural environment to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from a disruption.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)
The largest federal nutrition assistance program, SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. This card is used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.

WATER SECURITY
Water security refers to the surface water, groundwater, and reclaimed water that serve our residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreational, and agricultural needs. It includes one-hundred-year water supply planning, diversification of the water supply portfolio, and conservation to sustain our water supplies and quality for future generations.



SOURCES

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