

#15: LOCAL FOOD

OPTIONAL METRIC FOR CATEGORY A & B & C CITIES

Bold, green font indicates data elements that are eligible to be recognized at Step 5 if improvement is demonstrated.

DATA ELEMENTS

- 15.1 **Number of local food venues**
- 15.2 **Percent of housing** within 1 mile of a local food venue
- 15.3 **Percent of housing** within 1 mile of fresh fruits and vegetables

DEFINITIONS

- **Local food venues include:** farmer's markets; community gardens; CSA (community-supported agriculture) drop-sites; institutions focused on serving local food; grocery stores (including food cooperatives) selling local foods; restaurants serving local food. (Elements 15.1 and 15.2)
- **Local food is a broad term** with multiple attributes, defined differently in different cities. Attributes typically include one or more of: sourced within Minnesota; fresh; healthy; produced using more ecologically sustainable practices. Sustainable can include raised organically or using IPM (integrated pest management), humanely raised animals, fairly compensated farm workers. (Elements 15.1 and 15.2)
- **Local food venues typically have some standards.** Often farmer's markets will accept vendors with food grown within Minnesota, or perhaps the Upper Midwest, but not food from Arizona, or Argentina. (Elements 15.1 and 15.2)
- **In counting local food venues** cities should settle on a rough definition that fits the community culture and sense of what is local and healthy food. (Elements 15.1 and 15.2)
- **Institutions and restaurants serving, and stores selling** local food is a judgement call. An elementary school or restaurant that routinely buys Minnesota fruits and vegetables for cooking/serving should be included, just as a grocery that always buys Minnesota foods in season would be included. But a city may use a different/stricter threshold that might include minimum procurement percentage requirements at hospitals, prisons, colleges and other institutions. (Elements 15.1 and 15.2)
- **Housing** includes residential dwelling units that are within one mile of one or more local food venues. (Elements 15.2 and 15.3)
- **Stores selling fresh fruits and vegetables** have a NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) code of 445110 (supermarket/other grocery) or 445230 (fruit/vegetable market). (Element 15.3)
- **Alternative data elements:** if you have been gathering slightly different data, report those and explain how they differ from these GreenStep metrics.

DATA SOURCES

- City licenses, records, and common knowledge of city staff (Element 15.1)
- <http://minnesotagrown.com/member-directory/> (for farmers markets and CSAs) (Element 15.1)
 - GIS maps and/or city plat maps and census tract data (Elements 15.2 and 15.3)

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- Local chamber of commerce; U.S. Census data (for example, NAICS business count by zip code at <http://censtats.census.gov/cbpnaic/cbpnaic.shtml>)
- The USDA Food Access Research Atlas at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas> has compiled data regarding access to grocery stores by census tract for the entire United States. (Element 15.3)

CALCULATION AND PUBLIC REPORTING

- **Annual measurement and reporting** for these data elements is based upon the cumulative numbers as of December 31st before the reporting year. (Elements 15.1-15.3)
- **The number of local food venues will be normalized** and reported on the GreenStep web site as number of venues per 1000 population. (Element 15.1)
- **Using a mapping (GIS) system**, map zones within which street walking (or, as the crow flies) is within one mile of one or more local food venues. Then calculate the number of residential dwelling units within the zones. Finally compare the number of units to total units in the city and express the ratio as a percent. (Element 15.2)
- **For smaller cities**, dwelling units in census tracts within a mile of one or more local food venue can provide rough estimations. Or estimation from a city plat map may work fine. (Element 15.2)
- **Counting groceries selling fresh fruit and vegetables** provides a more limited view of local food access, and is easy to do in a small/medium size city. For a larger city it can be done using the two NAICS codes and web data from the U.S. Census. (Element 15.3)

RATIONALE

The benefits of greater community access to and consumption of local foods include increased food security for residents, more healthful food and improved human health, enhanced soil and water quality, reductions in energy use and CO2 emissions (in general), improved wildlife habitat, enhanced community livability and vitality, creation of green jobs, and stronger local economies.

Depending on what's included as a local food – fresh fruits and vegetables is one limited definition used in this GreenStep metric - the evidence base for these benefits ranges from very strong to somewhat weak. (See extensive studies and reports under the Local Foods Best Practice at <http://www.MnGreenStep.org>) On the strong side, for example, for Minnesota farmers markets, of each \$100 spent by community members, \$62 stays in the local economy and \$99 stays in Minnesota's economy.

The 1-mile accessibility threshold comes from work in 2007 by Design for Health (<http://designforhealth.net/food-access>), a collaboration between the University of Minnesota and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota that serves to bridge the gap between the emerging research base on community design and healthy living with the every-day realities of local government planning. Walking/biking/busing within one mile of healthy foods is a key issue, particularly for people without cars and people of limited means.

Local food is like local beer, walking, biking and outdoor dining: important to attracting and retaining a mix of city residents – especially younger residents - in most any city in Minnesota. Thus annual measurement to track improvement in the metric is important to many cities.

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STEP 5 GOALS

There are no state-wide goals for these data elements nor any guidance useful at this point in time for all cities in Minnesota. Therefore individual cities are best equipped to set realistic goals for improvement, and any improvement in the elements – higher numbers, higher percentages – is desirable.

NEED HELP? CONTACT

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