



## ***INTEGRATING FOOD ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN***

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The health of residents is vital to the long-term prosperity of communities, and our current comprehensive planning cycle is an opportunity for planners and healthy food advocates to work together to prioritize healthier food environments. For example, many communities need to make specific improvements to ensure people have reliable access to affordable, healthy food, while also nurturing a robust infrastructure for the growing, aggregating, and processing of this food. Planners can assess existing food access disparities, shape the food environment of communities, and facilitate healthy eating. Consider these strategies to improve food access in your community:

- **Download the Minnesota Food Charter Network’s [Food Access Planning Guide](#)**, which offers tools, resources, and specific language to help planners incorporate healthy food access into a local comprehensive plan. Join the [Metro Healthy Comprehensive Planning workgroup](#), a resource group for planners working to integrate health, including food access, into plans.
- **Partner with county public health SHIP staff, who have resources to identify data and engage community.** Public health staff work with stakeholders that understand the needs and priorities of the community. They can help select specific policy strategies and then be there to help implement them. There is a contact [in every metropolitan county](#) identified to work with planners!
- **Consider a Community Food Security Assessment to better understand community needs.** This [kind of assessment](#) can provide deeper understanding of household food security, food resource accessibility, food availability and affordability, and community food production resources to guide your plan.
- **Use land-use guidance and regulations to improve local households’ proximity to healthy food and support food-related businesses and activities.** Consider reducing lot sizes in new subdivisions, reducing unused land and parking areas surrounding commercial areas, and clustering multi-family housing around areas well-served by commercial goods and services, including food stores and transit. [Increase farmland preservation](#) to maintain capacity of local food production.
- **Enhance transportation systems and infrastructure for transit riders, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists.** These include increasing the variety of [public and private transportation options](#) which can bring people to food sources and improvements to the delivery of food to stores or households.
- **Support food-related businesses and initiatives that advance the development of local and regional economies.** Given that much of our food comes from elsewhere, there is significant potential [to nurture the growth of food-oriented businesses](#) in Minnesota, growing, and processing the food we eat closer to home.
- **Increase food production and access to healthy food where people live.** Incorporate gardens and animals into diverse residential settings and increase habitats helpful for beneficial insects. Check out the [Community Garden Policy Reference Guide](#) and [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Support Urban Agriculture](#). Also look at [Under One Roof: Model Healthy Housing Policies for Comprehensive Plans](#).

Planning professionals, healthy food advocates, and elected officials can partner on long-term planning and policy initiatives to create healthy food environments and a robust food infrastructure. These efforts can go a long way in reducing rates of preventable diseases, improving health, fostering community and economic development, and achieving equity for everyone.

