

THE 10TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT REPORT

Food For Thought: New Recipes for Job Growth

Presented by the Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin and the City of Milwaukee



UEDA's 2011 Community Development Summit moved into new territory with an exciting topic: the regional food economy and its potential for economic growth and job creation in southeastern Wisconsin.



Approximately 195 participants from across southeastern Wisconsin took part in this event including community-based organizations, food manufacturing and production, local government, higher education, business and civic leaders, and the general public.

Visit UEDA's Events blog, where we have created a [2011 Summit Page](#) with links to all presentations, a video recording of the Summit, resources and more.

Welcome/Opening Plenary

- *Bill Johnson, UEDA Executive Director*, opened the Summit, acknowledged the Summit Planning Committee, Sponsors and UEDA Staff and introduced a video message from *Will Allen, CEO of Growing Power, Inc.* Will asked attendees to think about how the Summit could promote efforts to grow the regional food system and form partnerships around issues such as food security, rural and urban food production, healthy food and job creation. He encouraged people to take action and get started in the "good food revolution."
- *Rocky Marcoux, City of Milwaukee Department of City Development Commissioner* also welcomed attendees, describing the ways that the City of Milwaukee has been innovative in helping to support efforts to grow the regional food economy and the development that has occurred as a result.
- *Mitch Teich from WUWM Milwaukee Public Radio* served as MC and Moderator for the event.

"Setting the Table" provided attendees with an overview of Wisconsin's food manufacturing sector and the potential of urban agricultural activities underway in the region. It featured a joint presentation by *Shelley Jurewicz, Vice President, Economic Development for the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce* and *Emmanuel Pratt, Executive Director at the Sweet Water Foundation*.

They characterized Milwaukee and southeast Wisconsin as "an epicenter" for urban agriculture and food production, showcasing the many organizations, companies and career paths that are a part of the regional food economy. This sector can be utilized as a means "to stitch neighborhoods back together" by bringing blighted properties back to life, providing job training and new opportunities for youth.

Keynote Speaker

Jeffrey O'Hara, Agricultural Economist, Food & Environment Program, Union of Concerned Scientists
His presentation focused on the job potential and economic benefits of expanding local and regional food systems, particularly by supporting farmers markets, as described in a recent paper by the Union of Concerned Scientists. His key points included:

- Local food markets are a significant economic enterprise, but receive little public investment. They also provide a glimpse into economic behavior – how people shop for and purchase food.
- Food markets are also durable over time and have high economic multipliers – there will always be a demand for local food. The challenge is scale and accessibility.
- The Union of Concerned Scientists' study looked at the various ways that local food markets could be supported, including various hypothetical models on their economic impact in terms of job creation, economic development and more.

- One key recommendation was to increase federal support for local food systems, including certification standards, credit and financing support for farmers and risk management.
- Additionally, passing the Federal Farm Bill in 2011/2012 will be significant – it is a critically important bill that will bring balance to the food system and support regional food hubs and local food production.

Feedback & Discussion

Attendees discussed and responded to the presentations from the Opening Plenary. Their questions touched on issues such as efforts to connect to educational institutions (both at the K-12 level and in higher education), how to fill production gaps in the regional food system by supporting local farmers and lengthening the growing season, how composting and bio-remediation tactics can be used to increase sustainable growth practices, potential strategies for creating urban jobs through urban farming enterprises, the connection between public health and the food economy and the potential for entry-level jobs and internships.

Morning Panel: The Strength of Our Food System

Moderated by Mitch Teich, WUWM Milwaukee Public Radio

Panelists:

- Giacomo Fallucca, Palermo Villa, Inc.
- Lincoln Fowler, Alterra Coffee
- Young Kim, Fondy Food Center, Inc
- Sandy Syburg, Purple Cow Organics
- Olivia Villareal, El Rey Mexican Products, Inc.

The panelists represented various components of the regional food sector, including manufacturing, food production and distribution, urban agriculture and remediation/sustainability approaches. Each panelist shared information about their company/organization, discussing their growth over time, the impact they have had on the communities they serve and why they choose the locations to operate their business.

Additionally, Mitch introduced a discussion that focused on their employment needs and the qualifications of people they are looking to hire, what are the challenges and/or gaps in the workforce for their organizations, how they choose and work with local suppliers and what they see in the near future as key challenges or opportunities for their business growth.

Lunch & Food Memories

The office of Milwaukee County Supervisor Eyon Biddle presented UEDA with a resolution, commending UEDA for its “extraordinary dedication to the community” and congratulated them for putting together an outstanding Summit event focused on the regional food economy.

Attendees were asked to share their “favorite food memories” on note cards, which will be compiled and put into a “wordle” or word cloud that shows which words appear more frequently when we talk about food and its impact on our lives. Visit the 2011 UEDA Summit page to view the wordle.

“Post-Lunch-Punch”

Rick Terrien from *Wisconsin Innovation Kitchen* and the *Iowa County Area Economic Development Corporation* started the Afternoon Session off by discussing food processing and entrepreneurship opportunities. Rick described the [Wisconsin Innovation Kitchen project](#) and how it has transformed the traditional incubator kitchen model by aggregating demand for processing and integrating local food products into the food system.

Afternoon Panel: Partnerships & Opportunity: Innovating Our Food System

Moderated by Mitch Teich, WUWM Milwaukee Public Radio

Panelists:

- Stephanie Anderson, IBM
- David Drew, Gannett Fleming
- Dennis Grzezinski, Milwaukee Food Council
- Cathy Henry, Sysco Eastern Wisconsin
- Kymm Mutch, Milwaukee Public Schools

The afternoon panel featured individuals and organizations that are working on current initiatives that are helping to transform the way that the regional food economy is viewed and operates. They discussed projects that feature collaborative efforts by institutions, groups, companies, nonprofit organizations, individuals and others to increase the scale of this sector. These included:

- The IBM “Smart Cities” Challenge and the recommendations for how Milwaukee can continue leading the way in aquaponics and urban food production;
- Described how an ad-hoc group of people are working to develop a sustainable business strategy/model for this area;
- Discussed how the Milwaukee Food Council is working to support healthy food access and sustainability;
- The efforts of Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) to train youth and other individuals for jobs and careers in the regional food system; and
- The collaboration that was formed between Sysco, Growing Power and Milwaukee Public Schools to increase local food production and bring healthy food to schools.

Feedback & Discussion

Attendees and panelists were asked to discuss what they see as next steps – how can we continue expanding on the good work that has been done so far to grow the regional food economy? Comments focused on the following:

- ✓ There is clearly a lot of opportunity to work collaboratively on new ideas; we should continue to seek out non-traditional partnerships.
- ✓ Are we making a comprehensive and multi-layered effort to utilize current food production? What are the good ideas that can help increase entrepreneurship and create jobs?
- ✓ Important to take action and get started. Do not be afraid to fail – mistakes are a way to learn and form relationships of trust.
- ✓ Consider how we can develop relationships among entrepreneurs, increase access to mentors and promote the food sector’s potential for a career.
- ✓ What are the thoughts about how to connect and coordinate all of this great work? We need to continue the conversations at both an individual and group level.
- ✓ There was agreement that UEDA should reconvene this group and invite others to discuss more concretely how to coordinate efforts and identify potential partnerships, initiatives and more that can support the growth of the regional food economy.



Interested in getting connected to initiatives in the regional food economy?

We can help! Contact UEDA at (414)562-9904 or Kristi@uedawi.org for details.

UEDA is a 501(c)(3) membership organization dedicated to the professional development of individuals and groups working in economic and community development in Wisconsin. Incorporated in 1997, its mission is to focus on housing development and preservation, asset-building and economic education, workforce development issues, and real estate development to enhance cities and their residents.