



## STRATEGIC PLAN



### BACKGROUND

In 2023, Montgomery County launched the newly created Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR). The purpose of the OFSR is to streamline and coordinate the County's efforts to address local food system challenges. The OFSR was established by the County Council in July 2022 under Bill 20-22 at the request of the County Executive, based on the recommendation of the Montgomery County COVID-19 Food Security Task Force.

### MISSION

The mission of the OFSR is to develop and implement interagency budgetary, regulatory, and operational strategies to build a more equitable, efficient, resilient, and sustainable food system in Montgomery County. The OFSR defines resilience as the capability of individuals, communities, and the County to collectively withstand and rapidly recover from food system disruptions, stresses, and changes.





## CORE VALUES

The following principles guide the work of the OFSR:

- **Equity:** all efforts will seek to address social injustice and racial disparities to build equity in our community
- **Systems-based:** strategies will focus on identifying, maximizing, and addressing the interconnections of food system priority areas, simultaneously contextualizing their benefits and their impacts on production, access, natural resources, education, and economy
- **Innovation:** transforming our food system will require the implementation of novel approaches, creative ideas, and best practices models from other jurisdictions
- **Data-driven:** strategic policy and investment decisions will be guided by intentional and reliable data collection and analysis, and solutions will be selected based on clearly defined success metrics and measurable impact

These core values guide the priority setting, workplan development, and resource allocation of the OFSR.

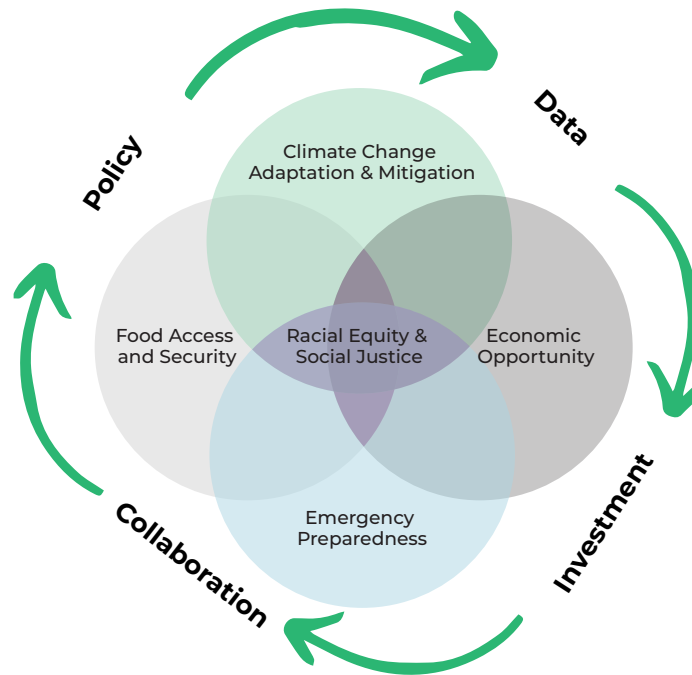
## LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

The OFSR has six legislated mandates:

1. Serving as a liaison between the government and food system stakeholders
2. Serving as a central liaison and coordinator for County government food system initiatives and projects
3. Developing a strategy for improving the efficiency, equity, sustainability, and resilience of the food system in the County
4. Collecting and updating the food system data needed to support strategic decision making
5. Supporting disaster response feeding planning and operations in coordination with local food assistance providers, Department of Health and Human Services, and Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
6. Representing the interests of Montgomery County in regional, state, national, and international food systems coordination efforts



## OFSR THEORY OF CHANGE



### **Food Access and Security:**

Implement strategies that ensured dignified access for all residents to nutritious and affordable food of their choice and support each resident's right to engage in and define their local food system.



### **Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation:**

Support food production, distribution, consumption, and recycling pathways and practices that protect our natural resources and address the impacts of climate change.



### **Economic Opportunity:**

Expand access to opportunities for local food production, workforce development, and food-focused entrepreneurship that invigorate our local economy.



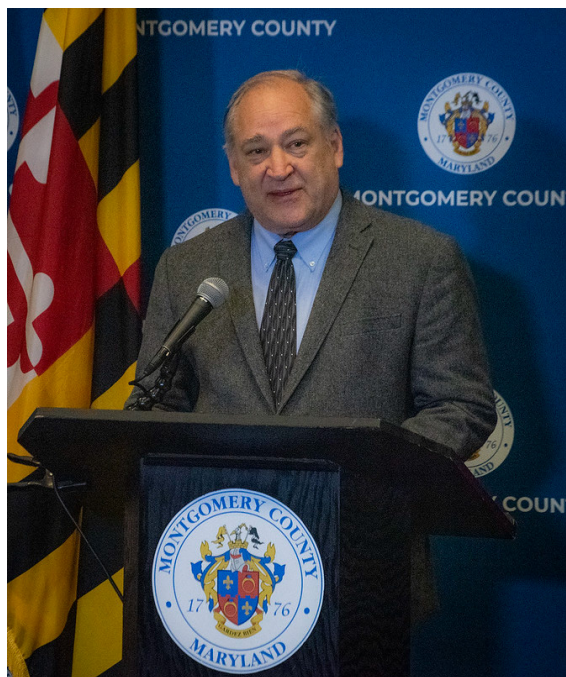
### **Emergency Preparedness:**

Develop an emergency food response plan, activating system-wide partnerships to withstand and prevent future crises.



## POLICY

Serve as an internal subject matter expert and advocate for County food system legislative, regulatory, zoning, planning, and programmatic efforts.



### Active Initiatives

- Coordinate the implementation of Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger recommendations
- Explore the Good Food Purchasing Program as a standard for food procurement in County institutions
- Provide food system legislative recommendations to policymakers in alignment with OFSR's legislated mandates

### 2024 and Beyond

- Engage with state policymaking process through the Maryland General Assembly
- Collaborate with DEP to develop an RFP for organics recycling in County office buildings
- Collaborate with the Office of Procurement and the Department of General Services to expand local food purchasing in County food service facilities
- Pursue opportunities to expand access to land for food production, including through urban agriculture
- Develop an Emergency Food Response Plan in collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security
- Join the Milan Food Pact



## DATA

Collect, analyze, and communicate relevant food system data to inform strategy and decision making, and measure progress and impact with intention.



### Active Initiatives

- Conduct a landscape assessment of existing County food-related policy commitments and available food system datasets
- Identify key local food system metrics, establish baseline measurements, and set performance goals
- Analyze the results of the 2023 Food Assistance Provider survey to maximize efficiencies within the food assistance network
- Develop local measurements of food insecurity and nutrition-benefits eligible participant populations, in partnership with the Georgetown University McCourt School of Public Policy

### 2024 and Beyond

- Develop Food Assistance Provider Service Data platform in alignment with community partner data collection and reporting capacity
- Create a Food System Metrics dashboard
- Map existing cold storage infrastructure and capacity for expansion throughout Montgomery County
- Implement data-informed goal-setting and policy & decision-making frameworks
- Develop and distribute an annual resident survey to evaluate initiatives' impact and assess opportunities to close gaps in service
- Create evergreen community feedback loops to identify opportunities and challenges and inform future efforts

## INVESTMENT

Guide County food system spending, procurement, funding, and resource management.



### Active Initiatives

- Guide the FY25 budget creation process related to food programs
- Inform the County's funding strategy and solicitation process for food rescue and recovery efforts
- Grants program management, including:
  - Resident and Community Gardening
  - Farm to Food Bank
  - Childhood Hunger Grant Programs
- Apply for financial resources from federal, state, and private sources
- Consider programs to address benefits insufficiency and support residents who may be ineligible for federal nutrition assistance programs

### 2024 and Beyond

- Transition select HHS food security contracts and programs to OFSR
- Develop and release a solicitation for the establishment of food production, aggregation, and distribution facilities of varied scale in Montgomery County
- Expand access to capital for food businesses, with a focus on supporting those who have been historically disadvantaged
- Identify County, State, and Federal funding resources to support the establishment of a Food as Medicine program at multiple healthcare sites



## COLLABORATION

Engage the critical insights and expertise of residents, community, business, agencies, and nonprofit partners.



### Active Initiatives

- Engage with County government agencies through newly established Food System Leadership and Interagency Committees
- Participate in local, state, and regional committees, workgroups, and coalitions (see p. 9)
- Support the coordination of school-based food assistance programs in partnership with MCPS and the food assistance provider network
- Build the OFSR website, engagement through social media, and a framework for other external communications such as annual reports

### 2024 and Beyond

- Strengthen processes for referrals by food assistance providers to other community service providers
- Enhance opportunities for resident-centered food system decision making



## ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION



- **Mobile Markets:** Research best practices and models from across the country that increase access to fresh, culturally-diverse food in communities with limited access to food retail and assistance sites.
- **Food Security Cohort Study:** Coordinate a longitudinal study of Montgomery County residents to collect more complete and comprehensive data related to food access and security.
- **Workforce Development Programs:** Collaborate with partner agencies and organizations to enhance food system job training and employment pathways
- **Food Production Opportunities on Public Land:** Assess policy opportunities to increase access to public land, thereby expanding local food production and consumption and strengthening local supply chains.





## Local, State, and Regional Partnerships

Run an efficient and effective office in order to fulfill the OFSR's legislative mandates and requirements.



### County

- Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC)- led Workgroups such as Farm to School Workgroup, Food System Advocacy Workgroup, Local Food Procurement Workgroup, Equitable Land Access Workgroup, Sustainability Collaborative, Childhood Hunger Collaborative
- Farm to Food Bank Coordination (MCFC, Office of Agriculture, Manna Food Center)
- C4 Coalition
- Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee
- Edible Food Recovery Workgroup
- Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice CORE Team
- Office of Community Partnerships Language Ambassadors

### State

- Maryland Food System Resiliency Council and Subcommittees
- Maryland Food Access Network

### Region

- Metropolitan-Washington Council of Governments FARM Committee
- National Capital Region Geospatial Data Exchange Food Mapping Workgroup
- Regional Food Policy Council Community of Practice



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