

RECOMMENDATIONS /

Based on the findings of the CFA, the following Recommended Goals and Recommended Actions for implementation were compiled by the participants of the collaborative Malden Community Food Assessment process.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommended Goal: Leadership and processes are established for strategic prioritization of CFA recommendations and creation of a Malden Food Plan.

Recommended Actions:

1. Seek approval or adoption of Malden CFA by Malden city leadership.
2. Establish a Food Policy Council (FPC) or comparable organized body as the leading coalition for prioritizing the recommendations of the Malden CFA and creating a Community Food Plan. FPCs bring together stakeholders from diverse food related sectors to examine how the food system is operating and develop recommendations to improve it. FPCs involve a variety of stakeholders from different segments of the local food system. FPCs are also involved in education efforts and the implementation of policies and programs related to the food system, particularly to help achieve food security.
3. Ensure all policies, practices and programs launched by the FPC are equitable by utilizing a health equity impact assessment during development and implementation.
4. Ensure FPC works closely with other boards, commissions and municipal departments to guarantee that food access and food security goals are included in other municipal plans and policies. These may include, but are not limited to: Comprehensive/Master Plans, Transportation Plans, Housing Plans, and Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRP).
5. Consider launching a civic engagement campaign due to large numbers of survey respondents not knowing what ward they live in.

FOOD CONSUMPTION

Recommended Goal: Ensure all Malden residents at all times have physical access, economic access and decision making power to consume food that meets their dietary needs and cultural food preferences.



Recommended Actions:

1. Ensure all eligible residents receive food assistance resources.
 - a. This should include efforts to maximize enrollment and participation in WIC, SNAP, HIP, as well as food assistance resources that do not have income eligibility criteria, such as area food pantries.
2. Increase food retail options that offer affordable, healthy, and culturally preferred food. This should include exploring options for online shopping and delivery, particularly at supermarkets; partnering with neighborhood markets/convenience stores to increase the availability of affordable and fresh foods. A neighborhood market/convenience store strategy could include establishing a CSA drop off at such a location, which would require no financial risk or commitment of the store owner, bring in additional customers, and increase fresh, local food offerings that could be SNAP/HIP eligible.
3. Promote transportation services improvements that modify or add bus routes and stops around supermarkets and food pantries.
4. Promote transportation infrastructure improvements that expands and enhances sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure across Malden, and particularly in areas that facilitate connections to supermarkets and food pantries.
5. Engage the school committee, food service providers, parents, and students to provide information and promote revision to and improvement of the Malden Public Schools District Wellness Policy.
6. Support student-led efforts to further assess school meals (i.e. quality and quantity of meals served) and work with school administrators to incorporate feasible recommendations for an improved school menu.
7. Explore the creation of a student advisory group dedicated to making changes and improvements to the school food.
8. Explore best practice approaches to encouraging healthy eating in schools in a culturally appropriate and youth-empowered manner, such as involving students in the development of school meals.
9. Work with contracted school food service providers to expand the Mass Farm to School initiative. Farm to school activities enhance classroom education through hands-on learning related to food, health, agriculture, and nutrition.⁶² School food service directors can improve the nutritional value and taste of school meals while also supporting the local economy. Farmers selling locally-grown products to schools can earn a profit while finding new ways to connect with schools. Farm to school provides all students access to nutritious, high-quality, local food so they are ready to learn and grow.
10. Address gaps in wage and housing by assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of the MA Economic Development Bill (2018)⁶³ and the Malden Affordable Housing Trust Fund Ordinance⁶⁴ and how the Community Preservation Act can benefit the affordability of housing in Malden.⁶⁵

62 <https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/>

63 <https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/2511/20191112-Affordable-Housing-Trust-Fund-Ordinance-FINAL?bidId=> and how the Malden Community Preservation Act can benefit the affordability of housing in Malden

64 <https://www.chapa.org/housing-news/massachusetts-legislature-establishes-an-economic-mobility-commission> and the Malden Housing Trust Fund Ordinance

65 <https://www.cityofmalden.org/313/Community-Preservation-Committee-CPC>

FOOD PRODUCTION

Recommended Goal: All Malden residents, schools, and community-based organizations have opportunities to grow healthy food.

Recommended Actions:

The Malden Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)⁶⁶ was last updated in 2017, and one goal in particular aligns with the goals and findings of the current CFA: **Goal #7* Increase opportunities for community gardening and urban agriculture.** Malden OSRP Goal 7 and associated recommended actions below are aligned with the Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan⁶⁷. Specific MA Local Food Plan references are: Action 3.2.8; Recommendation 3.16; and Action 3.16.1. Some recommended actions the OSRP identifies for the municipality to reach this goal include:

1. Inventory and assess suitability of municipally-owned parcels for food production, and prioritize these for establishing or expanding community gardens and urban agriculture
2. Partner with Malden community groups to develop a strategy for establishing and expanding community gardens and urban agriculture
3. Maintain a city-wide plan to provide resources and availability of community and home gardening to residents.
4. Facilitate exchange of community gardening knowledge between residents and community groups with expertise in this area.

In addition to the Malden OSRP recommendations, the Malden CFA also recommends the following actions:

5. Include rooftops and privately-owned vacant parcels in inventory and assessment of food production parcels. Areas of Malden that could benefit from community gardening and urban agriculture include: along the Northern Strand Community Trail (NSCT), parks and recreation areas, along the Malden River, Malden Housing Authority housing developments and senior housing (given that residents in those developments are involved in all aspects of planning and implementation)
6. Apply design principles and implement programming to ensure inclusive and accessible community gardening and urban agricultural opportunities for all residents from various cultural, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, and of all abilities.
7. Expand partnerships with neighboring community groups on aligned initiatives.
8. Explore ways for the Malden Public Schools, after-school programs, and/or Malden's Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program (MSYEP) to access existing community gardens, and/or for the community to access school gardens, such as through a shared or joint use agreement

⁶⁶ http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/8.29-FINAL_Malden_OSRP.pdf

⁶⁷ <https://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>

9. Explore a financial and leadership sustainability plan for Malden Community Garden (consider 501c3 designation, inclusive leadership of all Maldonians, ensuring language accessibility, maintain a relationship with MBTA/National Grid to increase the number of current plots, etc.)

FOOD RETAIL + DISTRIBUTION

Recommended Goal: All points of sale and distribution in Malden provide food that is representative of the communities' needs and preferences, including access to healthy, affordable, and culturally preferred food options.

Recommended Actions:

1. Conduct an in-depth retail assessment to determine how the distribution system can cater to the needs of smaller stores and have healthy affordable food reach more residents of Malden. This could include:
 - a. identify barriers for retail stores to accept WIC;
 - b. identify possible incentives and resources for food retailers to offer more produce;
 - c. identify possible incentives and resources for food retailers to accept SNAP and WIC;
 - d. identify evidence-based practices to increase the buying power of small retailers to offer more healthy, culturally appropriate food (fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains).
 - e. mapping current supply chain and distribution networks;
 - f. identify and engage local and regional distributors to understand barriers to procurement and interest in participating in distribution networks;
 - g. work with smaller food retailers that had high HFAI scores. Support acceptance of SNAP and WIC, and address their business goals and needs. Increase capacity to meet community food needs.
2. Explore options to increase the number of fresh, local food vendors (i.e. farmers markets and CSAs) in Malden.
3. Incorporate food security, in collaboration with emergency food distribution sites, into municipal emergency preparedness and resiliency plans to meet challenges of increased demand in the future.
4. Source collaborative funding to handle infrastructure requirements tied to increased demand for emergency food distribution.
5. Request that the Malden legislative delegation support:
 - a. the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) to provide SNAP doubling at farmers markets and CSAs statewide.

b. statewide efforts to implement a common application portal for MassHealth, SNAP, and other needs-based programs, that serves as an integrated, streamlined eligibility system for state-administered benefits.

FOOD RESCUE + WASTE DIVERSION

Recommended Goal: The City of Malden and community-based organizations utilize all available resources to reduce food waste and redistribute food to those that are able to use and consume it, while improving the city's environmental footprint.

Recommended Actions:

1. Request Malden legislative delegation support statewide efforts to decrease food waste, such as:
 - a. Legislative Session 21/22 dockets SD1338/HD1192: An Act Decreasing Food Waste by Standardizing the Date Labeling of Food and An Act encouraging the donation of food to persons in need SD.385⁶⁸:
 - b. Mass Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proposed waste ban amendments to 310 CMR 19.000⁶⁹ that would: 1) Add mattresses and textiles to the list of materials banned from disposal in Massachusetts, and 2) Lower the threshold for the existing ban on disposal of commercial organic (food) materials so that it applies to facilities that generate one-half a ton per week or more of these materials for disposal.
2. Explore ways to coordinate an education campaign for institutions, consumers, businesses, and nonprofits to understand, raise awareness of, and take action to standardize label dating. This could include groups like MassDEP, DPH, MDAR, Food for Free, etc.
3. Explore ways (such as the Food Security Infrastructure Grant program⁷⁰) to increase capacity to rescue more fresh produce and increase refrigeration capacity of pantries/distribution sites.
4. Examine institutional and commercial food waste and devise strategies for connecting good food to the emergency food network and residents most in need.
5. Explore ways to initiate composting at residences and schools, and incorporate composting into classes, such as through a feasibility analysis for municipal curbside composting services.
6. Support all school food waste reduction efforts. Conduct waste audits in school cafeterias to help determine best practices in reducing food waste, for example, whether portion sizes are appropriate, what foods are preferred by students or if adopting an "offer versus serve" approach could help reduce food waste.

⁶⁸ <https://mafoodsystem.org/projects/legislation/>

⁶⁹ <https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-waste-disposal-bans>

⁷⁰ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/food-security-infrastructure-grant-program>