



2025

FOOD ACTION PLAN

IMPACT REPORT





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Section 1:

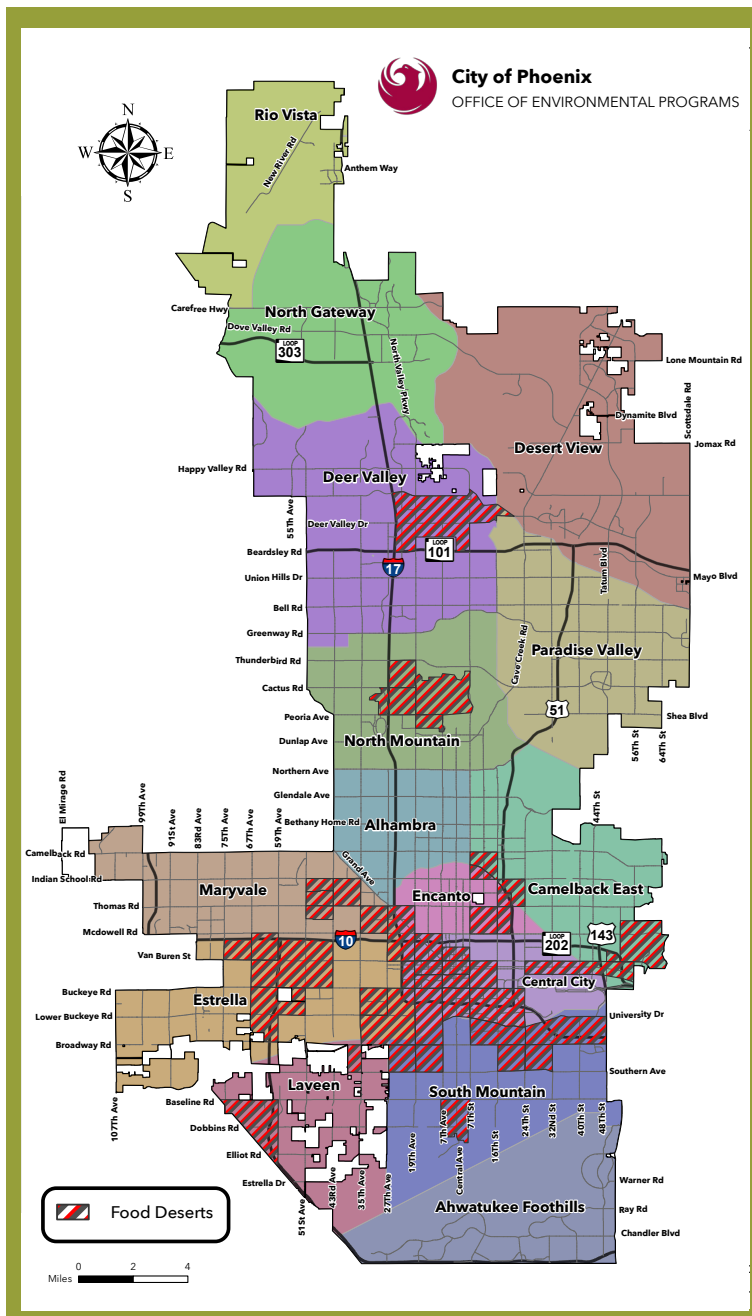
Overview of the 2025 Food Action Plan

Introduction

The City of Phoenix is committed to developing a sustainable, equitable, and thriving local food system. In March 2020, the Phoenix City Council adopted the 2025 Phoenix Food Action Plan (PFAP), which outlines goals, strategies, and actions designed to improve access to healthy food for all Phoenix residents. The PFAP and its five core goals were developed through an extensive community and stakeholder engagement process. The five goals are:



Since the plan was adopted by the Mayor and City Council, the Office of Environmental Programs (OEP) has worked alongside numerous local partners to actualize these goals through a variety of community-focused programs. This report highlights the progress made since the plan's adoption, showcasing key achievements, ongoing efforts, and areas for future focus. This report underscores the city's ability to create a more equitable and sustainable food future for all its residents when a focused plan with measurable goals and adequate funding are devoted to the effort.



This map is based on 2015 data from the USDA Food Access Research Atlas.

What is a Food Action Plan, and why do we need one?

A **Food Action Plan** is a strategic framework designed to address issues related to food access, sustainability, health, and economic development. The PFAP was developed in response to a Community Food Assessment conducted by the OEP and the Maricopa County Food Systems Coalition (MarCo) in 2018, which identified major gaps in food security and diet-related health. In particular, the study highlighted the presence and impacts of food deserts, defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as areas without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

43 of the 55
food deserts in Maricopa County fall
within the city of Phoenix boundaries,
and nearly half of Phoenix's population
lives within a food desert.

In response to this need, the PFAP was developed in partnership with city departments, community organizations, local businesses, and residents. Key stakeholders from these groups attended workshops, completed surveys, and participated in focus groups to identify solutions that ensure access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food. The actions identified in the plan - detailed in the following sections - aimed to promote food access by increasing local food production while using sustainable practices to promote the overall resilience of our local food system.

Weeks after the 2025 PFAP was adopted in March 2020, the global food system experienced a major shock. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international supply chains, leading to widespread shortages and empty shelves at the grocery store. The limited availability of food, compounded by rising unemployment, exacerbated existing inequities in food access. The City of Phoenix OEP responded to this crisis by leveraging its allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) COVID-19 relief funds to implement new programs through its Resilient Food Systems Initiative (RFSI). This funding directly enabled the creation of 14 new programs that activated the local food system and sought to increase its resilience. These programs were developed in direct response to the goals outlined in the PFAP, and the following report details the progress made toward these goals over the last five years. This funding was instrumental in the successful implementation of the goals within this plan.



Key Achievements



5,546,605
meals delivered



22,149,876.24
pounds of food distributed



51,264
pounds of food produced



818 people trained



\$1,292,219.00
revenue generated



94,940
pounds of food diverted from the landfill



872,100
gallons of water saved

1,132,104
households served



This section provides a high-level overview of what our food systems programs have achieved over the last five years. These metrics highlight the impact of our programs related, in part, to meal distribution, food waste diversion, and community support. These programs were made possible through \$14 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which allowed us to quickly develop programs that strengthened the local food system. Through the collective efforts of our community partners, grantees, and Phoenix residents, we've made significant progress toward the goals outlined in the 2025 Phoenix Food Action Plan with more than 90% of the actions completed or in progress.



Below, we summarize the most notable outcomes of these initiatives:



Meals Distributed: **5,546,605 meals**

5,546,605 meals were distributed to residents through the Funds to Feed, Feed Phoenix, and Meals that Work Programs.



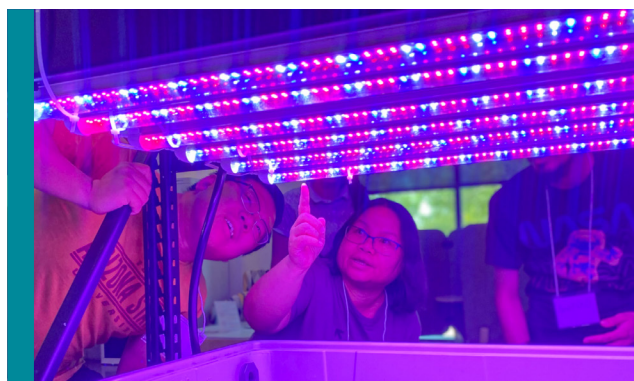
Food Grown by Residents: **4,670 pounds**

4,670 pounds of food were grown in 248 gardens installed serving 776 Phoenix residents through the Backyard Garden Program, which helped increase residents' access to fresh produce by empowering them to grow food at home.



Pounds of Food Produced Overall: **51,264 pounds**

51,264 pounds of food were produced across 12 grant projects and the Backyard Garden Program, which helped increase residents' access to fresh produce by empowering them to grow food at home.



Grant Funds Distributed: **\$1,808,694.20**

31 projects were supported between 2022-2024 through three grant programs; the Food System Transformation Grant, Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture Grant, and Agri-Food Technology Innovation Grant, which supported local farmers and non-profit organizations to increase food access and implement innovative practices, such as agrivoltaics, indoor vertical farming, portable cold storage containers, irrigation and shade improvements.



Food Waste Diverted: **94,840 pounds**

94,840 pounds (over 47 tons!) of food waste was diverted from landfills through Project REDUCE, the Food Waste Watchers Program, and four grant projects under the Food System Transformation and Agri-Food Tech grants.

Local Businesses Supported: **58 businesses**

58 local food businesses were supported through technical assistance, business training, and seed funding, helping to build capacity within the local food economy.



Residents Trained: **818 residents**

818 residents received hands-on education and training on topics related to local food systems like gardening, composting, and starting a food business.



Partnerships Developed: **152 partnerships**

36 direct partnerships were developed with non-profit organizations, cooperatives, benefit corporations, and community groups; 116 indirect partnerships were developed through entities managing city-funded programs.

The following section provides further insights into the progress made toward the five goals of the 2025 Phoenix Food Action Plan. For each goal, we highlight several initiatives that align with the actions identified in the 2025 plan, demonstrating our commitment to acting on the community's priorities. These initiatives showcase our efforts to increase food access, provide training and education, promote sustainable and diverse agricultural practices, and strengthen the resilience of our food system. The final section of the report provides a summary of all the actions outlined in the 2025 Plan and includes a review of the South Phoenix Food Action Plan (which was embedded as part of the 2025 Food Action Plan). Together, this offers a comprehensive review of the progress made so far and the work to come.



Progress by Goal

The 2025 Phoenix Food Action Plan is broken down into five main goals, each with several identified strategies and actions to support their implementation. This report aims to share the progress achieved toward each goal by highlighting programs and initiatives implemented by the OEP and its partners from 2020-2025. In the following sections, green boxes indicate that significant progress was made toward achieving a Food Action Plan goal, yellow boxes indicate that some progress was made, and red boxes indicate that minimal progress was made in that area.

GOAL 1: Healthy Food for All

All people living in Phoenix should have enough to eat and have access to affordable, healthy, local, and culturally appropriate food.

Goal 1: Healthy Food for All		
Strategy	Strategy Details	Progress
#1	Incorporate agriculture, food processing, and distribution into existing and future land use plans. Collaborate with key partners to facilitate new opportunities for urban-scale gardens, farms, gleaning, and distribution systems.	Completed
#2	Where feasible, use existing financial resources for food production and infrastructure. Pursue grants and other funding opportunities that will enhance the community's access to healthy foods.	Completed
#3	Partner with schools and others to support and promote education for youth and adults.	Completed



Highlight

PlanPhx (City of Phoenix General Plan)

In partnership with food system stakeholders, such as Valley of the Sun United Way, Vitalyst Health Foundation, Maricopa County Food Systems Coalition, Maricopa County Department of Public Health, and residents who participated in the general plan leadership committee, the OEP advocated for a healthy food system goal to be included in the 2015 comprehensive General Plan, PlanPHX. This goal was also included in the 2025 PlanPHX and states: "Promote the growth of a resilient, sustainable, equitable, and thriving local food system that makes healthy, affordable and culturally relevant food available to all Phoenix residents." Inclusion of this goal in the general plan, approved by City Council and Phoenix voters, set the foundation for current programs and future policies.

Highlight:

Food System Transformation Grants - Spotlight on Sun Produce Cooperative

The Food System Transformation (FST) Grant supports projects designed to transform the Phoenix food system into one that is more resilient, sustainable, equitable, healthy, and thriving. As of 2024, the FST grant funded 18 projects for a total of \$1,147,353 dollars.

One of those projects was led by the Sun Produce Cooperative (SPC), an agricultural and marketing organization that works to reduce barriers to entry for small-scale producers into Arizona markets. SPC utilized FST grant funds to lease a large, refrigerated truck which allowed them to significantly increase the distribution of locally grown produce in Phoenix. With the help of the grant, SPC was also able to implement a "Local Food Marketplace" software system to expand produce access and create new market opportunities in low-income, low-food access areas. In 12 short months, SPC distributed approximately 685,981 pounds of locally grown produce to Phoenix residents, generating an estimated \$631,125 in sales for local growers, businesses, and organizations.

Highlight:

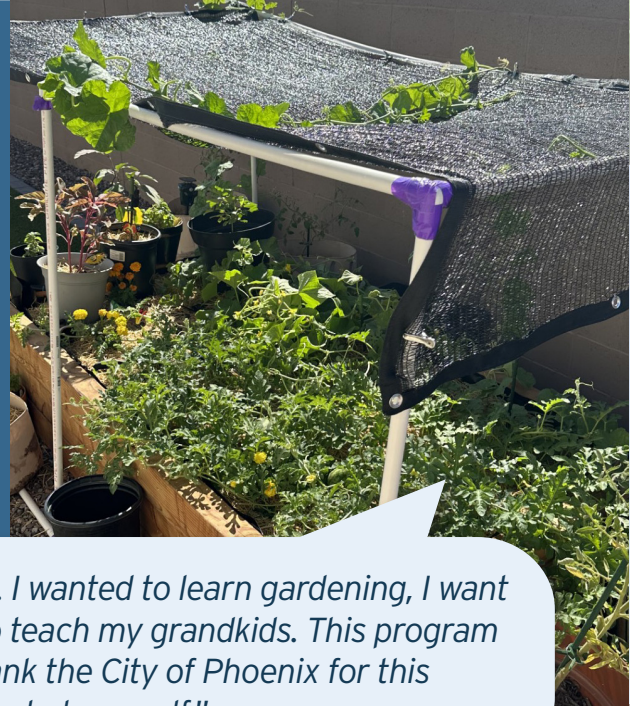
Backyard Garden Program

The Backyard Garden Program empowers residents, most impacted by food insecurity and hunger, to grow healthy food in their own backyards to improve health outcomes, promote physical activity, increase food access, and help reduce food costs. Phoenix residents living in food deserts and meeting low-income requirements in select Urban Villages (Alhambra, Central City, Estrella, Laveen, Maryvale, and South Mountain) received one of three free garden systems - a traditional raised bed, aquaponics, or LEHR Garden. In addition to the garden system, participating residents received all necessary gardening materials, training, and one year of individualized support provided by the contracted garden partners, TigerMountain Foundation, NxT Horizon, and LEHR Innovations. Since 2022, 248 gardens were installed, assisting 776 individuals, and growing over 4,670 pounds of food. Residents who completed the year-long program reported an increase in fruit and vegetable intake, spending less money on groceries, sharing surplus food they've grown with neighbors and friends, and increased physical activity and time outdoors since having their garden system installed.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Phoenix Residents – BACKYARD GARDEN PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

TigerMountain Foundation

Johnetta Dorsey, a resident of South Mountain Village, started her gardening journey with a raised garden bed from the TigerMountain Foundation. With no prior gardening experience but a strong desire to learn, Johnetta eagerly applied to the Backyard Garden Program after seeing it advertised on Facebook. Since being accepted, she has embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly and is now known for her thriving garden and plentiful harvests.



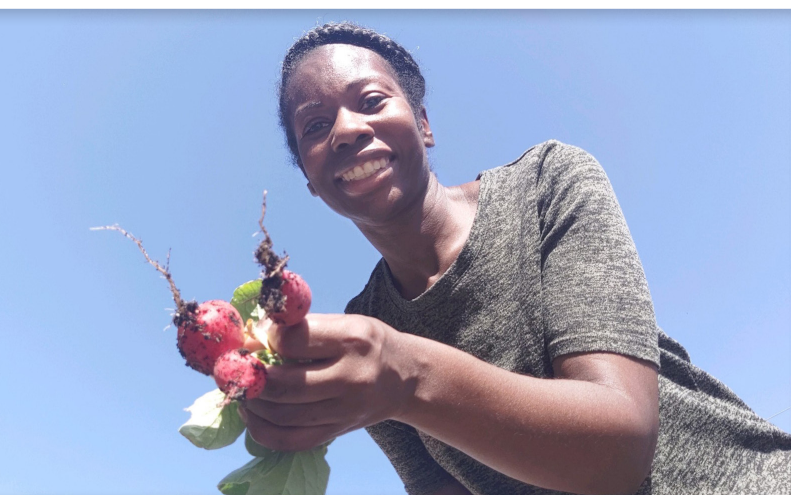
"This is a great program! I'm an older person. I wanted to learn gardening, I want to be able to grow my own food and I want to teach my grandkids. This program allows people like me to do that. I want to thank the City of Phoenix for this opportunity and thank them for helping me to help myself."



LEHR

Angelo Young, a Laveen resident, discovered the Backyard Garden Program while browsing the City of Phoenix website. Drawn to the idea of growing his own food, he signed up and received a LEHR garden system. Now, harvesting fresh leafy greens each morning has become a favorite part of his routine.

"I like to come out here (garden) in the morning because the lettuce is the sweetest in the cold of the morning. I'll pluck a couple of leaves to make a juice with kale or spinach. This was the first time I ever grew broccoli and it's so cool to snip it off the plant and just eat it."



NxT

Xavier Jones, a resident of South Mountain Village, received an aquaponics garden system through the program. Within just the first few months, he successfully grew over 10 pounds of fresh produce. Xavier appreciates the convenience and accessibility of having homegrown produce right at his fingertips"



"Literally, I can go outside, harvest whatever I need and use it to cook that night. That's really convenient and inexpensive."



GOAL 2: Strengthen the Local Economy

Businesses that produce, process, distribute, and sell local and healthy food should be recognized as integral to the economy and encouraged to grow and thrive in Phoenix.

Goal 2: Strengthen the Local Economy		
Strategy	Strategy Details	Progress
#1	Recognize food production as a highest and best use of land.	Completed
#2	Incorporate agriculture, food processing, and distribution into existing and future economic development plans.	Completed
#3	Establish a local food buying preference in future City contracts and include in current Sustainable Purchasing Policy.	In Progress
#4	Partner with stakeholders to support and promote a Buy Local Food campaign.	Completed



The second goal of the 2025 PFAP is to strengthen the local economy by promoting food businesses and fostering innovation within the local food sector. This goal encompasses strategies that formalize the role of food systems within the local economy, such as incorporating related activities into economic development plans, prioritizing land uses related to food production, processing, and distribution, and fostering agri-food tech innovation through business incubation and grant programs. This goal also promotes the creation of markets for locally grown products by implementing strategies like a Buy Local campaign and exploring how institutional buying power can be leveraged to source local, healthy food.



Highlight:

Healthy Food Procurement Policy

The OEP and Office of Public Health are developing a procurement policy that outlines new nutrition guidelines for food, beverages, catered meals, and snacks purchased with City funds. Ultimately, the policy aims to ensure healthy food and beverage options are available to all City employees and individuals that visit City facilities and attend City functions, creating an environment that promotes health and wellness. The team began developing the policy in February 2024 and, since then, the OEP has convened 10 internal departments to provide input, solicit feedback, and guidance. Additionally, OEP partnered with the Arizona State University, College of Health Solutions to develop a practical guide on how to effectively implement the policy. The Healthy Food Procurement Policy Administrative Regulation (AR) is anticipated to become effective in fall 2025.

Highlight:

Phoenix Let's Eat Local! Campaign

The Phoenix: Let's Eat Local! Campaign was a collaboration between the Office of Environmental Programs (OEP) and Local First Arizona (LFA) designed to strengthen connections between Phoenix residents and the local makers, growers, and advocates shaping resilient food systems. This initiative encouraged residents to explore, celebrate, and support local food communities while fostering a sustainable future for Phoenix's diverse food pathways. The campaign cast a spotlight on five historic neighborhoods with rich food cultures: Eastlake Park & Nuestros Barrios Unidos, Maryvale, Miracle Mile, South Phoenix, and the Roosevelt Row, Melrose, and Grand Avenue area.

Launched in 2022 ahead of Super Bowl LVII, hosted in Arizona, the campaign promoted over 80 local businesses through social media, the campaign's official webpage, and the Good Food

Finder, LFA's local business directory. This effort attracted both residents and out-of-state visitors to explore and dine at local restaurants across the Valley. In addition to supporting local businesses, the campaign distributed more than 1,000 bilingual (English and Spanish) information kits to approximately 12 community hubs and food distribution sites in the featured neighborhoods. Tailored for families, seniors, and veterans, the kits included resources such as flyers, stickers, and magnets highlighting programs like Double Up Food Bucks, where to purchase local produce using SNAP EBT, budget-friendly local shopping tips, Senior WIC benefits, and other food assistance resources.



SPOTLIGHT ON: *Homer* FARMs

Zhihao Chen and Chad Geelhood are food systems entrepreneurs dedicated to advancing innovative agri-food technology projects that benefit the community. Zhihao and Chad are co-founders of Homer Farms Inc., a vertical farming startup that seeks to create a circular food economy by linking food production and food waste. In 2022, the Homer Farms team received an Agri-Food Tech Innovation Grant, funded by Phoenix Mayor Gallego's allocation of ARPA funds, that helped them to launch the first large-scale indoor vertical farm in Phoenix.



Located in the Maryvale Village planning area, the **10,000 square foot facility** utilizes LED lighting and deep-water hydroponic technologies to cultivate crops efficiently. Since its inception, the farm has produced over **10,000 pounds of food** while using **95% less water** than traditional agriculture.

In addition, the farm's anaerobic digestion system has processed 45,000 pounds of food waste, created 5,625 gallons of liquid fertilizer and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 171,000 pounds (1 pound of food waste produces 3.8 pounds of GHG). Many of the fresh leafy greens grown at Homer Farms are distributed to food banks, senior living facilities, and other nonprofit organizations, helping to nourish the community and provide healthy food options in food deserts, where access to fresh produce is limited. Since launching its indoor vertical farm in Maryvale, Homer Farms has expanded its operations to include a processing facility and won a Request for Proposal to open a solar-powered container farm on a City-owned property. Fundings and technical assistance is being provided by the City of Phoenix, Salt River Project (SRP), and Arizona State University. Homer Farms will develop a new container solar vertical farm in Fall 2025. Excess solar power will be sold back to SRP and 20% of the produce grown at the site will be donated to the community, distributed by non-profit partners, Diana Gregory Outreach Services and St. Vincent de Paul.





GOAL 3:

Celebrating Local & Diverse Agriculture

Growing food in Phoenix and the region should be easy and valued whether for personal use or for business.



The third goal of the 2025 PFAP is to promote local food production by reducing barriers related to zoning, land access, and a limited agricultural workforce. While the City was unable to implement certain proposed amendments to the zoning code, we made strides in identifying strategies for farmland preservation. Additionally, the City has made progress toward its goal of activating city-owned properties for urban agriculture, helping to set the precedent for future local food projects. The OEP has been successful in our efforts to provide workforce and business development, offering a variety of training programs and apprenticeships that helped strengthen the local food sector.

Goal 3: Celebrating Local & Diverse Agriculture		
Strategy	Strategy Details	Progress
#1:	Update codes and ordinances where appropriate to eliminate barriers and encourage developing a healthy food infrastructure.	In Progress
#2:	Explore development of agriculture community land trusts and/or preservation mechanisms.	Complete
#3:	Explore the utilization of City-owned parcels as opportunities for urban agriculture, focused on food deserts within irrigation districts	Complete
#4:	Support the growth of land uses that contribute to a healthy and sustainable food system (i.e. grocery stores, community gardens, urban farms and other urban agriculture elements).	Complete
#5	Use existing and explore new job training resources, where feasible, and partner with others to provide training opportunities.	Complete



Highlight:

South-Central Transit-Oriented Development Plan

The South-Central Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Plan, adopted by Phoenix City Council in 2022, outlines strategies for promoting health, mobility, and food access in the neighborhoods adjacent to the South-Central light rail extension. The plan was co-developed with residents and local businesses through an extensive community engagement process, and prioritizes investments in green infrastructure, housing, and equitable transit-oriented communities (TOC). Community health and food access are key aspects of the plan, and there is an explicit mention of supporting urban agriculture-related land uses like community gardens, grocery stores, farmers' markets, and community kitchens. The plan's inclusion of food-focused design elements will help create opportunities for urban agriculture, community food programs, and partnerships in the South-Central neighborhoods. Looking ahead, the South-Central TOD Plan will serve as a model for incorporating food-focused land use into future planning and development projects to promote food access and community well-being.

Highlight:

Sustainable Cooperative Food Business Training Program

The Sustainable Cooperative Food Business (SCFB) Training Program educated Phoenix residents about the cooperative business model and equipped them with the skills and knowledge needed to launch their own cooperative food businesses. The City of Phoenix offered this 10-week program in partnership with Thrive Consultancy Inc., an Arizona Benefit Corporation that provides business development training and consulting for worker-owned businesses and other values-based business models. The SCFB Training Program taught participants about business planning, group decision-making, budgeting, marketing, and incorporation, empowering them to start or join worker-owned cooperative businesses. Participants also received access to sustainable business experts, on-going mentorship, and seed funding to launch their new ventures after completing the program. Since 2022, Thrive has facilitated five cohorts of the program. The first cohort focused on veterans, and subsequent cohorts included three English-language and one Spanish-language group. In total, **58 participants completed the program, resulting in 2 new businesses now operating and incorporated as cooperatives as of 2024.**

Future Urban Agriculture Site at 32nd Ave. & McDowell Rd.

The 32nd Avenue and McDowell Road property is a former brownfield site located in Council District 4. The City intends to transform the site into a hub for food access and urban agriculture through an interdepartmental partnership between the OEP, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Office of Innovation, the Community and Economic Development (CED) Department, Water Services Department, and the Office of the City Engineer. To support this transformation, the OEP is providing \$425,000 through brownfields general obligation bond funds to remediate the site.

Extensive and meaningful community engagement is planned for Winter 2025/ early 2026 to gather ideas on how to best use the space in consideration of food access and production, as well as educational opportunities for people living in the surrounding neighborhoods. Following the community engagement process, a Request for Information (RFI) will be issued for redevelopment of the site with the focus on project(s) that will strengthen the local food system by incubating new urban agriculture initiatives and local food enterprises and helping to improve neighborhood food access in this community.

SPOTLIGHT ON: *Maria Parra Cano &* **THE FOOD FOREST COOPERATIVE**

Maria Parra Cano is a chef, ancestral foods educator, community organizer, mother, and farmer in South Phoenix. She is the also owner of Sana Sana, the founder of the Cihuapactli Collective and one of the co-owners of the Food Forest Cooperative. Maria is committed to improving the health of her community by connecting them with nutritious, culturally significant foods.



She played an integral role in the City's COVID-19 response, providing **indigenous food care packs with dry goods and fresh vegetables** for **4,316 individuals** through the **Funds to Feed Program**.

Maria and her organizations participated in a variety of the City's food initiatives, leveraging these resources and training to continue serving the community. The Food Forest Cooperative (FFC) participated in the Sustainable Cooperative Food Business Training Program and afterwards incorporated as one of AZ's first worker-owned cooperatives. FFC now operates a 1-acre food forest in South Phoenix, where they work to reconnect the community to traditional foods grown using regenerative agricultural practices. They serve the community by providing educational workshops, volunteer opportunities, and by selling their value-added products made using their produce at local markets, helping to increase the availability of traditional foods and medicinal plants.







GOAL 4: Maintain a Sustainable Environment

Growing food in Phoenix and the region should be easy and valued whether for personal use or for business.

The fourth goal of the 2025 PFAP highlights the importance of building a food system that promotes access to healthy food for all while maintaining and improving the environment. This goal encompasses strategies related to reducing waste and improving efficiency in all sectors of the food system through the exploration of new policies and grant funding for businesses and community organizations to adopt sustainable practices.

Goal 4: Maintain a Sustainable Environment		
Strategy	Strategy Details	Progress
1	Update codes and ordinances to clarify food waste diversion, i.e., composting opportunities.	In Progress
2	Support and promote methods to prevent edible food from entering the waste stream	Complete
3	Promote and support sustainable practices in all areas of the food system.	Complete

Highlight:

Food Waste Watchers

U.S. households generate 43.6 million tons of food waste annually, contributing to environmental harm, financial losses of up to \$900 per year for families with children, and reduced access to healthy foods—particularly fruits and vegetables. In response, the City of Phoenix and Arizona State University launched **Food Waste Watchers**, a two-part program designed to reduce household food waste through education and accessible composting solutions.

Building on an earlier “Waste Watchers” initiative piloted by the City of Phoenix Public Works Department in 2018–2019, Food Waste Watchers provided free education on food waste prevention and composting, along with a year-long complimentary compost collection service for residents living in food deserts and communities heavily impacted by COVID-19. **The program engaged 123 participants and successfully diverted 5,385 pounds of food scraps from landfills.**

Food Waste Watchers included two research studies evaluating different combinations of solutions: one study paired education with a Mill bin (high-tech food recycler) or a Recycled City bucket (local compost collection service). Both studies led to reductions in household food waste, improved perceptions and behaviors around food waste, and—in the education group—improvements in diet quality. Notably, waste reductions were sustained and continued to improve over six months, highlighting the program’s potential for lasting impact.



Highlight:

Project REDUCE

According to the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), Phoenix generates an estimated 270,000 tons of food waste annually, with restaurants accounting for 69,000 tons. To address this issue, OEP launched Project REDUCE (Restaurants Eliminating & Diverting Uneaten Food through Composting & Education) in 2023, Phoenix's first initiative focused on helping restaurants eliminate food waste.

In its first phase, OEP partnered with NRDC, Waste Not, and Recycled City (R. City) to work with nine restaurants along Roosevelt Row and Historic Grand Avenue. Participating restaurants included Arizona Wilderness Brewing Company, Chilte Egyptian, Earth Plant Based Cuisine, Fair Trade Café, Gogi Berry Café, Irma's Kitchen, La Estacion Mexican, Snooze Eatery, and Testal Mexican Kitchen. Over ten weeks, restaurants received free composting services, connections to food donation programs, and mentorship from Chef Chris Lenza on waste prevention strategies. Waste audits at the start and end of the program helped identify opportunities to minimize waste. **The first cohort of restaurants collectively diverted 31,000 pounds of waste from landfills, with one restaurant reporting that the program helped them to cut salsa waste by 60%.** At the end of the first phase, restaurants received awards from a \$6,000 fund to continue composting or implementing new prevention strategies.

In the second phase of the program, launched in Fall 2024, OEP awarded microgrants of up to \$2,000 each to four restaurants in the Downtown Core to implement innovative food waste prevention strategies. Participating restaurants include Dust Cutter, Gallo Blanco, Fair Trade Café, and Olla Olla Crepes. Projects range from staff training to purchasing food storage equipment. The second cohort of restaurants grew their business by reducing costs through smarter inventory management, increasing sales with new menu items made from surplus ingredients, streamlining menus, and cutting spoiled produce by 50-100% through better preparation, reuse, and staff training. Additionally, customer-focused educational content on social media reached over 27,000 views. By refining their operations and sharing knowledge, these restaurants not only reduced landfill waste and lowered greenhouse gas emissions but also helped educate the community.

Phoenix Residents FOOD WASTE WATCHERS PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

"I am so excited to continue using the mill (bin). Since starting I have saved 46 pounds of food waste from entering the landfills. I don't enjoy the fact that I haven't used that much food that I have bought. This has encouraged me to be more mindful of what foods I buy and how I utilize it before it goes bad. I also enjoy knowing that any food waste can be used to replenish our planet and that's super exciting to me."

"I found not only have I been more mindful of food waste in the house but my visiting relatives are excited to use the bin and have started composting."

Resilient & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE GRANT

– SPOTLIGHT ON R. CITY

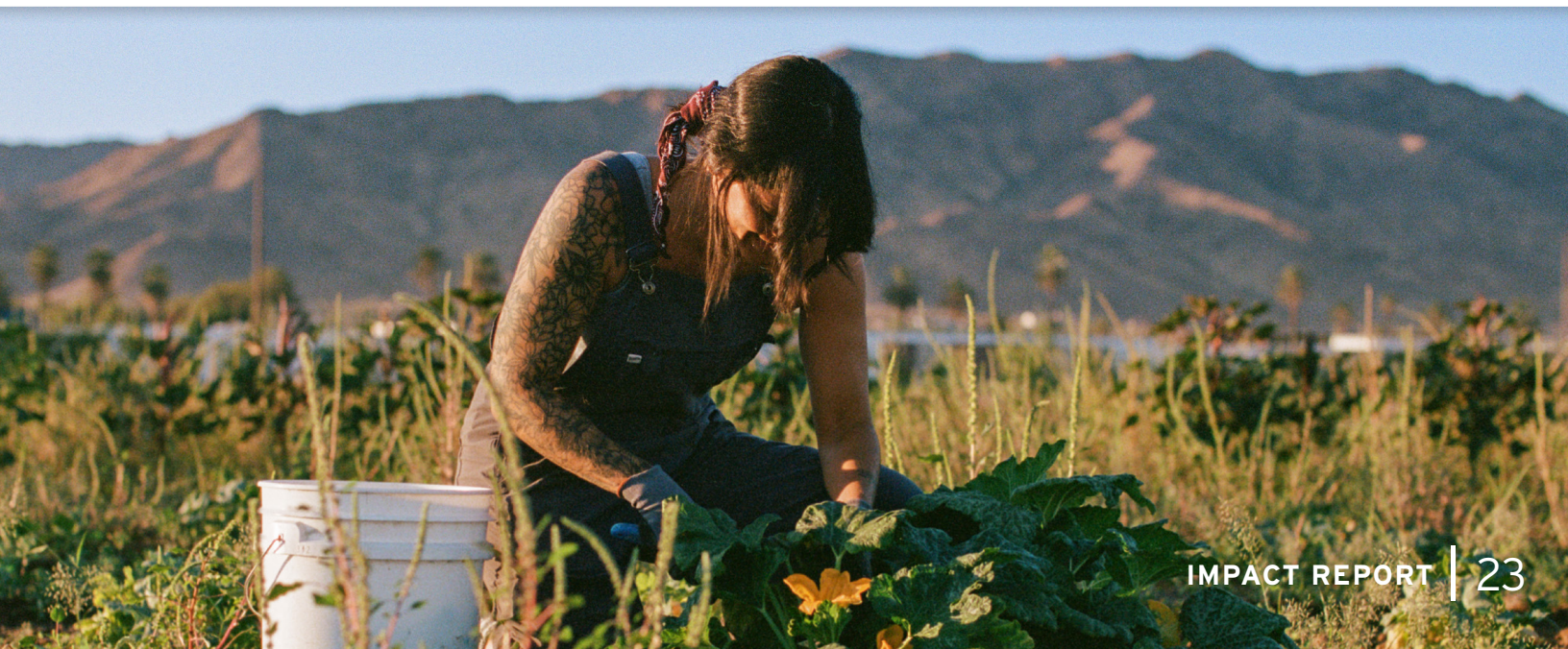
The purpose of the Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture (RSA) Grant is to assist farms to advance projects designed to accelerate the transition toward a more resilient, sustainable, equitable and thriving food system. **Since 2022, OEP awarded six RSA grants, investing a total of \$230,000 to promote food systems sustainability.**

One of the RSA Grant recipients was R. City, a local company that promotes the circular food economy by collecting food waste from across the Valley and composting it to grow fresh produce available for purchase. Through this grant, Recycled City provided 20 food-insecure households with free weekly deliveries of organically grown produce.



Over the course of the project, **973 farm boxes containing 2,254 pounds of fresh produce were distributed.** Additionally, food waste collected from participating households was composted, **generating 1,182 pounds of compost used to grow more produce.**

In addition to this work, R. City has also partnered with the City of Phoenix on its Project REDUCE and Food Waste Watchers programs, providing food waste collection and composting services to both Phoenix restaurants and residents. By sustaining farmland, reducing landfill waste, and strengthening the local food economy, R. City demonstrates the power of a circular food system.





GOAL 5: Creating a Resilient Food System

Develop policies and actions that address local and global challenges posed by climate change, urbanization, political and economic crises, population growth and other factors.

The final goal of the 2025 PFAP is to strengthen the local food system through strategic investments and partnerships that increase its resilience to climate change and other major shocks. Collaborating with other City departments and external stakeholders increases the overall resilience of the food system, as demonstrated by the role that partnerships played in addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goal 5: A Resilient Food System		
Strategy	Strategy Details	Progress
#1:	Research policies and actions that plan for future shocks related to changing population growth, hazards, economic conditions and climate.	Complete
#2:	Convene local food producers with city staff, leaders, and elected officials to build trust and understanding.	Complete
#3:	Explore funding opportunities from federal, state, and philanthropic organizations for food system activities and staff.	Complete



Highlight:

Council District Projects

To further refine program offerings to fit the needs of Phoenix residents, each City Council District and the Mayor's Office was allocated funding to identify food programs or projects that provided short- or long-term support during the pandemic. A total of \$500,000 was provided, with \$100,000 to the Mayor's Office and \$50,000 to each council district. Projects added funds to grant programs for farmers and entrepreneurs, small food banks/pantries, school districts, training programs and funds were also used to enhance and create new community gardens.

Highlight:

Mayor and Council Projects by District

Mayor and Council Projects	Mayor and Council-Selected ARPA projects from 2022 to 2024
Mayor Kate Gallego	Awarded funds to YoBro Farms and Homer Farms.
District 1	Awarded funds to Washington Elementary School District to establish a new food pantry at Alta Vista Elementary School, which opened in November 2024.
District 2 and 3	Council Districts 2 and 3 combined their funding and contributed \$100,000 to Paradise Valley School District for summer meals, grants to schools within the district for existing and new school gardens, and to the Paradise Valley Emergency Food Bank.
District 4	Awarded funds to ICNA Relief, the Phoenix College Pantry and to 11 small pantries in the district.
District 5	Awarded funds to Homestead Park for construction of a new community garden built by TigerMountain Foundation, to 19 North Community Garden, and to Solano Community School Garden
District 6	Funds awarded to CPLC Senior Living Apartments and for the neighborhood pantry.
District 7	Awarded funds for one Urban Agriculture Fellow, to Projects Roots for a solar pergola and for two additional backyard gardens in District 7 and additional funds for the Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture grant program.
District 8	Awarded funds equally among 20 farmers at the Spaces of Opportunity urban farm project.



Highlight:

Gila River Indian Community Grant

In 2021, OEP received a grant from the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) that supported two initiatives to promote urban agriculture and community resilience: the Urban Agriculture Fellowship and the Backyard Garden Program. Through the Urban Agriculture Fellowship, **2 youth participants were placed at two Phoenix-based farms**, with one fellow securing employment with their host farm and the other transitioning into the Sustainable Cooperative Food Business Training Program offered by OEP. The grant also funded 30 backyard gardens and established aquaponic systems at the Cartwright Community Garden and Lassen Elementary School. **Collectively, GRIC-funded backyard gardeners grew 473 pounds of food and spent 1,286 hours tending to their gardens.**

Highlight:

ARPA COVID-19 Relief Programs

In 2020, the Phoenix City Manager recognized the challenges that were going to be faced by the food system in the early days of the pandemic and requested that OEP propose a plan to implement programs that would provide meals and food to the community. Because the 2025 PFAP was completed with extensive community input, OEP was able to use the plan as a framework for the Phoenix Resilient Food System Initiative (RFSI) to respond to the challenge. The intent of the Initiative was to continue and expand the models that innovatively provided food during the pandemic while creating jobs, economic opportunities and strengthening the local food network and to aid in achieving the goals established in the 2025 PFAP. The RFSI is integrated with other City plans,



Highlight:

ARPA COVID-19 Relief Programs (*continued*)

programs, and initiatives, such as, the Climate Action Plan, Public Work's Circular Economy and Zero Waste initiatives, Community and Economic Development's Food System Entrepreneurship and Innovation Strategy, and Human Services poverty reduction efforts. Programs were created in three major categories: 1) Economic Development and Innovation, 2) Local Food Consumption and Production, and 3) Equity and Inclusion. Each program implemented focused on providing food during the pandemic by enabling existing food system stakeholders to stay in business and incorporate sustainable and resilient practices that would serve them in the long term through the pandemic and beyond.

The following three programs are examples of initial programs that immediately addressed the community's food needs in the early stages of the pandemic. The success of these programs enabled OEP to create the RFSI.



Feed Phoenix Program - This program was a collaboration between the City, Local First Arizona Foundation, local farmers and restaurants, caterers, and social service organizations. Local First Arizona Foundation managed this program which purchased produce from 25 local farmers, delivered that produce to 55 local restaurants to use in healthy meals that were then delivered to 43 social service organizations for people in need. **In total, more than 379,769 meals were delivered, and 15,375 produce bags delivered from 2021 through 2022.** The program provided farmers with a regular source of income and crops not go to waste, restaurants/caterers stayed in business, and nonprofit organizations were able to serve the needs of their local community. The local food system was strengthened with stronger networks and connections and people benefitted from meals that inspired many to continue to eat healthily.



Highlight:

ARPA COVID-19 Relief Programs (continued)

Funds to Feed Phoenix - This program enabled hyper-local nonprofit and grassroots organizations to enhance or expand services already being provided to their community. Funds were granted to 22 nonprofit and grassroots organizations for food distribution, including meals and produce boxes, which also enabled participants to access other social services provided by each organization. Ten school districts received funds for summer meals and food pantries. LISC Phoenix managed this program and has delivered over five million meals from 2021 through 2023. An unexpected outcome of this program is that some of the organizations were able to access additional funding through LISC and their network resulting in expansion of services to the community.



Meals that Work - In partnership with Aventura Catering at the Phoenix Convention Center and Waste Not, a local nonprofit that rescues and redistributes food, this program prepared and delivered 36,000 meals from September 2021 to February 2022 to social service organizations, such as St. Vincent de Paul, local K-12 schools, and more. Fourteen food service employees at the Convention Center were utilized to prepare the meals, which were delivered in the community by Waste Not. This arrangement meant that jobs were maintained and healthy meals were delivered to those in need.

Want to learn more about OEP's Resilient Food Systems Initiative? The OEP produced a documentary called "Cultivating Food Resilience" that highlights the impact of these programs and celebrates the efforts of the City, community partners, and Phoenix residents as we've worked toward the goal of "healthy food for all." Watch the documentary online at [Youtube.com/live/b0k18Ey20yk](https://www.youtube.com/live/b0k18Ey20yk).



COVID-19 RESPONSE *Partnership*

The OEP acknowledges that collaboration with outside organizations focused on creating a healthier, sustainable city was critical to the success of the food system programs implemented during and after the pandemic. We are grateful for and thank the following partners who answered the call to help create the Feed Phoenix, Funds to Feed, and Meals that Work Programs. These partners continue to be exemplary, passionate and impactful partners in the City's food systems program:

Local First Arizona

Kimber Lanning
Gabe Gardner

LISC Phoenix

Terry Benelli
Frieda Pollack

Valley of the Sun United Way

Gilbert Arvizu and
Jayson Matthews
(formerly with VSUW)

Vitalyst Health Foundation

David Martinez III
Gabe Jaramillo and
C.J. Eisenbarth-Harger
(formerly with Vitalyst)

Thank you for collaborating with OEP to create a resilient, sustainable, thriving, and equitable food system.



Section 3

South Phoenix Food Action Plan

In 2017, the City of Phoenix worked with residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations in South Phoenix to develop an action plan for promoting local food systems and healthy, walkable, economically vibrant communities in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Local Foods, Local Places Program. This plan was developed through an equity-driven community engagement process that focused on identifying the community's food access needs and vision for their neighborhood. The following goals were identified through a series of workshops, community tours, and the engagement of a local steering committee comprised of residents, representatives from community organizations, and other partners.

GOAL 1

Activate the City-wide Food Action Plan, tailored for South Phoenix

Action	Action Details	Progress
1.1.	Identify goals and policies from the Phoenix Food Action plan that need to be prioritized and implemented at the South Mountain Village level.	Complete
1.2.	Activate the South Phoenix Local Food Advisory Council to carry on and oversee work.	Incomplete
1.3.	Create a road show presentation for raising awareness and promoting implementation of a complete food network.	Incomplete
1.4.	Engage the Roosevelt School District and the South Mountain Community College in developing the action plan.	In Progress

The actions identified in the city-wide plan that were tailored in South Phoenix include:

- Backyard Garden Program implemented for residents living in South Mountain Village Planning area from 2022 through 2024.
- The Roosevelt School District was engaged through Lassen Elementary School to place an aquaponics garden system for students. The OEP continues to explore opportunities with South Mountain Community College.

The actions in this goal related to activating a South Phoenix Local Food Advisory Council and creating a roadshow were not able to take place due to the pandemic and can be incorporated into the 2030 Phoenix Food Action Plan.



GOAL 2

Identify local food projects

Action	Action Details	Progress
2.1.	Create new commercial community kitchens with training programs for entrepreneurs, and community education.	Complete
2.2.	Create an urban farm with produce going to food partners as part of its mission, with youth and adult job training.	Complete



- A new community kitchen was placed in South Phoenix by Local First Arizona, Fuerza Local.
- The City supported the Spaces of Opportunity project and the farmers at the site, some of which donate produce to the local community or sell to St. Mary's Food Bank or Arizona Food Bank Network, which in turn provides the local produce in their food boxes distributed to people in need.



GOAL 3

Activate the City-wide Food Action Plan, tailored for South Phoenix

Action	Action Details	Progress
3.1.	Use storytelling to capture narrative of marginalization and perspective on existing projects, budding projects, and what is already working in the community.	In Progress
3.2.	Use community potluck suppers and other meal events to educate residents about local foods, and to recruit for further community engagement. Follow up on how local foods could be incorporated into food purchases and preparation.	Incomplete
3.3.	Create multi-media approaches to reach as much of the community as possible, explaining food access issues, and how they can become part of those working with schools.	Incomplete
3.4.	Create focus groups to gather the community's ideas on how to solve food access, and food security issues across the community profile/spectrum.	In Progress
3.5.	Hold meetings between growers and buyers to solve issues of processing and distribution.	In Progress



- Narratives have been collected from residents, farmers, distributors, and food system stakeholders over the past five years and have been incorporated into presentations and this report.
- A documentary was created “Cultivating Food Resilience” that highlights the work completed citywide and within the South Phoenix community.
- In partnership with LISC Phoenix, two focus group sessions were held in 2020 and 2021 to better understand the food issues being faced by the south Phoenix community during the pandemic.
- Focus groups will continue through the engagement process for the 2030 Food Action Plan.
- OEP conducted individual meetings with growers and buyers to understand barriers and develop solutions throughout the past five years.
- In April 2022, a meeting was hosted by OEP and facilitated by Pinnacle Prevention to understand the needs at Spaces of Opportunity to determine the best way to distribute funds that were available.

Actions 3.2 and 3.3 for conducting community suppers and events and engaging the community did not take place due to the pandemic and can be incorporated into the 2030 Phoenix Food Action Plan.



GOAL 4

Recommend policies and strategies for implementing food system initiatives

Action	Action Details	Progress
4.1.	Develop a comprehensive resource directory for food system elements to help identify gaps and needs for policy development.	In Progress
4.2.	Take information learned in Local Foods, Local Places workshop to the city administration and elected officials and relevant state or federal officials.	Complete
4.3.	Develop policy and relationships in support of procurement of local produce by school district.	Incomplete

- The information learned in the Local Foods, Local Places workshops was presented to city administration and elected officials as part of the 2025 Food Action Plan
- A comprehensive food resource directory has not yet been completed and is included as an item to be completed under the OEP Food Systems Program in calendar year 2026, after completion of the 2030 Food Action Plan.

Action 4.3 has not been undertaken due to the extensive ARPA programming that has taken place over the past five years.



Section 4:

Summary

Since the plan's adoption in 2020, Phoenix has made significant progress toward the goals outlined in the 2025 Food Action Plan. **The City has completed or is on track to complete 48 of the plan's 51 total actions, advancing each of the plan's five goal areas.**

The Food Systems Program was established with staff and programmatic funding on July 1, 2021 within the Office of Environmental Programs further solidifying the City's commitment to a sustainable, equitable, and thriving local food system with healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food for all.



Goal 1: Healthy Food for All		13/13 complete or in progress
Integrate policies supportive of food access into the South-Central Transit-Oriented Development Plans.		Complete
Carry out the actions identified in the Edison-Eastlake Choice Neighborhoods Plan pertaining to food access		Complete
Explore criteria for transportation, tree and shade, & other projects that create safe and convenient connections between neighborhoods and healthy food assets.		Complete
Study the impacts of local food production on food equity and social justice for low-income communities.		Complete (Ongoing)
Identify available financial resources from federal and state government, national and local philanthropic organizations, and private sector.		Complete (Ongoing)
Based on the priorities identified in this plan, pursue those funding opportunities that further the priorities.		Complete (Ongoing)
Determine the viability of using current funding mechanisms available from the City that can be used for food system improvements.		Complete
Collaborate with key partners to facilitate new opportunities for urban-scale gardens, farms, gleaning, and distribution systems.		Complete
Support food systems, urban agriculture, health and nutrition education for youth, adults, and seniors.		Complete
Expand and enhance collaboration efforts with state and county agencies working with school districts in Phoenix.		In Progress
Support Farm to Table programs in schools.		In Progress
Identify existing food and farm assets within food desert areas and develop asset maps accessible by residents through a variety of communication tools.		In Progress
Support efforts to enroll eligible families in food assistance programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).		In Progress



Goal 2: Strengthening the Local Economy		11/12 complete or in progress
Coordinate with internal and external economic development professionals to evaluate the economic development potential of the food system as a local industry cluster.		Complete
Provide opportunities to connect food production businesses with available land.		Complete (Ongoing)
Become a leader and hub for ag technology innovation. Collaborate with academic partners to establish an agriculture technology initiative.		Complete
Identify financial and technical assistance opportunities to assist agricultural entrepreneurs and existing food-related businesses.		Complete
Coordinate with other food system stakeholders to explore the need for local and regional food-processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure.		Complete (Ongoing)
Develop comprehensive, user-friendly materials on the requirements of food production, processing, and distribution businesses.		Incomplete
Continue existing work with Arizona State University, City of Tempe, and Local First Arizona Foundation to establish a Food Economy Accelerator for the region		Complete
Explore contract language that can be incorporated into City contracts that purchase food. Coordinate with internal departments to develop guidelines and language.		Complete
Explore the opportunity to provide healthy, local produce to city employees through a CSA program and Initiate a pilot in downtown City facilities.		In Progress
Explore healthy procurement guidelines for City events and facilities.		Complete
Collaborate with partners, such as Local First Arizona Foundation and others to develop and implement a Buy Local Food Campaign.		Complete
Enhance partnership opportunities with grocers to further promote Buy Local.		In Progress



Goal 3: Celebrate Local & Diverse Agriculture		16/18 complete or in progress
Identify and update the zoning code to clearly identify zoning districts in which agricultural land uses are permitted. Develop definitions for agricultural land uses.	In Progress	
Develop streamlined processes for agricultural zoning.	In Progress	
Explore the development of an “Agritainment” zoning district that permits agricultural uses and accessory uses that support the primary agricultural use.	In Progress	
Explore the development of a zoning incentive model (density, PAD district, similar zoning options) that encourages set asides of land for food production.	In Progress	
Explore various mechanisms that could be utilized in concert with nonprofit and private partnerships to preserve land for food production.	Complete	
Identify best practices of other cities in this area.	Complete	
Review existing city policies impacting agricultural land uses. Recommend new or modifications to existing policies.	Complete	
With City departments, create guidelines on how to lease/buy city owned land for food production, including establishing appropriate minimum length of lease terms.	In Progress	
Explore adoption of policies allowing the use of park land and other city-owned land, where feasible and appropriate, that can be made available for food production	In Progress	
Create an inventory of land potentially available for agricultural use, including brownfields.	Complete	
Upon identification of available city-owned land located in food desert and irrigation district areas, issue a Request for Proposal for agricultural development.	In Progress	
Encourage collaboration between public and private sectors and small/medium sized farms, food-hubs, mobile markets, co-ops, community and back-yard gardens.	Complete	
Establish community commercial kitchens and/or use existing commercial kitchens.	In Progress	
Explore opportunities to work with vacant schools with kitchens to use as a training and economic development resource.	In Progress	
Collaborate with partners and institutions, such as the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension of Maricopa County to support the New Farmer Program	Complete	
Identify other potential partners with a focus on providing training for new farmers and laborers.	Complete	
Facilitate access to training programs for farmers and retailers to gain more marketing knowledge and expertise.	Incomplete	
Incorporate city policies that support the creation of agricultural employment training opportunities to further promote job creation in the agriculture sector.	Incomplete	

**Goal 4: Maintain a Sustainable Environment****3/3**
complete or in progress

Identify and update/amend appropriate sections of the zoning code to clearly identify zoning requirements for composting opportunities.

In Progress

Evaluate opportunities for collaboration with other stakeholders involved in the prevention of food waste and food rescue.

Complete

Develop a Sustainable Food Economy Accelerator by identifying mechanisms to assist food-related businesses, including technical assistance and financial resources.

Complete**Goal 5: A Resilient Food System****5/5**
complete or in progress

Conduct research and explore best practices for integrating food system resiliency with hazard mitigation, emergency response, and or resilience planning efforts.

Complete (Ongoing)

Coordinate with City Departments and external stakeholders to identify opportunities for food system integration.

Complete (Ongoing)

Create or identify existing events, workshops, conferences, and other opportunities to connect local food producers with City staff, leaders and elected officials.

Complete

Present the Arizona Food & Farm Forum hosted by Local First Arizona Foundation in the City of Phoenix.

Complete

Identify and apply for available funding opportunities that support the implementation of strategies and actions.

Complete (Ongoing)**Total Actions****Complete****32 / 51****In Progress****16 / 51****Incomplete****3 / 51****In Progress or Complete****48 / 51**



Section 5:

Next Steps

Progress toward these goals was made despite (and in direct response to) the COVID-19 pandemic. Challenges and opportunities created an immediate need for food access and food economy support. During this time, the City prioritized programmatic activities focused on increasing food access and supporting local food producers and businesses, helping strengthen the resilience of the food system during a time of crisis. Now, the City is ready to focus on policy change as it works to formalize the programs, practices, and progress it's made toward its goal of ensuring there is healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for all.

The City of Phoenix is beginning to develop the 2030 Phoenix Food Action Plan, which will define the next phase of food systems work in the Greater Phoenix Area. The planning process will involve identifying the community's vision for the future of the local food system, with new strategies and actions based on community-identified priorities. Outreach for the 2030 Food Action Plan began in March 2025, with the goal of completing the plan within the first quarter of calendar year 2026. Information on how to get involved is found on the OEP website.

2030 Food Action Plan Timeline:



Thank you for your interest in and support of the City of Phoenix Food Systems Program. The work described in this report was made possible through the City of Phoenix's partnerships with Phoenix residents, community-based organizations, academic institutions, and private sector partners. To all of our partners - thank you for your dedication to creating a more resilient and equitable food system. We look forward to continuing this work together.

