

Notes from: **Linking Food Systems Investment to Community Planning**

Name of Notetaker: Ashley Jones-Wisner

Number of attendees: 15

Who was in the room? (general geographies, types of roles, or list of attendees if intros are done)

Douglas County Conservation District
Producers
Planning commission members
Extension
Local Food and Farm Council Members
State Government
Cooperatives
Private Foundation

Key points from speakers: (list 7-10 main points) NOTE - only one speaker so less key points to provide

- Local food is not an end in itself, it's a means to another end.
- From speakers' experience: What does the community want to achieve and how do food/ag contribute to that? If they saw this broadly, it worked well, if they just focused on just one piece like community gardens, limited results.
- Active partnership between public and private sectors is key.
- Good connections are key. Pollination between different types of people.
- Take a systems approach.

Was there a lot of energy on a particular topic? Which one(s)?

The group activity sparked a lot of conversation and discussion. See report out/conversation highlights below.

What generated lots of questions?

The issue of urban planning and education and how it does nor does not relate to rural communities. Additionally, the idea that often in comprehensive plans there is a disconnect between the types of activities planned/desired and the community assets available.

Additional notes:

Notes from Julia's presentation - [Growing Food Connections USDA funded grant](#). Extension piece of project focused on local policy. Used research, education (bringing food systems into academic planning programs) and extension to take what was learned from the research and work to apply what learned in 8 places across the country. Douglas County was one of them - (a "community of innovation"). "Communities of Opportunity" were also identified. Wyandotte County in Kansas and Douglas County Nebraska were two others. In all 8 communities tried to create something like a food policy council. In literally all circumstances, there was someone who sat at the table who said "you know what those people need is..." So went through and did a variety of workshops around civic engagement where they went where people WERE LOCATED - did not ask anyone to come to us.

Ended up coming up with some guiding principles that are to 1) recognize and celebrate the human assets in your community. 2) Using familiar or common language is also important. What do you mean by "agriculture" when you say agriculture? 3) Take an assets-based approach. What are the assets you have to solve a problem? 4) Address issues holistically - one of the dangers in planning is that people plan - if it sits on a shelf and doesn't get used, it doesn't achieve anything

Group Activity: Digest a Plan

Each table in the room took a section of the [Johnson County, Iowa Comprehensive Plan](#) and answered the following questions:

Did the plan...

- **actively engage all community stakeholders?**
- **leverage local resources and assets?**
- **remove barriers and advance achievable solutions?**

The tables worked through the questions and reported out the following:

Sustainability

- Actively engages all community stakeholders - Felt it left out the university, existing businesses, rural residents, urban agriculture, oil and gas, low-income and public transportation
- leverages local resources and assets - big focus on natural resources and leveraging/protecting them. Human assets were forgotten
- removes barriers, advances achievable solutions - did see a lot of barriers to new projects, but there were references to adjusting policies and incentives to help changes to occur and move towards sustainability. Not much looked achievable - lots of actions.

Local Economy

- Actively engages all community stakeholders - huge section talking about what their local economy looks like. The goals they came up with where sustainable farming goals, but looked like they did not engage the traditional agricultural community. The agricultural community and industry sectors were under engaged. There isn't anything about how or why to expand industry.

- leverages local resources and assets -disconnect between resources offered by university or hospital: no incubator or similar programs mentioned
- removes barriers, advances achievable solutions - great values mentioned and implementation steps, but not many specifics

Infrastructure and Amenities

- Actively engages all community stakeholders: Not necessarily in the infrastructure portion but it is referenced and outlined in the larger plan. University was only mentioned once in the infrastructure/amenities - could be problematic. Would be nice to know how many public meetings were held and with who was represented. Would like to also know how they followed up with individuals who participated regarding how their input was or was not used.
- leverage local resources and assets - It was clear they did not have a public utility. Did leverage public/key stakeholder resources during the input process. In implementation portion, they list collaborating partners and action steps which shows leverage and progress.
- Remove barriers, advances achievable goals - there is some pretty “weak” language about action steps. Not sure if there are any barriers removed

Land Use

- Actively engages all community stakeholders - came away from reading wanting to know what the demographics of the county were.
- How did they leverage local resources and assets
- Remove barriers, advance achievable goals -

Discussion in the room after each group reported out:

One of the participants was an urban planning professor at KU. Her feedback to the room was that while none of us were planners, we all picked up on the elements of a well written plan in the comments that were reported out.

Question was asked if there was such a thing about a rural planner? Often rural communities will contract out with urban planners because that is what is available if it is too costly to have a planner on staff for a small community. There isn't such thing as a “rural planner” in the academic world. Issue is often that urban planners are only equipped with tools that work in urban or urbanized areas and often not what's needed in rural area. Comments - there are critical elements to rural planning that should include the farming community. It is rarely farmers that do the planning. Need farmers to be a part of that process.

As an example in the Johnson County, Iowa plan discussed, there is a big disconnect between the type of ag they have included and the assets they have.

Question - Cover 26 counties in the NW Kansas. Leverage some foundation dollars to help the communities plan. What we implemented instead of planning was “strategic doing” based out of Purdue University. It's not a plan, its a matrix. Very implementation oriented. Its moving the needle, but there needs to be a 2.0 behind that and move some of the projects forward - how do we get the bigger

projects done now? What's happening is engaging in some cases 2-300 people extra in the county that are working on or promoting projects from the County. Conversation - don't need a giant plan. If the matrix is working, go for it. It's hard to read 150 pages. :)

Conversation - about halfway through reading the plan made the assumption it was a county plan and not a city plan and that the city had their own separate plan. Answer - Douglas County Kansas and the City have a combined plan, but not sure if Johnson County plan was combined or if the city had a plan.

Julia - [A check list has been developed for towns that is called "Is Your Town Farm Friendly?"](#) It's been adapted for the community guide - "Is Your Town Food Friendly?" These check -lists were discussed and handed out to the tables in the room.