

# Appendix A:

## Local Foods, Local Places Action Plan for Canton, NY and St. Lawrence County

### GOAL 1: Keep Momentum and Strengthen Communications.

In the near and long term Canton must continue cooperation and communication in the pursuit of local foods goals. This momentum needs to be expanded through the region, including Potsdam at the minimum, with Canton as a leader. The established farmers market makes the village a natural center, and Canton has the momentum. The relationships created through this workshop process have expanded the vision, and it is key to get everyone working together in the same room on a regular basis. Canton needs to keep building momentum at the municipal and county levels as well as through small group action.

Action 1.1: Identify all key stakeholders and sectors of the local food system		
<b>Why is this important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To increase understanding and buy-in among a greater diversity of partners and Canton residents.</li> <li>To find common goals and focus areas throughout the food system—farming, food entrepreneurship, and increasing food access to lower-income residents.</li> </ul>	
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a comprehensive and evolving list of all participating organizations and individuals, with contact name and information that is up-to-date.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	Immediate	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Carol Pynchon	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	LFLP Steering Committee	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Time</b>
	None	Volunteer time
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	N/A	

Action 1.2: Establish a formal communication network		
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Continuing the forward momentum and energetic atmosphere of collaboration will require strategic attention to creating communication networks that are both inclusive and non-onerous. A formal communication network will give structure to the ongoing conversation around Canton regional food system development in a way that encourages participation and collaboration.	
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information and activities are communicated to the larger group of food system stakeholders through an email listserv (to be managed by and created through Cornell Cooperative Extension).</li> <li>Conversations are maintained through other mechanisms to be determined by the local foods advisory committee.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	Short	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Patrick Ames (Cooperative Extension)	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	LFLP Steering Committee	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Time</b>
	None	Cooperative Extension and volunteer hours
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	N/A	

<b>Action 1.3: Formalize a community-led local foods advisory committee utilizing the Cornell Cooperative Extension advisory board framework</b>		
<b>Why is this important?</b>	An advisory or steering committee <sup>1</sup> comprised of key stakeholders would facilitate regional and county food system initiatives, and would fill a current void in shared community leadership. This action places responsibility on existing organizations and entities instead of on individual people or a singular organization. A steering committee dedicated specifically to food system development also furthers work that began with the Local Food, Local Places process and contributes to forward momentum. Using the “advisory board” framework already in place through the Cornell Cooperative Extension, where members are nominated and approved, ensures that the participation is broad and provides an existing structure for meeting and communicating efforts and goals.	
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a functional committee that meets regularly.</li> <li>• The steering committee prioritizes and orchestrates an action plan that is representative of wider community goals.</li> <li>• The steering committee engages the communication network described in Action 1.2, informing the broader community of actions and opportunities for involvement and support.</li> </ul>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	Medium, requires CCE Board approval, nominating process convening group.	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Cooperative Extension, Patrick Ames, and Village of Canton, Economic Development Leigh Rodriguez	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	LFLP workshop stakeholders.	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Time</b>
	Minimal admin costs	Cooperative Extension and volunteer time
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and partners	

<sup>1</sup> Many communities have achieved greater cross-sector coordination, communication, and facilitation of food system efforts through the creation of food councils or committees. These councils take many forms: some focus on local, regional, and state policies, advocating for change, while others focus less on policy and more on coordinating local and regional food system improvement efforts. This second type functions in an advisory role, helping to identify community priorities, leverage support, and create a focus around projects so that there is greater coordination and mutual benefit to all participating organizations. These advisory councils work to foster communication, networking, and community/business support around shared goals. Food Advisory Councils do not typically undertake projects as a group—they are not non-profits or fundraising boards. Instead, they work to coordinate greater collaboration and capacity between member organizations and agencies. For good examples of functioning Food Advisory Councils in regions similar in size to Canton, see the Franklin County, Ohio Local Food Council (<http://www.fclocalfoodcouncil.org/about-the-council>) and the Ashtabula (Ohio) Local Food Council (<http://www.fclocalfoodcouncil.org/about-the-council>).

## GOAL 2: Develop New, and Strengthen Existing Farmers

Through training and education programs, (land access, young farmer engagement, incubator programs, etc.)

### Action 2.1: Inventory existing programs and opportunities for young or new farmers interested in gaining knowledge and experience

<b>Why is this important?</b>	An up-to-date inventory of programs and opportunities will be of value to prospective participants as well as additional farms and programs that are thinking about creating new programs. It will also help to identify gaps in opportunities available. It is also important to develop a mechanism for keeping this list up-to-date to ensure its long-term usefulness.	
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive and up-to-date list of opportunities available</li> <li>• The list is published and publicized in ways that reach prospective farmers and other interns</li> <li>• A mechanism for regular updating is developed and implemented</li> </ul>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	Short term for creation and implementation, ongoing use and maintenance	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Canton Sustainability Committee, oversight	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	GardenShare, SUNY Canton, St. Lawrence University	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	<b>Money</b>	<b>Time</b>
	None	Volunteer, existing employee hours
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	N/A	

Action 2.2: Address knowledge gaps in farmer training and information sharing to coordinate programs and opportunities for learning	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Farmers need ongoing support and training to deal with changing climates and the subsequent introduction of pests and diseases that they have not seen before. In addition, new and old technologies need to be shared so that Canton-area farmers can continue to diversify and grow their line of products to meet the needs of local consumers. While there currently exists several opportunities for obtaining this knowledge, greater coordination will ensure more participation as well as help to identify the gaps in knowledge that can be filled by Cooperative Extension and other mechanisms.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New training offered within the first year.</li> <li>• Inter-agency meetings within the first year.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Ongoing
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	To be determined from existing workshop stakeholders, or new volunteers.
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	The <i>Rural Life Association</i> website is under reconstruction, and will serve to aggregate much historic information. The RLA published a newsletter for several decades geared toward farmer training, especially among back-to-the-landers,

Action 2.3: Develop a farmer incubator program to increase the number of production farmers in the area and to teach new farming technologies	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	New producers are needed to increase the overall supply of fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy produced locally. Additionally, new production technologies need to be learned and utilized in order for the Canton region to produce a greater diversity of agricultural products. A farmer incubator program can take many forms, but at their basic include instruction in production technology, farm planning, business management, and marketing; space to try out new production techniques in close proximity to other beginning farmers and instructors; and support for finding/financing land and the capital necessary to start a farm business. <sup>2,3</sup> .
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 farmers use 1A each for 3 years</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	2-4 years
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Cornell Cooperative Extension
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	St. Lawrence University, SUNY Canton, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services

<sup>2</sup> For more information on starting farmer incubator programs, the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI) provides an abundance of resources <http://nesfp.org/food-systems/national-incubator-farm-training-initiative>

<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the Piedmont Conservation Council’s handbook, *Developing a Strategic Plan for Regional Farm Incubation* provides detailed development tools for beginning an incubator program <http://piedmonttogether.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Incubator%20Farms%20Strategic%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

### GOAL 3: Implement a Marketing and Awareness-Raising Strategy

Highlight the beneficial aspects of local and healthy food to a broader local and regional audience, engaging in a wider community conversation. Work toward communicating the “story” of local foods—how local foods contributes to economic, social, and cultural development and place making, while also preserving and enhancing individual, public, and environmental health. Ensure that the marketing and awareness-raising strategy reaches residents from all socio-economic levels: food security and access issues are as important to the development of a robust local food economy as developing new food entrepreneurs and a regional brand.

<b>Action 3.1:</b> Generate broader community awareness of points of access for people experiencing food insecurity, as well as opportunities for nutrition education, economic assistance, and other resources. Ensure that this information is readily available to direct healthcare providers and others who work with low-income families.	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	<p>Food security is an urgent issue and there is a need to make sure that existing resources are fully utilized. A greater integration of the various opportunities available to people experiencing a lack of food security will help to build momentum for a cultural shift with food access, and will also help to identify gaps to be addressed by future projects. Ensuring that this information is in the hands of direct healthcare providers and others who are engaged with low-income residents will ensure that more families get the information that they need.</p>
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct healthcare providers are equipped with a current list of resources available to lower income people interested in obtaining healthy local food. The list includes dates, time, and location of opportunities, eligibility requirements, and any necessary contact information.</li> <li>• In addition to direct healthcare providers, other outlets for this information are identified and the lists/resource is made available for distribution. Examples include: food pantries, weekly sales circulars, newspapers and radio, Facebook, and county health departments.</li> <li>• The steering committee is working with Dollar General to cross-promote the farmers market and the ability to utilize SNAP benefits there.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Ideally initiated by fall/winter 2015, continuing into spring 2016.
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	GardenShare
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	County Social Services, churches, health providers, and other people who interact with low-resourced populations.

<b>Action 3.2: Conduct a community research program to identify the specific barriers to healthy eating in low-resource populations</b>	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Organizations interested in improving health outcomes for underserved populations and the community at large must thoroughly understand the barriers to healthy eating to be able to create effective programs. Often, generalized assumptions are made about barriers to access (ex: price of healthy food, location, type of produce for sale, hours of market, etc.) and programs are created that address these assumed barriers. A well-planned research program that asks in-depth questions regarding personal goals and barriers to eating healthier through focus groups and one-on-one interviews would provide the specific, accurate, and localized information to create programs and resources that are well-utilized by intended participants. A Community Food Security Assessment was completed in 2014 by a SUNY Potsdam professor that utilized surveys and focus groups to identify self-identified barriers to eating healthier food among low-income populations <sup>4</sup> . This provides a wealth of information as well as a research methodology that could be utilized and expounded upon to respond more precisely to the food needs of St. Lawrence County’s low-income populations.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A research program with specific implementation actions is developed.</li> <li>• The research is conducted and the outcomes are analyzed and disseminated to the appropriate organizations.</li> <li>• The research outcomes inform the type of programs available and the way in which they are offered.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	mid- to long-term (completed by summer of 2016)
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	To be determined.
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	Heather Sullivan-Catlin, sociology researcher at SUNY Potsdam, and other researchers or organizations who either need this information or already have it.

<sup>4</sup> <http://gardenshare.org/sites/default/files/CFSA%20SLC.pdf>

Action 3.3: Develop a local “Fruit and Vegetable Prescription” program for Canton.	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Fruit and Vegetable Prescription programs allow healthcare providers to write “prescriptions” for fruits and vegetables. These “prescriptions” are actually vouchers redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers markets. Developing this program in Canton is important because it provides a way to link discussions of personal health and eating fresh fruits and vegetables with the ability to obtain those foods at low or no cost to the prescription holder. This program would also build the relationship between direct healthcare providers and local food access promotion organizations.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program is implemented with the participation of area hospitals and direct healthcare providers.</li> <li>• A majority of the prescription vouchers are redeemed at the Canton Farmers Market.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Program is implemented at the start of the spring 2016 farmers market season.
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Hospitals and Health Center in Canton, GardenShare
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	Farmers Market
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	Insurance companies, local employers, the Wholesome Wave Foundation

Action 3.4: Reach out to community leaders individually to cultivate participation in local foods activities.	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	In order to generate a greater awareness of the economic, environmental, health, and community benefits of supporting the local food system, all sectors of the Canton community need to be engaged. This action seeks to engage community leaders such as church clergy and neighborhood and civic group leadership in local food initiatives in order to create more champions for the cause that are already in positions of influence within their organizations. Targeted outreach to community leaders will help to amplify the message while also cultivating a broader base of participants and leaders for food system efforts, bringing new voices and perspectives to the table.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leaders are identified and contacted by a liaison from the steering committee.</li> <li>• There is a sustained channel of communication between community leaders and their specific liaison.</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Short term—by fall 2015.
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Local foods steering committee (developed in action 1.3)
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	

<b>Action 3.5: Create a regional identity for foodways that celebrates the local cuisine and variety of items grown and produced in the Canton region.</b>	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	A greater sense of community pride in the local cuisine is needed for the public to engage in a conversation about local foods and the possibility for local foods to help the Canton area economy, environment, and public health. Although agriculture is St. Lawrence County’s top employer, many of the products are exported out of the county and state, resulting in a lost opportunity to make an explicit connection between food and place. Creating a specific regional identity, summarized graphically by a symbol that could be used on food labels and menus would help to re-develop community pride for the land and the culture of Canton.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regional identity is described through words, recipe books, photography, and multi-media platforms, and summarized by a graphic symbol</li> <li>• The regional identity is promoted and shared with the broader community</li> <li>• Consider connecting food and local foodways to the existing “brand” of wellness in Canton</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	Mid- term—ongoing from now till Summer 2016
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	Folklorists associated with the TAUNY Center, Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA), wine trail developers, local breweries, Jake’s and 1844 House, and Blackbird (local restaurants that are marketing and buying local), Center for Agricultural Economy (in Hardwick), Adirondack-based wellness group (Lake Placid group) could be a model.

## **GOAL 4: Explore Aggregation, Distribution Systems, and Value-added Capabilities to Build and Connect Supply and Demand**

A number of promising initiatives are already underway for improving or adding food processing and/or aggregation potential in the community. First was the application from the Cornell Cooperative Extension for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) to build a commercial kitchen at their farm. Though their primary purpose for this commercial kitchen would be for research, education, and training, the facility could also be made available to new entrepreneurs in the community who are in need of commercial value-added kitchen and processing facilities. The second major initiative underway is that Sparx is looking to put in a new meat processing facility in the Canton Industrial Park. This for-profit facility would have distribution networks and climate controlled space that could potentially be used as a non-meat aggregation center in the future, making local foods more accessible locally as well as to regional markets. Both these developments were enthusiastically supported by the LFLP working group at the session, noting that they should be supported and encouraged as much as possible by the wider community and the sustainability committee. It was also noted that both these initiatives are somewhat ‘under works’ and as such are being championed in the community. Therefore, action planning for them at this session was not the highest need.

This LFLP action plan focuses attention on the North Country Grown Cooperative (NCGC), and how to best re-evaluate its mission, operations, and functions for the future given that it recently encountered some setbacks with the loss of some institutional partners. The working group drafted actions for the NCGC, which are presented below. Some of the detail of the action plans were difficult to identify at the workshop session as most of the discussion centered on the current state of the NCGC and its current and former institutional partners. These actions may take a little longer to figure out, and could evolve over time. There were NCGC members in the working group as well as staff from SUNY Canton and St. Lawrence University, which presented opportunities for candid and open discussion. Their key issues/challenges/opportunities identified can be summarized as follows:

- The NCGC needs to become a more viable business in order to be sustained.
- NCGC has been in operation for 10 years but has recently experienced setbacks such as losing customers.
- There are some inherent difficulties that have exacerbated the supply to demand ratio. The growing season and the academic calendar year do not overlap: when production is highest during summer the demand at local academic institutions is at its lowest.
- Pricing, quality, and consistency were also cited as difficult hurdles. Meeting a low price point is a concern to some of the institutions but not all. The institutional partners recognized there will be higher prices for local food, and for the most part would be willing and able to meet those prices within reason. There needs to be some give and take, some balance so both growers and supplier can make it work.
- Improved and on-going conversation about supply/demand and general communication between growers and customers is needed.
- The NCGC growers need to make money and like to grow what they want, not necessarily what the institutions need.
- It may be time for NCGC to re-think its business model and approach, and update its business plan.
- The NCGC could explore locating more customers that would provide more stable, year-round demand, such as health care institutions and employers.

- Perhaps the Office of the Aging, hospitals, etc. would be willing partners.
- The current mission of the NCGC is to increase the income of its members in an environmentally friendly manner. Currently there are no paid staff and no capacity to move it forward. The cooperative has stabilized its situation by resorting to an all-volunteer staff. This has enabled it to maintain existence, but does not provide a mechanism for substantial growth.
- The NCGC could explore the CSA model for existing or new customers.

Finally, towards the end of the working session on action planning, another idea was proposed that built on the long-standing desire in the community to see something positive happen at the Jubilee Plaza. Some expressed the vision for a community food center in the public plaza retail/service space, a public outdoor space, and walking corridors to Main Street, the river, and Senior Housing. There needs to be a thorough assessment of supply and demand, producers and markets for a potential Canton Community Market. The vision should ensure that the market is visible and open year round to encourage place making and generate economic development potential downtown. This is a longer term vision for the plaza; the Village and citizens are not in a position of ownership of the plaza at this point, while this LFLP plan could still advocate for this longer term desire for a downtown community food center/market. A next step could be to create a visual “map” of the potential for this site, to better illustrate a community vision that could help advocate for and promote this outcome in the future.

**Action 4.1: NCGC needs a champion**

<b>Why is this important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need an entity, or a new champion, for this aggregation role if it’s going to be the NCGC.</li> <li>• Rebrand, resell, and remarket North Country Grown Cooperative (NCGC) to find a champion.</li> <li>• Develop a food coordinator marketer position who matches up food needs to producers and puts out requests for needs. Develop marketing alternatives.</li> </ul>
<b>Measures of Success</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	

**Action 4.2: Create a new customer base for NCGC**

<b>Why is this important?</b>	NCGC or Steering Committee: explore avenues to work with colleges and institutions to implement employee CSAs using Flexpay and health benefits.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	

**Action 4.3: Refresh and update NCGC Business Plan**

<b>Why is this important?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh and update NCGC Business Plan</li> <li>• Explore new models, eq. buy and be middle</li> </ul>
<b>Measures of Success</b>	
<b>Timeframe</b>	
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	

<b>Action 4.4:</b> Explore concept for the creation of a community owned market to foster community revitalization in downtown Canton. Revisit previous plans and re-assess feasibility.	
<b>Why is this important?</b>	Downtown Canton has limited access to fresh, local foods on a daily basis. Currently, Nature’s Storehouse carries some items, and the farmer’s market operates on Tuesdays and Fridays May through October. The nearest full grocery is about one mile from downtown. A community owned market <sup>5</sup> would create greater access to fresh, local foods and be an anchor for downtown redevelopment by potentially utilizing a space that has been vacant for 15 years.
<b>Measures of Success</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of an updated feasibility study</li> </ul>
<b>Timeframe</b>	1 year
<b>Taking the Lead</b>	Canton Village Economic Development
<b>Supporting Cast</b>	Assistance could be sought from the Shipley Center for Innovation or Reh Center for Entrepreneurship at Clarkson University.
<b>Cost Estimate</b>	
<b>Possible Funding Sources</b>	

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<sup>5</sup> Some examples of community owned coops or markets, or related resources are below:  
<http://friendlycity.coop/about-us/our-story/> and <http://www.community-store.org/>  
[http://www.ruralgrocery.org/bestpractices/What\\_is\\_a\\_Community\\_Store.pdf](http://www.ruralgrocery.org/bestpractices/What_is_a_Community_Store.pdf)  
<http://www.chequamegonfoodcoop.com/co-op/about/>