Draft of a Local Food Action Plan for Northfield  
(Notes from the 1/7 meeting)

Sustainable Agriculture

What is sustainable ag?

Local food: Growers (livestock) Food (forestry and fibres)  
Must not: harm ecology, create poverty or growing inequality  
Should: Create accessibility based on what people want to eat or need  
Definitions may need to change so the system is flexible and reflective of changing times  
Food availability: how and where to access  
Sustaining agriculture is regenerative, including the relationship of people to each other  
Food shelf: consciousness of what whole food system needs  
Define which people are included in sustainable ag: growers, consumers, restaurants, grocers  
Local environment: what are the constraints/strengths of the region in relation to growing food?  
Articulate final definition in a positive way

Sustainable ag working definition: A sustainable local food system that is ecologically sound, just, and meets the needs of consumers

What do we need? How do we get there?

• Accessibility: Our food and cultural system need to be shifted. The tiny percentage of people who care is enough. If we start building the necessary structures for a resilient local food system ourselves, more will want to join. We still need an overall vision, and must encourage and support sustainable farmers and eaters.

• Education and development of local policy: where is our economic development on sustainability?

• Greenstep City: allows more small-scale agriculture on city properties  
City of Commissions: take into account sustainability of food choices

• Local processing (cream, meat, etc.)

• Infrastructure: root cellar, energy costs of things like freezers for meats (component of being off grid may need to be incorporated)

• Gathering old community relics and resources > inventory accessible resources

How can we leverage our progress to build toward the next steps? Important to be self-supporting in this process.

Untapped resources: must facilitate the use of unused resources
Need to re-establish the institutional and public infrastructure programs that are needed to bring a resilient local food system into being.

**Immediate action, 1-2 Years:**

Encourage trading between neighbors

Follow Blandin 5 Steps for Community Action:
1. Frame the issue
2. Name the results
3. Leverage community resources
4. Select approach
5. Develop action plan!

Regi’s idea: Comprehensive Plan
- Land access (who can grow food and how can we best use our resources?)
- Technical training (using land appropriately)
- Financing
- Education system (coop, colleges)
- Policy that matches our needs

**Action Within 10 Years:**
- Establish a local processing plant (off grid?)
- Behavioral changes through education that create consumer demand for local, sustainable produce
- Improve infrastructure between farmer and consumer, both physical (processing plant) and political
- Work with the City Council to support such infrastructure
- Reach out beyond Northfield

*Note: 6 Forms of Community Capital*

1. Political
2. Structural
3. Environmental
4. Cultural
   - Others?

**Overall process needed:**
- Definition
- Community input
- Comprehensive plan
- 10 year plan
Community Agriculture

Definition: Food grown within walking distance (in the city of Northfield), and distributed with the help of local policies and social networks such that food is accessible to all.

What do we have already?

- 3 Community Gardens (a fourth is in the works)
- Farmers’ Market
- Riverwalk
- Just Food Co-op
- Hillside Farmer’s Cooperative (pastured poultry)
- Rural Enterprise Center
- County Extension
- Master gardeners
- Permaculture designers

What do we need?

Immediate Action, 1-2 Years

- Local food directory/newsletter
- Presentations on the importance of local food at the Rotary, Just Food Co-op, and churches
- Teaching kitchen
- Food preservation and cooking classes > utilize church kitchens?
- Town emergency preparedness plan > with help of colleges
- Fruit and nut trees planted in town
- Community chickens/goats
- Community oven
- Gleaning for people and food shelf
- Northfield PLAN for local food (secure a greenbelt to remain undeveloped)

Actions Within 10 Years:

- Community restaurant!
- Community teaching/learning center
- Accessible community garden in partnership with local government, schools, gardeners, and the food shelf
- Perrenial food in parks (apples, hazlenuts, blueberries, and more!)
  - Community orchard/nut grove
- Local hard cider
- Community greenhouses
- Yardsharing!
- Diversify local foods grown with varying ethnic backgrounds in mind
Infrastructure Needs:

- Mentoring network
- Community kitchen for classes as well as processing
  - Join with anchor business like co-op, restaurant, deli, or processing facility to ensure long-term sustainability
- Mobile processing
- Use school kitchens during the summer
- Community root cellar
- Enlist Carleton and St. Olaf students

How to Encourage the Necessary Behavioral Changes (to support local food):

- Mentoring network
- School education (pizza is not a vegetable)
  - School gardens!
- Shared community tools, pickup trucks, etc. > make use of the Community Exchange!
  - Neighborhood sharing groups > Joey Robison organized one in Northfield!
- Instructional YouTube videos on cooking local vegetables (or pamphlets could be distributed at the co-op!)

Resources:

- Local Food Action Network
- Community Exchange (see Transition Northfield)
- Karen Olson, Joey Robison on neighborhood sharing groups
Personal Agriculture

What do we already have?

• Good-sized yards
• Composting
• Food for all species
• People growing their own food
• Native plants
• Natural yards
• Can raise chickens in town

What do we need?

• Save seeds
• Move away from “perfect” lawns
• More enthusiasm
• More education on how to use food year round
• “Vote” with your food dollar
• More community gardens in more areas
• Regulations on herbicides on lawns
• How to eat seasonally, with suggested recipes
• More local newspaper coverage
• Private gardens at senior living
• Information on what we can/cannot do based on zoning

How do we get there?

• Hold classes, provide info on food preservation: freezing, canning, drying
• Make root cellars
• Identify vacant land that could be used
• Education
• Vegetable garden tours instead of flower garden tours
• Chicken coops
• Make a resource list of people who have experience
• Set up mentors (elders, students)
• Post this info on the Transition Northfield web site and/or deliver to the newspaper (bi-weekly column)
• Hold a class on using black walnuts
• Collect fruits of the city (gleaning)
• Hold a class on “Composting 101” at a neighborhood site
• Set up a bartering system
Notes from a Local Food follow-up meeting

Community Action Process:

1. Frame – identify the issue
2. Name key results
3. Leverage community resources
4. Select approach
5. Develop action plan

Principles (Framing):

1. Food and water are essential to human survival and thriving.
2. Ensuring the health of local food/water economy ensures health and wellbeing of every member of our community.
3. The health of the ecosystem and the health of the community are reflections of each other.
4. A food system’s resilience reflects the quality of farmer livelihoods and the quality of life for all those involved from farm to table. (The more resilient a food system becomes, the better the quality of life for all those involved from farm to table.)
5. A food system’s resilience requires the engagement and support of the community at a level that guarantees the self-sufficiency of the food system.

Indicators of resilience (Key results):

1. Assess quality of life of farmers in the region
2. Define a healthy livelihood for farmers and workers in the food system
3. Define a healthy ecology on a farm
4. The life cycle of the retail value of food and the distribution of this wealth from farm to table
5. The baseline of food needs in the community
6. Establish the production baseline of farmers that exist already in relationship to the currently engaged community
7. Address the infrastructure gap between the two points above

Leverage community resources (political, economic, land, market, social capital)

1. Inventory

Approach:

1. Engage the community from table to farm in food resilience planning and implementation
2. Research the issues: surveys, etc.