LOCAL FOOD AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:
Central Ohio and Weinland Park

February 18, 2015
Louisville, Ky.
What is local food?
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Local food is Economic Development
Local food planning

- 2010 regional plan
- Local food councils
- Regional food council
- Seek coordination on projects in region
- Economic development strategies
Background

- Industrial neighborhood, Southeast of OSU, two miles north of State Capitol
- Factories faded, prosperity plummeted, crime climbed
- Section 8, transience, poverty, health issues
- Environmental cleanup of two large industrial sites
- Hints of gentrification, outpouring of OSU and civic attention, re-investment
$864,000 HUD Community Challenge grant to MORPC

Team of subgrantees: The Ohio State University, Local Matters, Wagenbrenner Development, Civic Association, Godman Guild

Neighborhood priority: Jobs

Planning goals shifted to food processing

Plan proposed a three-story building with:

- food processing
- kitchen incubator
- workforce development
- café and co-op market
- event space/caterer
- office space
- business services
- rooftop gardens
A Dynamic Vision for the Community
Economic Impact

Food District
@weinland park

Health & Nutrition

Community Engagement
Plan passed on to Community Economic Development Corporation of Ohio, August 2013
The best laid plans ...
The reality:

• Skepticism: Too much at once?
• Financing
• Real estate availability
• Economic development strategies
• Finding coattails to ride
The challenge:

- Build in phases; more-focused
- Make adjustments, but don’t change core mission
- Jobs & economic development
- Find business partners
- Food processing that is part of a regional food system
The latest:

- Larger site, four blocks away (same developer)
- Many food-related businesses on a 30-acre former factory site
- Considering high-pressure pasteurization
- City support for plan
- Job-training facility to serve all businesses on the site
One-word summary: Business

Elaboration:

• Even a non-profit social enterprise must be a viable business
• Business leaders at planning table
• Build on existing food businesses
• Develop new models, partnerships
Central Ohio Regional Food Council
Original mission:

Share ideas among local councils

New mission:

- Assign task forces to identify various supply-chain gaps and barriers
- Encourage and facilitate new, collaborative business models
- Enlist business support when policy changes are needed
- Bring funders, lenders to the table
- Coordinate efforts in region to avoid duplication
Meat Industry Task Force:

• Look for bottlenecks in the region’s meat-processing capacity

• Study the industry, talk to experts

• Identified lack of cold-storage

• Bring together key players up and down the supply chain; present findings

• Lock the door until they agree on a solution
Distribution & Logistics Task Force:

• Entrepreneur developed online “virtual food hub”

• Distributors want tool for logistics, not for sales and business relationships

• Bring together farmers, distributors, processors, entrepreneurs, etc., to develop a model that helps all players

• Utilize existing businesses, trucks, infrastructure
Food Waste Task Force:

- More restaurants, institutions seek to compost waste
- Composters lack capacity or face other challenges
- Task force will study: Market problems? Regulatory? Both?
- Bring together solid waste authority, EPA, composters, food businesses, haulers, etc. to hammer out a solution
Think systemically
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