

CEED@Chicago
Food Equity Committee Meeting
March 9, 2009
Midwest Latino Health Research Training and Policy Center – Room 608
2 – 4 PM

Present: Jose Arrom, Danny Block, Sheila Castillo, Lucy Gomez Feliciano, Marty Madera, Eve Pinsker, Dinah Ramirez, Melvin Taylor (by phone)

After introductions, the committee reviewed the draft summary of policy work and programs on equitable distribution of food. The summary had been prepared for and distributed at the February 17 meeting of the CEED@Chicago Coalition.

Dinah Ramirez showed the committee the final draft report from the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs task force, *Growing the Illinois Economy, A report to the Illinois General Assembly by the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force*. Dinah said there are still minor edits being made. She reported that Rep. Judith Hamos (D-Evanston) was planning to file a bill to create the Food, Farm, and Jobs Council (Amendment to House Bill 3990 was filed on March 11) and that a companion bill was going to be introduced in the State Senate, and in the appropriation committees of both chambers. The latter would fund implementation of the recommendations of the Food, Farms, and Job report and would create a Food, Farms, and Job Council with a \$250,000 budget.

Sheila Castillo referred to the list of individuals and groups in the summary and asked for direction on who still needed to be contacted for additional information. Danny Block recommended we contact the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). He should be contacted for the contact person who is working on food equity. Dinah said there are three people coordinating the regional food policy part of CMAP *Go to 2040* plan. The person who led the focus group on the Southeast Side from CMAP was Homer.

Sheila asked why CMAP added the whole idea of food and sustainability to the plan. Dianh answered they were funded by the Chicago Community Trust. CCT might be another contact.

Danny added that the Chicago Community Trust is putting money into a variety of community planning processes. He met Adele Simmons, former president of the MacArthur Foundation and currently with Metropolis 2020. She said she'd pushed NIPC, CMAP's predecessor, to do community planning and there had been real emphasis among the planners to get community voices into the current process.

Dinah said that Heifer International is starting to fund some of the projects in the city. Sheila asked if any of the projects were related to policy work. Dinah responded that HI gives money to community groups so they will continue to grow and to give back to the community affecting the CBOs' policy. Danny added that Heifer International is involved in policy as one of the co-sponsors of CFPAC, but he had never heard of the overall organization taking a major policy

position. Danny said that HI likes projects with animals. They got involved when the chicken ban came up in the city

Sheila pointed out that what the CEED coalition is trying to do is make policy change on a system level. We need to find out what these organizations are doing and how they are related to policy change. Eve said that CEED doesn't want to reinvent the wheel – we are looking at what other groups were already doing and identifying policy change efforts that the coalition could possibly get behind.

Danny reported that there is a group doing some assessment of accessibility of stores in Pilsen and other area for disabled people. Jose added that the plan was to send a disabled person in and out of the stores. This project is a subset of NCPAD at UIC.

Danny said that a lot of people have done assessments. Lucy Gomez Feliciano added that Logan Square did assessments, but she didn't know what they did with results. The Logan Square Chamber of Commerce took the lead. Danny said the Logan Square Chamber of Commerce brought together Noel Chavez, CMAP, and him to map gentrification through stores. They did a market basket study. He didn't know if the Chamber did any education of store owners. We could probably list other market basket-type assessments.

There was a market basket study of Austin and Oak Park with which Danny was involved together with West Side Health Authority. The report was called *An Apple a Day*.

Danny was involved in the Northeast Illinois Food Security Assessment. That involved a six-countywide mapping of access to grocery stores. Within that report, there were six communities in which there were further case study assessments lead by Noel Chavez. The communities were Riverdale, Hegewisch, Englewood (including West Englewood), Pilsen, Portage Park, and only a market based study in Uptown. Angela Odoms-Young and Shannon Zenk have done work in Englewood and Chicago Lawn. And then the four of them – Shannon, Noel, Angela, and Danny are currently finishing a project looking at stores that accept WIC coupons in Northern Illinois, but not Chicago. This involves doing a mapping of all stores accepting WIC coupons. WIC is now going to be including fresh produce. This last practice reflects a federal policy change.

Jose said that working with WIC brings in Catholic Charities. They've been experimenting with this for awhile. Sheila asked if this was part of the Farm Bill, but Danny replied that it wasn't. WIC is a federal program but it is state administered. He thought it was part of the food and nutrition bill that is being acted upon now. The state has contracted with Catholic Charities to run WIC in Chicago through WIC centers. The only other places accepting WIC in Chicago are stores where the whole chain accepts the coupons, like Jewel and Dominick's. Outside of Chicago, WIC is administered by the Illinois Dept of Human Services. For a smaller store, it can be a bit of a burden to carry all the things required for the store to be able to accept WIC coupons.

Danny thought that the Sinai Urban Health Institute did a small market basket survey. Dinah asked if anyone has all those studies? The answer was no, and Dinah said just bringing them all together in one place would be extremely helpful, especially if they could be put on the website.

Danny added that there's a journal article on Austin. It's in Public Health Nutrition journal. It isn't available in the UIC electronic library. He'll send it to CEED as a PDF, but we can't put it on the web.

Danny pointed out that there may be policy recommendations coming out of the WIC study – in addition to what's already happened. Odoms-Young was on the committee that developed the new package. This was developed a year and a half ago. His research group is sort of reporting to the DHS about the assessment they are doing now. Policy recommendations could be coming out of our work. Odoms-Young is leading store owner and manager interviews. There may also be some consumers interviewed. A lot of focus is on store owners and whether they are finding hardships with the WIC requirements.

Lucy pointed out that maybe we could provide some support with this new WIC system. WIC covers pregnant, nursing, and children up to 5. The people who use the system are among the poorest and there are a lot of people involved. Jose said that WIC is administered by the USDA. In Chicago, they kicked out all the stores except the big food centers, because the smaller ones were misusing it. They didn't turn in their coupons regularly and it looked like no one was using the funds.

Danny reported that his project was funded by the USDA. The folks at USDA are worried about how the new WIC policies will work. There is a list of things you can buy with your WIC coupons, down to the brand name. But with produce, there isn't that kind of control. The list is very specific, defined by nutritionists and economists. To get more information on this we have to talk with Odoms-Young, the Illinois DHS, and USDA.

Danny noted that there's also a WIC seniors program. The seniors program has funding for seniors to buy produce at farmers markets. It might be administered through WIC centers. Jose suggested that Chandana Nandi should be able to find that information for us

Sheila presented the list that CEED Coalition members suggested as possible policy action areas.

1. Commitment to community gardening
2. Increase literacy and re-education around food preparation and access
3. Community gardens in Chicago parks and cooking demos
4. Environmental assessment, e.g., soil testing
5. Marketing and product placement
6. Pricing policies in corner stores (Michal Pollan)
7. Incentives for farmers to grow produce and supply farmers markets
8. Provide incentives for small grocery stores to carry healthy food, e.g. LINK Card
9. Urban agriculture programs to accept LINK cards (e.g., Growing Power and Market Basket)
10. Incentives for small grocery shops in African American communities
11. Examine street vendors food quality, e.g., the LSNA RWJ project.

Lucy explained that Chicago is one of nine sites across the country sponsoring the Healthy Kids, Healthy Community project. The partnership is focusing on six policy areas, two have to do with access to parks and three have to do with food. The partnership is working with the Park

District and the Mayor's Fitness Council around food vendors in the parks, including push carts. They are also promoting vegetable gardens in the parks. LSNA is the lead organization, but the partners include all the Sunday Parkways communities, CLOCC, the Interdepartmental Task Force on Child Obesity, the Active Transportation Alliance, and the Park District. They have to educate kids and parents. With street vendors, it's complicated. There are a lot of city departments involved. The partnership is still learning all the intricate questions that they will have to ask in order to move the policy piece.

Danny added that a group of scholars have been talking for awhile about mapping street vendors. It's hard to figure out how to do it. Besides carts, there are other things like trucks.

Sheila asked the committee what they saw as the thread(s) that ran through what the coalition had suggested and the committee had discussed. What is it that we can get behind?

Eve said that the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities project is establishing a model we could get behind and replicate once it is worked out. Danny pointed out that this is not just about food, it is safety, it's access to the parks – it's holistic. Finding the key policy is kind of hard.

Danny pointed out that there is no uniform way of describing stores that sold food. He was given at one point a file that had all of the stores and restaurants that had received a license from the city. There was no classification system. He would like to see a common form of data acquisition on stores or food access sites throughout local governments. By mapping this, we could more easily assess access. Melvin Taylor said that he had the same experience. He had to visit every store on his list to find out what kind of a store it was. The list contained everything from the local gas station where you can get a bag of chips to the restaurant where you can get a plate of food. Danny said that for his study, they were trying to figure out all the grocery stores in the six-county area and ended up driving around.

Marty Madera thought that there are might be licensing issues involved here. He went to a store to buy ice cream, but was told they couldn't sell ice cream. Melvin said that it seems like stores only have to apply to the city Department of Revenue for food licenses. They cover any kind of stores. Public Health department doesn't inspect stores unless there is a complaint.

Jose pointed out that people know where they can find different kinds of food. They have their own classification system. Danny agreed. He said he's gone into communities and shown people maps – a lot of people don't classify ALDI as supermarkets while he classifies them as discount supermarkets. Then there are stores like Cermak Produce – which has a lot of food – and he'd classify it as a supermarket, but some people would say there are no supermarkets in their community.

At the city level -- preferably at the county and state level -- if we could have a data set that was standardized so we could see where there are gaps. His study found a new gap that opened between 2005 and 2007 on the Northwest Side – there are no large chain supermarkets. The lack of standardization is the reason he had to look at each individual store. For example, there is a Tony's on the South Side that is a corner store, but there is a Tony's in Logan Square that is a Certified Grocery. You can't tell from the name.

Sheila said that the policy that we want to achieve is equity in food distribution. If we had a dependable way to identify and categorize a store -- know what it sells -- it would be easier to discern whether there is an equitable or inequitable distribution of food. Danny said that if we could collect in some sort of standardized way, for example, floor area, that would give us information we don't have. He thought that other states do this and there might be models.

Jose suggested that we look at access to healthy food not from a consumer perspective, but from a health perspective. A Johns Hopkins project in Baltimore awarded healthy food certificates to stores that had certain products. Dinah and Eve asked why we couldn't we have a healthy food certification for our stores? Danny said we don't want to measure price. There are two different kinds of surveys that have been developed. The *Is It There?* surveys look at a store, its general size, and what it carries, e.g., produce, meats, dry goods. The second type of survey is one developed with RWJ funds by Karen Glanz, the Nutrition Environment Measures Study (NEMS). It looks at the presence of healthy food options at a store. Do they have whole grain cereals? It looked at particular brands -- which Danny said he didn't like.

Eve suggested that maybe the policy change could be putting some incentives or zoning policies in place to help bring healthy stores into areas that don't have them. Dinah mentioned that this would get CEED into what the Food Trust is doing.

Melvin asked if this could relate to TIFs and Danny said that TIFs are more general. Sheila said she believed that the city could use TIF money to build out infrastructure such as sewage and water lines.

Sheila asked how the committee should proceed. She would have to talk to Danny to track the market basket studies down. How do we go to coalition with recommendation for what policies we want to pursue? Lucy said that we should consider picking up on the energy of something that is already going. She thought the work being done around WIC is interesting and it affects a large group of people. Danny's point about needing good data for mapping is also interesting. Danny added that when Austin changed from white to black, a lot of the stores left. But there was no data. Getting this data could help guide policy in the future.

Jose said that in his community, people don't go to the big stores except for Costco and other wholesalers because they feel the big stores don't offer good prices. Danny said that people complain about the lack of stores like Jewel when they aren't there.

Dinah suggested that if we are going to look at WIC we have to connect with the Chicago Food Depository. It is also expanding into fresh foods. Angel La Luz works for the Chicago Food Depository. Kate Mayer is head of the whole Chicago Food Depository. Angel La Luz is on the advisory council for CLOCC. Jose said the contact at Catholic Charities is Angel Gutierrez who is in charge of food programming.

Danny point out that a lot of times when LINK is discussed, it centers around LINK being used at farmers' markets. Lucy said that the Logan Square farmers' market accepts LINK cards, they figured it out.

Lucy said we need to look at TIFs and how TIF monies have been used to support stores or urban agriculture. She was told that somebody from Center for Neighborhood Technology – Scott Bernstein -- understands a lot about TIF. Eve and Danny said that people at CUED (Center for Urban Economic Development) and the Voorhees Center here at UIC have a lot of information.

Sheila said we have half again as many people to contact and get information about their work. But with what we have, are there any threads? Danny pointed out that two or three items on the list from the coalition meeting talk about community gardens. There are a number of groups doing alternative food projects. A lot of the groups are represented in the CFPAC. He thinks these are important to healthy communities since they connect to jobs, education, a variety of things that should be promoted more specifically by the city. Maybe we should have a city office of community greening. A lot of what we talked about was store-based. But as projects that work on a whole variety of levels, community gardens are important to community health in general.

Dinah said her organization keeps telling the Department of the Environment that community gardens are a point of entry into climate change. She got a call from someone who saw a display at the Field Museum and Greg has gotten about 10 calls already from people in Pullman and other nearby areas who are interested in starting gardens. They are touching base with groups like hers at the grassroots and they have no funding to help them.

Danny said there are other greening efforts. Roseland is one of them.

Sheila said that the goal is to have recommendations for the coalition at the May 12 meeting about what policy area we should pursue. Jose asked what are the common goals for the food system that we want to impact – such as food equity, safety? Eve said that the coalition had specified food equity and Lucy added that there is a need for education, for instance around soil and whether it is safe.

The next committee meeting will be on Monday, March 30th, from 11 AM to 1 PM. The location will be announced.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 PM.

(Notes prepared by Eve Pinsker, edited by Sheila Castillo)