

Foothills FOOD ACCESS PLAN

*All Foothills residents are fed,
nourished, and have the
resources to access the food
they need.*

Presented by: Foothills Community Food Partnership



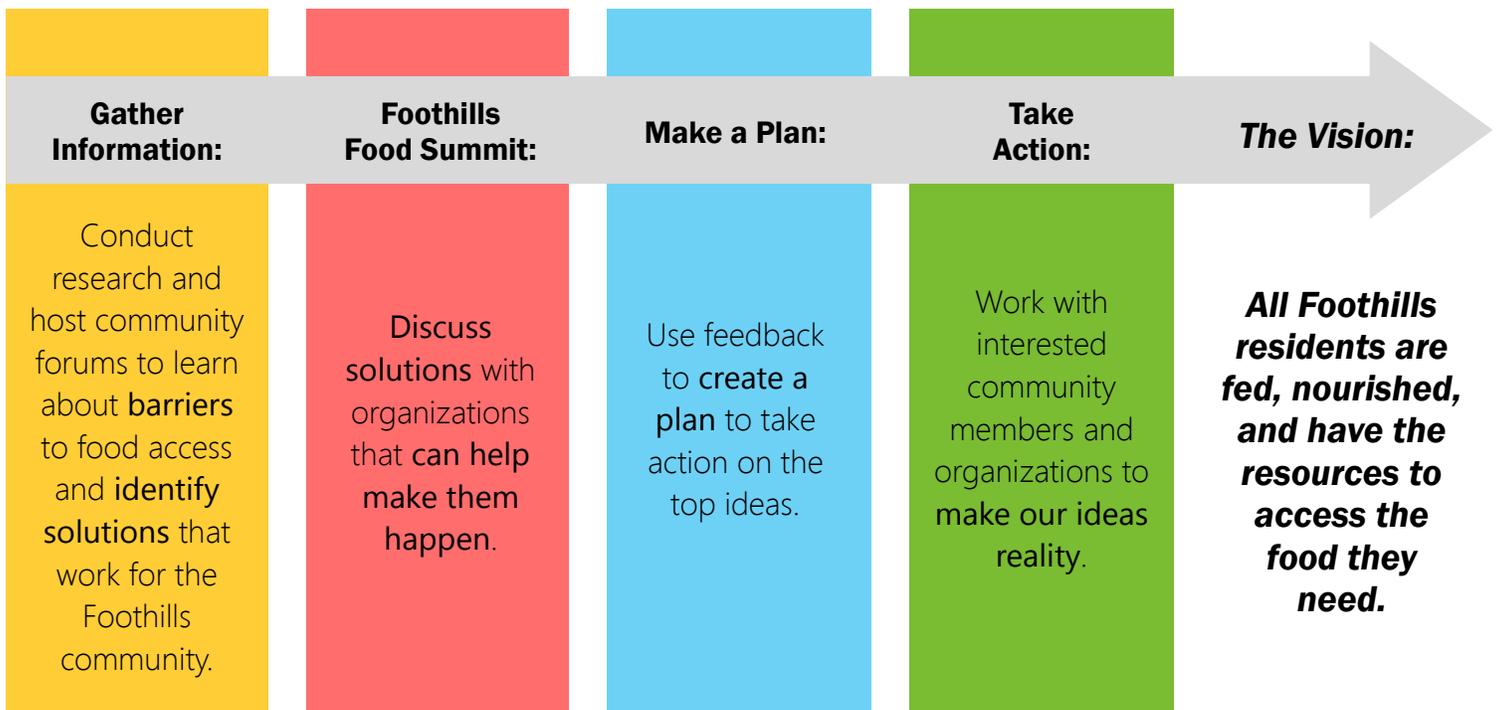
Background

The “Foothills” refers to the rural area of eastern Whatcom County, which is home to roughly 9,000 people in a geographic region spanning approximately 620 square miles. The USDA classifies the Foothills as a “food desert,” meaning that it is a low-income area and that at least 33% of the population lacks adequate access to retail sources of food.

In November 2014, sixty individuals representing local residents, farmers, businesses, non-profits, funders, and government agencies gathered at the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center for the Foothills Food Summit. The purpose was to share information and create partnerships among community leaders with a common interest: that all Foothills residents are fed, nourished, and have the resources to access the food they need. A full report of the Foothills Food Summit is available on the Foothills Food Bank website at www.foothillsfoodbank.org.

The **Foothills Food Access Plan** reflects the research, community input, and discussion of visions and strategies from the Summit. The Plan provides a framework for community action, highlighting the services, facilities, and programs that will help improve food access in Whatcom County. This Plan is a working document, which will evolve as we learn what works, and as new partnerships and innovations emerge.

The Planning Process:



A Picture of Foothills Food Access



Our Vision

We envision a community where everyone has plenty of healthy, fresh, local food to eat.

This is a community where extra care is taken to ensure that our children, our seniors, and our neighbors have strong systems of support, so that no one goes hungry. This is a community where our local farmers, ranchers, fishers, and foragers are recognized as our cultural heritage and supported as the providers of the freshest, healthiest, and most delicious food around. This is a community that is proud of its self-reliance – where people know how to grow food, preserve food, and cook healthy meals for their families. This is a rural community where people are spread out geographically, so we have mobile systems to take food and services to the places where neighbors gather, and neighbors pitch in to make it happen.

This is a community where we join forces to ensure that everyone has access to healthy food.

Our Guiding Principles

People

We believe that all people have the right to healthy food. We have long-standing traditions of neighbors helping neighbors in each of our small communities. We know that each of our communities (Kendall, Acme, Maple Falls, Glacier, Deming) will have a unique combination of people doing this work and figuring out the best way to make it happen.

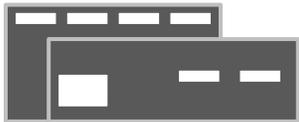
Places

We will build a system that brings more healthy food and food education to the places that are close to home. An organized network for distribution is more resource efficient, and strengthens our small local communities and economies.

Partnerships

We will build strong partnerships with local community groups, agencies, funders, local businesses, and non-profit organizations to achieve our common goals. With stronger partnerships, more resources can flow.

Strategies



The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center is a hub of healthy food access activities, with community meals, gardening, and education. Foothills Food Bank storage, distribution, and mobile services are located in this facility.



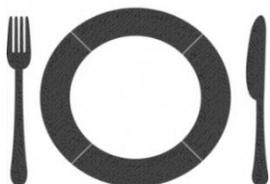
Mobile services deliver nutritious and fresh food to key community destinations. A mobile food bank, based out of the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center, and mobile farmers markets have regular distribution days, where neighbors gather for food, information, and fun.



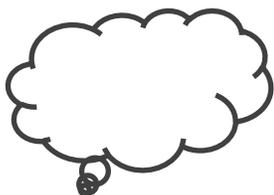
Hunger prevention services extend beyond the food bank. Winter and Spring Pantry Programs and Summer Meal Programs ensure that kids don't go hungry during school breaks. Meals on Wheels serves homebound people throughout the area, and emergency responders always have food baskets on hand.



Farm-to-school and farm-to-preschool programs are well-established in all schools and preschools. Fresh, healthy, locally sourced food is served for breakfast, lunch, and in summer meal programs. Food education is integrated in the cafeteria, the classroom, school gardens, and family/youth programs.



Meal programs gather people together to socialize and eat good food. Senior meals, shared community meals, and summer meal programs for youth are hosted at all the key community locations. Community meals highlight the local bounty and provide opportunities for people to learn how to cook nutritious meals.



Educational programs are offered throughout east Whatcom County, at the Nooksack Tribe, the libraries, the schools – at every place that food is being served or distributed. People of all ages and cultures help each other learn about nutrition, growing food, preservation, and cooking.

Food Access Strategies in Action

This diagram represents an integrated food access system in East Whatcom County using the strategies and principles described above. Mobile services deliver on a regular basis to hubs in each Foothills community (Acme, Deming, Glacier, Kendall, Maple Falls, Van Zandt). Each food hub has the combination of services that meet their unique needs, and community volunteers act as organizers to bring them to life. Over time local support builds, and there is connectivity of services across the whole Foothills region.

