

*"The Niagara Falls local food action plan was developed by a diverse group of residents to improve access to healthy food in our city."*

**- BRIAN ARCHIE**, Niagara Falls Resident & Executive Director of Create a Healthier Niagara Falls Collaborative



# 5 Years of Progress

**NF** LOCAL FOOD  
ACTION PLAN

# A Community Owned Food System

In 2013, the Healthy Food Healthy People Coalition sprang to life, ignited by the desire to transform the food system in the City of Niagara Falls. Those early days were dedicated to forging vital partnerships, cementing our core priorities, and harmonizing our vision.

Driven by a deep commitment to our community, we took a decisive step. The city needed a plan, a roadmap to guide us to a community owned food system, one that serves all members of the Niagara Falls community. In 2018, the Niagara Falls Local Food Action Plan was published and approved by the City of Niagara Falls to increase food security and improve the local food system.

We have rallied around a powerful and ambitious vision of a Niagara Falls that celebrates diversity, community health and economic resiliency for all. The result is an all-encompassing, resident-informed, and resident-powered food action plan. This report highlights the progress made since the plan was published and approved.

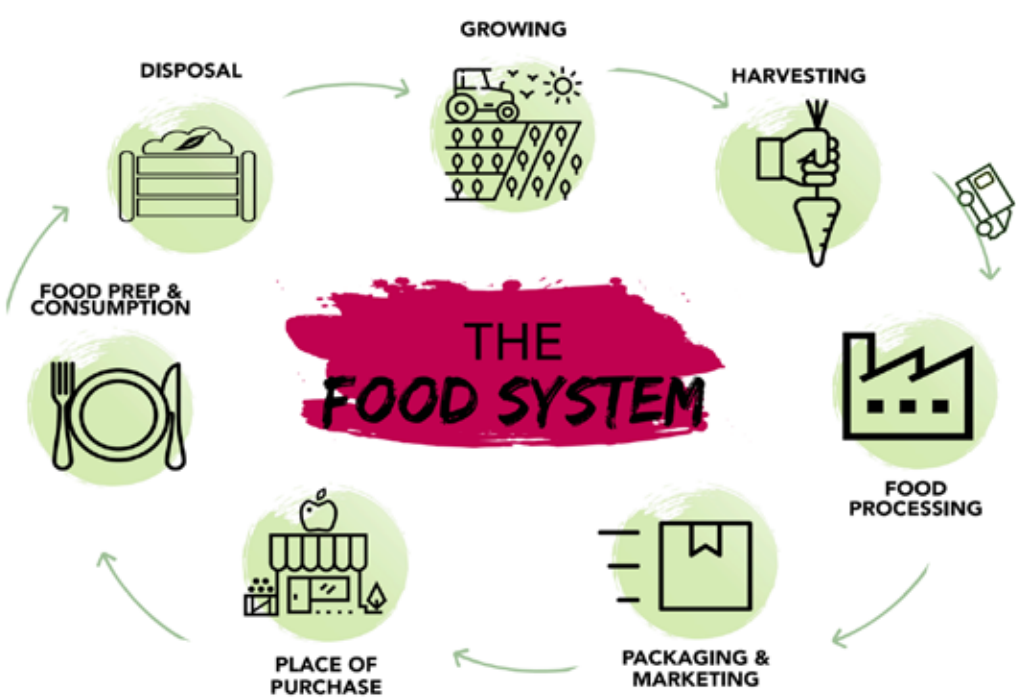
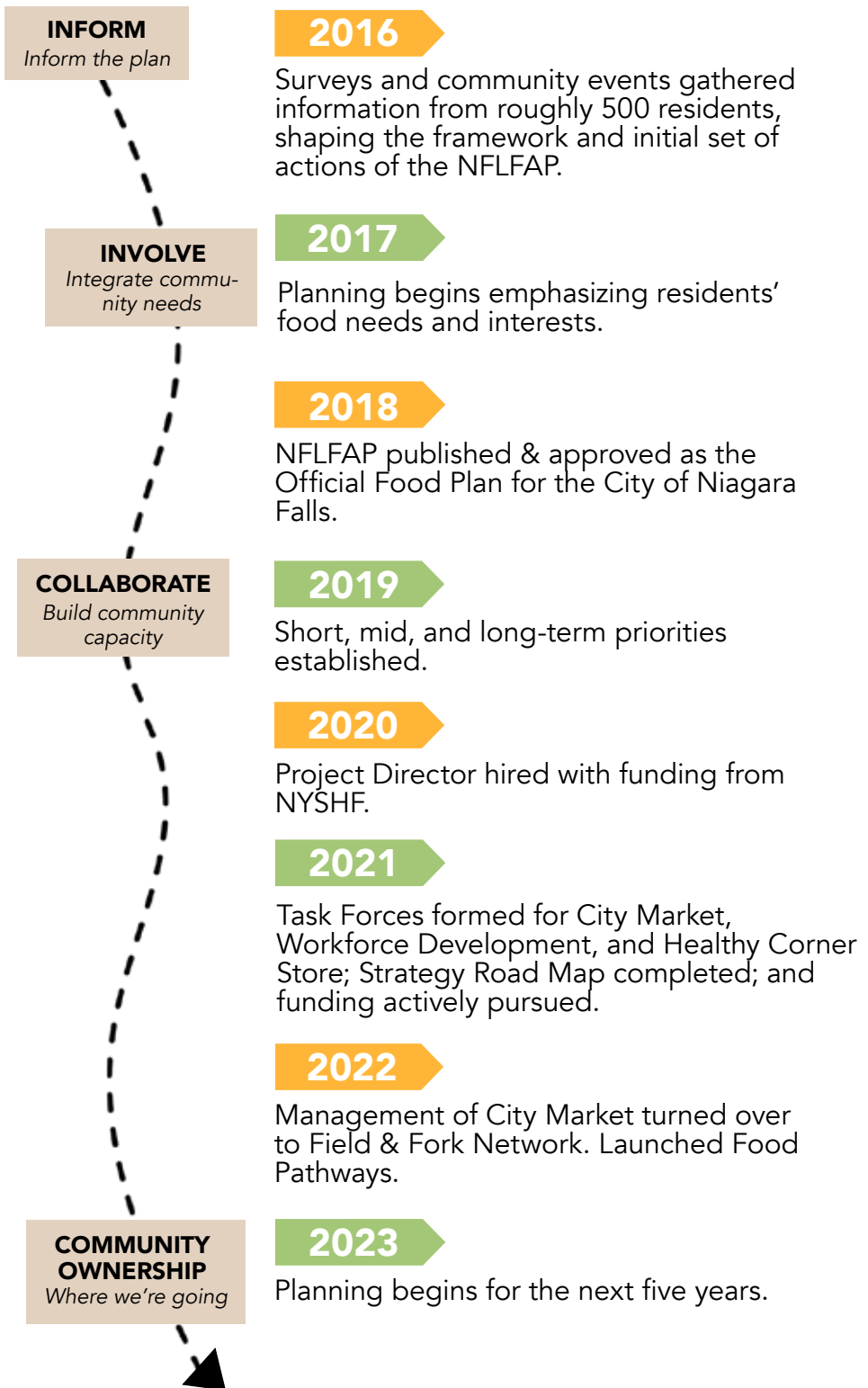


Photo front cover: Residents of Niagara Falls learning and growing together.

# The Path to Community Ownership





*Kids Day at Niagara Falls City Market 2023*

## Revitalizing the City Market to Best Serve the Community

Improving the Niagara Falls City Market was identified as the top priority of the community in 2019. Since then, progress has included:

- ✓ Increasing access to include food assistance programs that allow shoppers to maximize their food budgets
- ✓ Bringing in more vendors to offer a wider range of products available to purchase such as honey, baked goods, pickles, jams, and various artisan items in addition to quality produce from local farmers
- ✓ Hosting market events such as live music, arts, and culture, inviting the community to gather in a safe and fun environment

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## Transforming Neighborhoods... One Garden at a Time

As vehicles for social and environmental renewal, community gardens offer residents a cost-effective source for food and a place for transformative activities. Along with our partners at Grassroots Gardens of Western NY, new user-friendly maps were created, along with other resources, to make it easier for aspiring gardeners to identify and access land.

## From Feedback to Action: Lifting Community Voices

The need for sustainable solutions to food access challenges continues to be a priority for city residents. Advocacy has emerged as a powerful tool for meaningful change, empowering the community to shape their food landscape. Two initiatives have helped residents identify policy goals and mobilize grassroots advocates for change.

Through various events and a community survey, we gathered input from residents about food issues that matter to them. These include:

- ✓ Expanding healthy food retail options in the city
- ✓ More educational programs on cooking and growing food including urban farming
- ✓ Improving food purchasing policies at schools, hospitals, and other institutions with an emphasis on more nutritious and sustainable options

Through a coalition of community partners, 20 Niagara Falls residents engaged in a multi-day training on community building and neighborhood improvement, gaining skills to activate and empower other community members to effect change at the neighborhood level.

Future trainings on food justice and food equity are scheduled for 2024.

*Niagara Falls residents provide input on community food priorities.*



# Nurturing the Future: Food Literacy as a Catalyst for Change

Young people are the driving force behind a healthier future, one where food is not just sustenance but a source of empowerment and community well-being. In partnership with the Niagara Falls City School District, we launched two programs to inform, educate and enlighten youth by providing them the tools and experiences that broaden their horizons for a brighter food future.

### FOOD PATHWAYS

An immersive program for high school students that includes hands-on exploration, field trips to food-related businesses and professional skills development. Over the last 2 years, more than 20 students have gone through the program and unanimously agreed it significantly enhanced their understanding of the food system.



"Without Field & Fork and the Food Pathways program, I would have never found the motivation to try new things and apply for college."

**Jacy Benson**

*Student at Niagara Falls High School, Food Pathways Program*

### URBAN SEEDS

An educational program that inspires young people with the knowledge and skills to actively contribute to building a healthier community. From seed to waste, this program provides hands-on learning and community engagement, nurturing an awareness of how food choices are interconnected with community well-being. Delivered by our partners at The Connection, the Packard Court Community Center and the Niagara Falls City School District, more than 300 young people have experienced the program over the last 3 years.



*Niagara University Interns and NYS Public Health Fellows joined partners for a healthy food audit of corner stores in Niagara Falls.*

## Fueling Economic Renewal by Improving Food Access

Addressing the challenge of food deserts – those neighborhoods that lack access to affordable and nutritious foods – is an ongoing focus of the Healthy Retail Work Group. This group of concerned residents and key stakeholders is actively researching potential solutions to bring to Niagara Falls including alternative grocery store models and a healthy corner store initiative. By enhancing food access, the introduction of new healthy retail outlets can serve as a dynamic force for economic revitalization. Bringing in new business and employment opportunities will stimulate economic activity and contribute to the overall sustainability and growth of the community. The Healthy Retail Work Group is focusing on two goals for 2024:

- ✓ Improving healthy options at corner stores that are near schools and youth centers providing residents – young and old - convenient access to nutritious foods in their neighborhood
- ✓ Identify and plan for an alternative grocery store model to serve a high-need area in the city



# What's Next?

We are dedicated to collaboration with our partners, ensuring the continued evolution and implementation of the plan. Together, we aspire to construct a food system characterized by equity, sustainability, and accessibility for all. In pursuit of these aspirations, our goals for the next five years are threefold.

- ✓ Transition to stronger resident leadership
- ✓ Continue to refine the plan's priorities to ensure it is meeting the needs of the community
- ✓ Strengthen and expand the Healthy Food Healthy People Coalition

# Support Our Work

Whether you're a community leader, a food enthusiast, or an individual eager to make a difference, your passion can profoundly impact our collective efforts. Step forward, contribute, and help shape a Niagara Falls where healthy food is a fundamental right.

# Stay Informed

Subscribe to our email newsletters for the latest updates regarding the Niagara Falls Local Food Action Plan.



Niagara Falls City Market Kids Day 2022



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