**8/11/15 Mid-North Quality of Life Plan Health Action Team meeting notes**

MFCDC office, Martha Baker-Blue and Brenda Havens co-chairs (<http://www.walkurbanindy.org/>)

**I didn’t mention this, but Isaiah resigned as chair of the board of Temple Heritage Center, Inc. this week, which is an indicator (to me) that he is looking to “get out” of Indy sooner rather than later, likely to be closer to family in FL. Food for thought (no pun intended.)**

Looks like MFCDC will likely pick up the ball on the “long-term solutions” committee that came from Joyce’s food access organizing, and Brittanie Redd (brittanie@mfcdc.org) will likely be the staff person handling that beginning next week (as Kelli Mirgeaux is leaving MFCDC…) Still need to formalize that role with Leigh/MFCDC, develop a work plan, and set up a regular meeting schedule in order to re-engage folks from Mid-North/Midtown that have already expressed an interest in pursuing this, specifically those interested in a co-op. There’s also a possibility to coordinate with Near West (UNWA) folks also working on similar (new grocer) food access solutions.

I attached the Mid-North Commercial Node Study for review. A good macro analysis of retail viability that offers suggestions for prioritizing investment aimed at traditional retailers. Does not take into account some of the finer-grained socioeconomic factors related specifically to food access. Also, MFCDC/BWI’s mixed-use project “groundbreaking” (for the Citizens Energy work) is scheduled for this fall and the retail space is scheduled to be ready by early- to mid-2017 --- that should be considered as another viable retail space for a new co-op.

Marion County Health Department recently completed a “survey of full-service groceries in Marion County” that should be available on the MCHD or Indy Food Council (see below) web site soon.

This is an interesting study that I’m sure helped the City to justify their Section 108 investment in the Sav-A-Lot at the Meadows.

<http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/multimedia/data-visualizations/2015/hia-map/state/indiana/potential-full-service-grocery-store-development-in-a-food-desert>

Indy Food Council (<http://indyfoodcouncil.org/?page_id=61>) hosts quarterly education sessions with expert speakers. There is a session tentatively planned for 9/18/2015, 4:00-7:00pm with a rep from ICDC (Indiana Co-op Development Council.) ICDC assisted with the formation of Indy Food Co-op and continues to consult with them. Sign up for the Indy Food Council newsletter using the link to receive updates on this and other events.

Whitney Fields, Program Manager for the Indy Food Council (wfields@lisc.org), is also attempting to coordinate five applications for the EPA’s *Local Foods, Local Places* TA grant (<http://www2.epa.gov/smart-growth/local-foods-local-places#background>) including the Mid-North QOLP Health Action Team “Food Scholars” program which is a piggyback/partnership with the existing Purdue Extension Master Food Volunteer program (Program Manager Emma Crayner, can this interface with OAS1$?) This is likely not a great funding source due to the fact that it’s already going to be ‘over-subscribed’ for this round, and we haven’t yet formulated any clear action steps or needs for additional analyses. Good to keep in mind going forward, though, as is the Indy Chamber’s resources for new/expanding “storefront” businesses as well as the annual McKinney Foundation grants ($10K) available through the City Office of Sustainability.

**8/4/15 Urban Patch Food Access meeting notes**

Tabernacle Presbyterian Church sanctuary, Joyce Moore ([www.urbanpatch.org](http://www.urbanpatch.org))

The group was significantly smaller than the first meeting a week prior, likely due to National Night Out events scheduled for the same time as the meeting. Folks broke up into three groups to work on short-, mid-, and long-term solutions. ~70% of the attendees migrated to the long-term group (attracting a new full grocer), with the rest focusing on mid-term solutions (developing bodegas, food carts.) There was little interest (why?) in the short-term group that was to focus on OAS1$ (healthy cooking/eating from dollar store food shelves.)

Bodega (mid-term solution group) discussed:

* small storefronts (bodegas), pop-up shops, and mobile food carts in strategic corners (gas stations, busy street corners)
* a survey/needs assessment to determine which (food) items should be provided
* zoning implications, including Indy Rezone changes which may make this strategy more feasible
* possibility to develop a central distribution hub for urban Indy consumers that could serve rural Indy growers
* how to also make crucial hard goods such as TP and diapers available
* how to encourage entrepreneurship, create jobs, and recycle consumer spending back to the local community

Grocery (long-term solution group) discussed:

* Bill Crawford (rep Marion County Commissioners) mentioned the pending MDC approval of a $1.6M City Section 108 loan (guarantee?) to support the new Sav-A-Lot grocery near the Meadows and urged the group to work with their elected officials (CCC) as they consider options. He also provided a summary of local banks’ federal CRA ratings --- all were rated “satisfactory” (including Chase which is closing branches…) with the exception of PNC which is rated “outstanding.”
* Leigh/MFCDC urged folks to be cognizant of existing action items in the Mid-North Quality of Life Plan (also attached) and reiterated that she has been working with Indy Food Council (LISC/Tedd), a grocer “new to the Indy market”, and reps from the still-forming Pleasant Run Co-op to secure a grocer for MFCDC’s pending mixed-use LIHTC development (BWI/Gary Hobbs) at 29th & Central. It is her understanding that the cost to open a new co-op location ranges from $650K to $3M.
* Alan (Pogue’s Run) shared that Indy Food Co-op’s mission is always to empower the community in which they are located and gave several examples of what that looks like at Pogue’s Run (member discount programs, customer-driven decisions on items to stock, resident-shoppers adopting healthier eating habits.) He reiterated that the co-op is “customizable” to serve community needs and that membership is not required to shop there. Membership does afford certain benefits (member-only specials, member-only discount days, member-only frequent shopper bonuses) and can be purchased ($150 lifetime membership) in six installments of $25 each if initial cost is an issue. Contact Nate (store manager) or Mary (bookkeeper, board member) for specific info on store operations such as square footage required, average purchase, etc.
* Imhotep shared that the Double 8 store fixtures and remaining food items will be auctioned by Key Auctioneers and should be wrapped up by early September (auction at Fairfield store is scheduled for 9/4/15.) Once assets are liquidated Isaiah “will see” about the disposition of the actual real estate. Tyson shared that the actual real estate is not owned by Double 8 or Isaiah, but rather an entity controlled by his family. It may be possible/prudent to secure an option (right of first refusal to purchase) on a site that would be suitable for a new co-op location.
* It is likely possible to secure permission to set up food carts at the shuttered Double 8 locations, perhaps Sunday after church (idea shared with Bodega group.)

**7/28/15 Urban Patch Food Access meeting notes**

Tabernacle Presbyterian Church sanctuary, Joyce Moore ([www.urbanpatch.org](http://www.urbanpatch.org))

Overall, a positive first step on work that has great potential to span 38th Street with a big win for the entire Mid-North/Midtown area.

That was the initial meeting for concerned citizens in the Mapleton-Fall Creek/Mid-North/Midtown geography --- those most impacted by the Double 8 closures at 34th & Fairfield & 39th & Illinois. Turnout included many folks from “north of 38th”, which is not the norm --- I think getting the word out on Nextdoor MFC & Nextdoor Meridian-Kessler helped with the mix.

Joyce/Urban Patch organized this meeting, and a lot of alternate strategies were highlighted such as the dollar store cooking classes/food carts (OAS1$ model), small produce bodegas, and the highlighting of existing food/transportation resources, including accessing free ‘surplus’ produce from area farmers... These are all good ideas, but don’t effectively address the lack of a ‘real grocery store’ in my opinion.

The meeting last Saturday at Flanner House involved mostly stakeholders from the UNWA/Northwest community --- those most impacted by the closure at 29th & MLK (and the Chase bank closures…) There was a lot of political posturing ---- pastors, elected officials (CCC Vop Osili, CCC Joe Simpson, pastors, etc.) In my view, that was more of a typical “immediate response” meeting…and the conversation about longer-term solutions will likely stay with the Northwest Quality of Life Action Team that is already thinking about (if not acting on) food access issues. I feel bad for those guys because I think their adjacent (economic) catchment area is pretty bleak --- not close to downtown/density/high earning residential.

I’m happy that we didn’t have a ‘reactive’ group last night and thought the assembly was pretty diverse, thoughtful, and articulate. State senator Greg Taylor was there, a representative of Congressman Carson, as well as the pastor of Phillips Temple church (I’ve never seen the leader of that church “next door” attend a meeting in 10 years of activism in MFC…) and representatives from City (DMD, County Commissioners, MNL, et al), Indy Food Council, and many others…which is promising. Note that efforts in our area will get very different \***local**\* (CCC) political support than the Northwest side. It will be crucial to keep everyone that was in the room last night apprised of progress on each front…and keep momentum so potential supporters and advocates don’t lose interest.

I think the challenge will be to keep a diverse group (residents and stakeholders that span the 38th Street divide) together as we work on solutions. Joyce/Urban Patch feels the areas north of 38th are already well-served by grocers --- I agree that any new grocery store location needs to be located south of 38th Street, but the success of any venture will necessarily involve the economies of scale afforded by a catchment area much larger than just MFC (i.e. all of the Midtown geography --- 17 neighborhoods from Fall Creek to Broadripple roughly along the College/Central/Meridian corridor.)

I’m looking forward to hearing from Joyce about next steps…which I will assume include committees to pursue the various strategies discussed.