

# Charlotte Listening Session

November 15, 2012

**Partners: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council (*Anna Brown, Marilyn Marks*) and Mecklenburg County Cooperative Extension (*Kristin Davis*), held at the Charlotte School of Law (*Jason Jones*). In cooperation with the Cabarrus County Food Council (*Aaron Newton*).**

Nearly 100 people attended. A number of experts from the local and state regulatory community were present including representatives of NCDA&CS Food & Drug and Marketing Divisions, DENR Division of Environmental Health, Food Protection Branch, the NC Present Use Value Advisory Board and Mecklenburg Soil & Water Conservation.

NC Local Sustainable Foods Council members present: Nancy Creamer, Center for Environmental Farming Systems; Debbie Hamrick, NC Farm Bureau Federation.

The group split into three working sessions to better discuss issues. Those groups and the main issues they surfaced are:

## Children's Access to Fresh, Local Foods

*facilitated by Sheila Mullen, Continuous Motion Health & Wellness*

- Youth Friendly Appeal and Presentation of Food
- NC Standard Blueprint for school gardens and innovative food education
- Connecting future success and consequences of choices
- Innovative active communication
- Gap certification policy changes

## Land Use & Zoning

*facilitated by Shivaugn Rayl, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association*

- PUV minimum acreage and conservation lands for water quality. Smaller tracts preserved for open space in the face of continued growth in urban areas, can density be a factor in determining when to allow smaller tracts of land into the PUV program?
- City of Charlotte requesting public input on zoning.  
[www.surveymonkey.com/s/charlottezoningassessment](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/charlottezoningassessment)
- Need a clear point of contact in city planning/zoning who can answer questions about how the ordinances apply to local food productions.

## **Urban Agriculture & Local Foods: Entrepreneurship, Business Start-up & Value-added Opportunities on the Farm**

*facilitated by Debbie Hamrick, NC Farm Bureau Federation and North Carolina Local Sustainable Foods Council member*

- Develop a stakeholder group to put together a revitalization plan for the Charlotte Regional Farmers Market that examines ways the market can be a key resource for area farmers and local foods entrepreneurs.
- Provide access to business assistance resources (state and local) and education/training for local foods businesses.
- Facilitate business incubation and supporting emergent entrepreneurs.
- Provide marketing assistance for local foods businesses, especially raising consumer awareness of local foods.
- Facilitate coordination and communication between and among local and regional food councils.

### **Evaluation**

*Nearly half of the guest who attended the session completed an evaluation to gauge knowledge gained from the experience, future intentions for engagement in the local foods movement and additional comments.*

- 95% of participants surveyed indicated that the listening session met their expectation
- 32% of participants indicated that they will remain engaged in food policy conversation in their county, 66% indicated that they are already engaged
- 49% indicated that they will become more involved in local food and food policy
- 71% indicated that they are currently supporting local food in their county