

IN THIS ISSUE

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Planners coming to the table

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In this issue, “Planners Coming to the Table,” we focus on how the planning community has come in recent years to embrace food systems as a legitimate focus of their profession. This is a watershed event, since planners are trained to provide systematic analyses and process skills to opportunities and challenges faced by communities — things all too often lacking in agriculture and food system work.

Back in 1986 when I was a graduate student in the department of city and regional planning, with a focus on food systems and a minor in extension education, at Cornell University, I was a bit of an odd duck, talking in graduate seminars about food policy councils, how the city of Knoxville was retrofitting buses and changing their routes to accommodate inner-city grocery shoppers, and how farmers’ markets were really functioning as rural microenterprise incubators. My advisor, Pierre Clavel, the recently retired professor and author of *Progressive Cities* (1986) and *Activists in City Hall* (2010), humored my interests and encouraged me to passionately pursue food system planning. I wasn’t the only planning student interested in food and agriculture, but at that time we were few and far between.

Today the situation is quite different. The American Planning Association has adopted a “Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning,” planning students are pressing their departments to offer food system planning courses, and Cornell and many other planning programs around North America have begun to accommodate them: hiring faculty with food systems expertise, developing new courses, PhD programs, research groups, and the like (e.g., efforts at the University of Buffalo and the University of Wisconsin). In this issue you will read about the pedagogical roots of this nascent field of planning and get a glimpse into cutting-edge practices.

We dedicate this issue to Jerome Kaufman and the intrepid young planners he has helped to inspire, some of whom are pictured on the cover of this issue (see the cover photos’ captions at the top of the table of contents). They have challenged the conventional wisdom in the planning profession and successfully argued that food systems uniquely bridge well established planning fields such as community and economic

development, land use, and transportation. While food system planners are really just at the beginning of this exciting period of growth, they have added their shoulders to the wheel, and as a result we will see an accelerated pace in the movement to create more equitable and sustainable food systems. For this, we take our collective hat off to you!

In this first issue of our second volume, papers cover a broad swath of the nascent food system planning field — from pedagogy to practice. **Minaker and co-authors** and **Freedgood and co-authors** provide a thorough review of the approaches and tools used by planners and allied professionals to assess community-level food systems. **Mendes and Nasr (with multiple contributors, including Jerome Kaufman)** and **Soma and Wakefield** explore the emerging roles (opportunities and challenges) of planning faculty and practicing planners. **Evans-Cowley** and **Desjardins and colleagues** provide detailed case studies of incorporating food systems into regional comprehensive planning. One of the powerful analytical tools planners can bring to the table is geographic information systems. **Giombolini et al., Ruelle et al., Nixon and Doud,** and **Hu et al.,** use spatial analysis to explore the potential for diversification, foodshed development, food security infrastructure, and spatial characteristics of food deserts. **Horst et al., Day-Farnsworth and Morales,** and **Levkoe and Wakefield** make explicit cases for planner engagement in alternative value chains, food distribution systems such as urban food hubs (for which they propose a new typology), and community food centers.

Our open call papers in this issue include Burnett et al.'s consumer preference study, which suggests that a more narrow definition of "local" may not increase price premiums significantly. McCuiston et al. studied cattle morbidity in a niche beef cooperative and make management recommendations to minimize losses and costs. Jackson et al. provide a case study of the unique health insurance rebate program managed by a CSA coalition in Wisconsin. Finally, Adekunle et al. explore ethnic vegetable demand in Toronto and the prospects for farm diversification in response to that demand.

We also offer two superlative book reviews: Eliav Bitan reviews Fred Kirschenmann's latest collection of essays entitled *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience*, and Nevin Cohen reviews de la Salle and Holland's *Agricultural Urbanism: Handbook for Building Sustainable Food Systems in 21st Century Cities* — calling it a "manifesto" about building place around food.

Lastly, our regular columnists offer their views on hot topics related to food system planning and current affairs. Rami Zurayk writes about the absurdities of the current global food regime and the need for it to be "occupied." Ken Meter gives us 17 reasons to conduct food system assessments and challenges us to think deeper than numbers alone. John Ikerd explores the challenges of land use planning for sustainable food systems and offers a potentially more equitable and viable approach to farmland protection than purchasing development rights.

Happy reading — and best wishes for 2012!



Publisher and Editor in Chief