



Food In LOUISVILLE Neighborhoods Community Coalition

FOOD IS CRITICAL FOR LOUISVILLE!

Learn what your Metro Council Members and Candidates Think About These Issues

BACKGROUND: Louisville is challenged with food insecurity; resource disparities among Louisville neighborhoods makes access to healthy, appropriate, affordable food difficult for many in our city. During the current coronavirus crisis, people are especially concerned about food security and food system resilience.

The Food in Neighborhoods Community Coalition asked each of the Metro Council members and candidates to answer the questions below regarding our local food system. Twelve of them responded, and their answers are included below.

[Food in Neighborhoods Community Coalition \(FIN\)](#) is a community coalition that supports community efforts to build a just, healthy, and sustainable food system in Louisville, Kentucky. FIN is made up of engaged citizens, non-profit and faith leaders, community activists, educators, gardeners, and scholars who share a commitment to equity and sustainability in the food system. FIN has three Working Groups: Food Access & Markets; Urban Agriculture Coalition; Food Policy Action.

All of our members believe in and are working toward a stronger local food economy that will:

- provide better food access and health outcomes
- meet strong consumer demand for local food
- improve our neighborhoods with equitable, non-gentrifying people-centered development
- expand community access to land, water and green space
- reduce carbon emissions, and
- make Louisville more self-reliant and able to mitigate climate changes and other crises

[alphabetical by last name]



Jecorey Arthur

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1) What is a memory you have related to food that is significant to you?

I grew up in the West End's Parkland Neighborhood. At the time we had more liquor stores than food stores. This is the case in many poor neighborhoods.

2) Many residents do not have access to affordable, healthy food. How important an issue is this? Very

What suggestions do you have to address it?

1. We'll need to pick up where Barbara Sexton Smith left off in terms of partnerships to continue mobile programs.
2. There have been successful ordinances in other cities that limit convenient stores in order to attract full-service grocery stores. This needs to be done in our district.
3. We need to organize neighborhood associations to support locally owned grocery stores. There are several in the works, but they need funding. NDF would be the perfect start.

3) There is high consumer demand for local food in Louisville. How important is it to you that our local government help fill this demand? Very

What suggestions do you have to address it, while also paying particular attention to the needs of low-income residents?

We should prioritize buying local before anything else. The city government should be working to ensure all citizens have access to quality local food. There are less than a handful of sit-in restaurants in the West End of Louisville. We need resources to support our local and potential business owners who want to serve our community's food needs. These resources could be new grant opportunities, more effective trainings, or rotating promotion programs to drive up traffic.

4) A number of cities have increased urban agriculture to address food access and food security. How important is it to you that local government support growing more food in our city? Very

What suggestions do you have to accomplish this?

We need proper education about healthy food not only for consumption but also for preparation. We should have multiple community gardens in each neighborhood. It's important to also address our excessive amount of surface lots so we can transition them into green spaces to be used for growing local food.

5) Growing more food requires access to land. What role should local government play in increasing access to land in and around the city?

If we reassessed the surface lots in downtown and converted just a quarter of them we would have over 9,000 ft of new green space. That's 25 football fields. This reassessment could happen across the city.

6) Food insecurity is a serious problem, yet approximately 40% of food is wasted. Do you have any suggestions on how to deal with wasted food?

We have an often forgotten unhoused population that could benefit from food that would otherwise go wasted. Every night after dinner, my toddler and I take left overs to people on the streets. We could feed everyone if this was a formal citywide program.

7) Louisville's infrastructure for processing and storing food from Kentucky farms has been all but lost. Are you familiar with this issue and do you have any ideas on how to address it?

There are countless abandoned warehouses across the West End of Louisville. We lost the Food Port. Let's revisit but thinking of a food network, where these unused spaces are used for storage, but also production, education, and distribution. It will take creative private-public partnerships, including JCPS.

8) Other ideas you have to address Louisville's food insecurity, insufficient local and affordable food, diet-related disease, heat island effect, and/or climate change?

The life expectancy where I live is over a decade less than most parts of town. This needs to be addressed systemically across a web of issues and food might be right in the middle of that web. I lost count of how many school fights I witnessed that stemmed from being hungry. Do you know why school bullies steal lunch money? Because they are hungry. The life that follows this reality is a shorter one.



Cassie Chambers Armstrong

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1) What is a memory you have related to food that is significant to you?

My grandparents owned a small farm in the hills of Eastern Kentucky. As a young child, I remember working in the fields and gardens, and knowing that work was necessary to put food on the table each night. My grandparents always grew an extra garden of food to feed struggling families in the area, and they instilled in me from a young age the importance of working to make sure every member of our community had healthy food to eat.

2) Many residents do not have access to affordable, healthy food. How important an issue is this? Very

What suggestions do you have to address it?

One of the things I studied as part of my Master's in Public Health was issues around food insecure communities. I am very interested in initiatives to connect local farmers to food insecure communities, including incentive programs to bring fresh produce and other healthy foods into these communities. New Roots is doing some great work in this area. I also support things like farm to school initiatives and other programs to make sure that every child has access to fresh, affordable food. I also believe in expanding the scope and reach of federal programs that give seniors and mothers of young children access to farmers markets using vouchers.

3) There is high consumer demand for local food in Louisville. How important is it to you that our local government help fill this demand? Very

What suggestions do you have to address it, while also paying particular attention to the needs of low-income residents?

I am interested in exploring ways to reinvigorate some of the former farm to table local government initiatives that were recently lost due to budget issues and better understanding how government can promote and support access to local food.

4) A number of cities have increased urban agriculture to address food access and food security. How important is it to you that local government support growing more food in our city? Very

What suggestions do you have to accomplish this?

I would like to explore ways for local government to make it easier for those interested in urban agriculture projects to easily and affordably access land. I understand that this has been a challenge in the past, and I would like to hear from your organization about your ideas for ways to support urban agriculture projects.

5) Growing more food requires access to land. What role should local government play in increasing access to land in and around the city?

I believe that local government should be a partner to helping those interested in producing local food to obtain the land they need for these projects. Although I understand that much of the land the city owns presents size challenges, I am interested in exploring how land owned by the city could be put toward more urban agriculture projects.

6) Food insecurity is a serious problem, yet approximately 40% of food is wasted. Do you have any suggestions on how to deal with wasted food?

I believe that we should better support composting of wasted food. I would give this composted material to local farmers and others who were interested in it.

7) Louisville's infrastructure for processing and storing food from Kentucky farms has been all but lost. Are you familiar with this issue and do you have any ideas on how to address it?

This is not an issue that I am particularly familiar with, but I am interested in learning more from experts.

8) Other ideas you have to address Louisville's food insecurity, insufficient local and affordable food, diet-related disease, heat island effect, and/or climate change?

Although I have done some food policy work in the past (mainly around promoting accessibility of healthy foods in communities), I am less familiar with many of the current projects being undertaken in our city. However, I very much recognize the value of these projects and the work your group is doing, and I look forward to learning more about how I can support your work.



Mera Kathryn Corlett

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1) What is a memory you have related to food that is significant to you?

First of all, what a wonderful question to ask at the beginning of this survey.

When I was a young teenager, my mother and I were downtown around lunchtime. We decided to stop by the McDonalds on

Broadway to get a bite to eat. As we pulled into the parking lot, my

mom caught sight of someone she knew. She said, “I think that’s Jim” (I have changed the name for confidentiality). I looked in the direction she was looking and saw the man she was referring to standing near the entrance. It seemed that as people walked by him, they were doing their best to not make eye-contact with him. It was apparent in their body language that they did not want to get stuck in a conversation with this man. His very presence made them uncomfortable.

My mother worked at the state psychiatric hospital. It was common for her to see a patient who had been discharged. Often, they were on the streets. Sometimes she would celebrate to see one of them holding a job at Goodwill or someplace else. I suspected he was a former patient. Heading toward the entrance, my mother approached him. Their eyes met and in the most subtle way I saw him recognize her. She asked, “Jim, have you eaten today?” I cannot count the number of times I have heard her ask this question to someone like Jim. His answer was no. “Well, I’d like to buy you lunch. Will you let me do that?” We waited in line in silence for our turn. I watched Jim, disheveled and unorganized. Not certain what to, but having a desire to make him feel welcome, I flashed the biggest smile I could muster. He nodded which I interpreted as his way of accepting this moment we shared.

With the food ordered and picked up at the counter, my mother proclaimed “Come eat with us.” And he did. As we ate our meal my mother asked him about where he was living and inquired about how he was taking care of himself. She said some things Jim found funny. When he chuckled, I saw he knew she cared for him. As I watched them, I looked around the room at all the people who had turned their glance the other way from him, who had changed their path so as not to be close to him. And then, there we were all in the same space eating together, sharing a meal. It was a powerful moment where I encountered oppression and radical justice in a very real way. The compassion modeled to me by my mother on that very ordinary day had a deep and enduring affect on my values and sense of equity.

2) Many residents do not have access to affordable, healthy food. How important an issue is this? Very

What suggestions do you have to address it?

The week that I launched my campaign, another grocery store in District 18 closed its doors. Unfortunately, this has become too common in our city. A little over a year ago, the Courier Journal reported that Louisville had seen over a dozen grocery stores close in just three years. Many of those businesses were located in areas already facing scarcity of fresh food options. Lack of access to healthy, affordable food is an important issue that has major implications.

Addressing the city's food deserts will require a holistic approach of partnering with organizations, government agencies, businesses, and residents themselves. In other cities, non-profit grocery stores have started appearing. Through federal grants, they are able to sell foods to those with the greatest need at affordable prices. One of the more interesting ideas I've seen is bringing the food to neighborhoods by means of mobile grocery stores. I am open to these and other creative solutions to strategically address the problem.

3) *There is high consumer demand for local food in Louisville. How important is it to you that our local government help fill this demand?* Very

What suggestions do you have to address it, while also paying particular attention to the needs of low-income residents?

District 18 currently does not offer a Farmer's Market. When I was knocking doors and speaking with residents, this was one of my points that received the most engagement from residents. Recently, I spoke with a member of the Lyndon City Council about starting one in a Lyndon park. This district is full of people who want to support local growers but have to travel to neighboring areas to do that. Adding options for buying local agriculture is a part of my campaign and connects to one of our central messages of returning focus back to the community. As we search to also support low-income residents, I think it is important to build on programs that are already in place. I would be interested in modeling it on the Kentucky Double Dollars program, which was a project created by Community Farm Alliance and Bluegrass Farm to Table. It incentivized WIC and SNAP users to shop at Farmers Markets and purchase healthy fruits and vegetables.

4) *A number of cities have increased urban agriculture to address food access and food security. How important is it to you that local government support growing more food in our city?* Somewhat

What suggestions do you have to accomplish this?

One of the passion projects I would like to start upon taking office is to establish community garden locations within the district. There are multiple apartment complexes located throughout District 18 and these residents do not have access to land to grow their own food. I think this will be a resource that helps all residents but especially those living in our many apartment complexes. I would also like to look into something that a friend of mine in California has created. They have a co-op of folks in their neighborhood who grow their own food and rather than selling it to one another, they trade. From what I understand it has been very successful in their community and brings people together from multiple socio-economic levels. I am curious if something like this could work here.

5) *Growing more food requires access to land. What role should local government play in increasing access to land in and around the city?*

Local government should be engaged with the community and residents they serve. There is an opportunity for our representatives to offer support by collaborating with organizations and communicating services available to people. I believe that we have yet to tap the full potential and it is especially true for how District 18 is currently being represented. I am excited about the

possibility to spearhead committees and work with others to try to creatively address the pressing issues surrounding accessibility and food insecurity.

6) *Food insecurity is a serious problem, yet approximately 40% of food is wasted. Do you have any suggestions on how to deal with wasted food?*

This matter came up the other day in a phone call with a constituent. She asked, “Did you know there is no centralized place online to locate food banks in our city?” While volunteering, someone had come to her asking where the closest food bank was. I think one of the first things we can do is to streamline communication of the resources that are already available. Next we need to expand and better coordinate with those that have the resources to share and those that have need.

One of the other problems with Food Banks is that the majority do not have the ability to refrigerate food and that contributes to the problem with food waste. If refrigerated food cannot be stored, it must be thrown out. Improving refrigeration in food banks will go a long way in reducing food waste.

I also think that we need to think outside the pantry and get creative. Shepherd’s Pantries are small boxes that resemble the Little Free Libraries you see around town, but are specifically for keeping canned goods or non perishable items so that those in need can discreetly access food without ever leaving their car. I am currently searching for a location to put a Shepherd’s Pantry in our district.

7) *Louisville’s infrastructure for processing and storing food from Kentucky farms has been all but lost. Are you familiar with this issue and do you have any ideas on how to address it?*

This is not an issue that I feel like I have a deep knowledge of and I would be open to learning more. In the work that I do, it has been important to me that I partner with organizations and others who can lend knowledge so that I have all the information necessary to truly understand the issue at hand. This will be something I intend to bring with me into office. When I am elected Councilmember for District 18, I will want to partner with FIN to address problems like this and others.

8) *Other ideas you have to address Louisville’s food insecurity, insufficient local and affordable food, diet-related disease, heat island effect, and/or climate change?*

This is not an issue that I feel like I have a deep knowledge of and I would be open to learning more. In the work that I do, it has been important to me that I partner with organizations and others who can lend knowledge so that I have all the information necessary to truly understand the issue at hand. This will be something I intend to bring with me into office. When I am elected Councilmember for District 18, I will want to partner with FIN or other organizations in my district like The Food Literacy Project to address problems like this and others.