

FOOD





FOOD

How the District grows, sells, eats, and disposes of food has far-reaching effects on our communities, health, and sustainability. Despite the strides Washington has made in the last decade towards increasing healthy food access in underserved communities, more than one in ten of the District's residents still have difficulty accessing healthy, affordable food. The District has expanded the number of urban farms and community gardens that provide community spaces and fresh food to residents—but still, disparities in food access and diet-related chronic diseases persist.

Currently District Government leaders and nonprofits are focused on addressing the inequitable supply of fresh, healthy food in the District. While some wards have one grocery store for approximately every 10,000 residents,³⁴ Wards 7 and 8 have one grocery store for every 60,000 residents. The DC Food Policy Director and Food Policy Council, both created by legislation in 2014, have named expanding fresh food access in Wards 7 and 8 as their top policy priority. The District Government is also providing tax credits and free property leases to incentivize urban farming. DC Health provides significant grant funding to support federal and local programs that increase healthy food access, especially for pregnant women, infants, children and seniors. These programs include WIC, Produce Plus, Joyful Markets, and Healthy Corner Stores. And, DCPS and charter school students are learning about the importance of healthy eating through hands-on nutrition and cooking education programs and 134 active school gardens.

We know Washington, DC can further advance policies and programs that improve the District's food system and strengthen healthy food access for all residents. These Sustainable DC 2.0 food goals leverage the District's food policy infrastructure and momentum to catalyze innovative approaches to ensuring a healthier, more equitable, and sustainable food system.



Sustainable DC 2.0's actions on food have real benefits for Washington, DC at all levels:

INDIVIDUAL

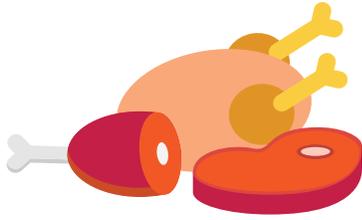
Making healthy, fresh food available and affordable for all District residents can help residents improve their health and well-being. Research shows that a nutritious diet can alleviate risk for chronic diseases like diabetes,³⁵ help children learn and behave better in school,³⁶ and improve people's quality of life.³⁷

NEIGHBORHOOD

A thriving community-driven food system contributes to increased community connectivity and ownership. Community gardens and farmers markets offer public spaces where neighbors can gather, share growing tips and recipes, and leave with healthy food for themselves and their families. Grocery stores and locally-owned restaurants offer employment for residents as well as fresh food and the opportunity to sample the ethnic foods that represent our diverse population.

DISTRICT

Providing healthy meals to kids in school, ensuring that every community has access to healthy food, and creating fair, sustainable jobs in the food sector all provide pathways to the middle class for District residents. Decreasing Washington, DC's food waste also makes more healthy food available for consumption and decreases the District's carbon footprint. A healthy city is a resilient city, and a thriving food system is necessary to meet the District's goals.



11.2% of DC households are food insecure meaning they lack consistent access throughout the year to enough food they need.^{xi}



The District has:

40
full service
grocery stores

71
healthy
corner stores

62
farmers markets

18
urban farms

73
active community
gardens^{xlii}



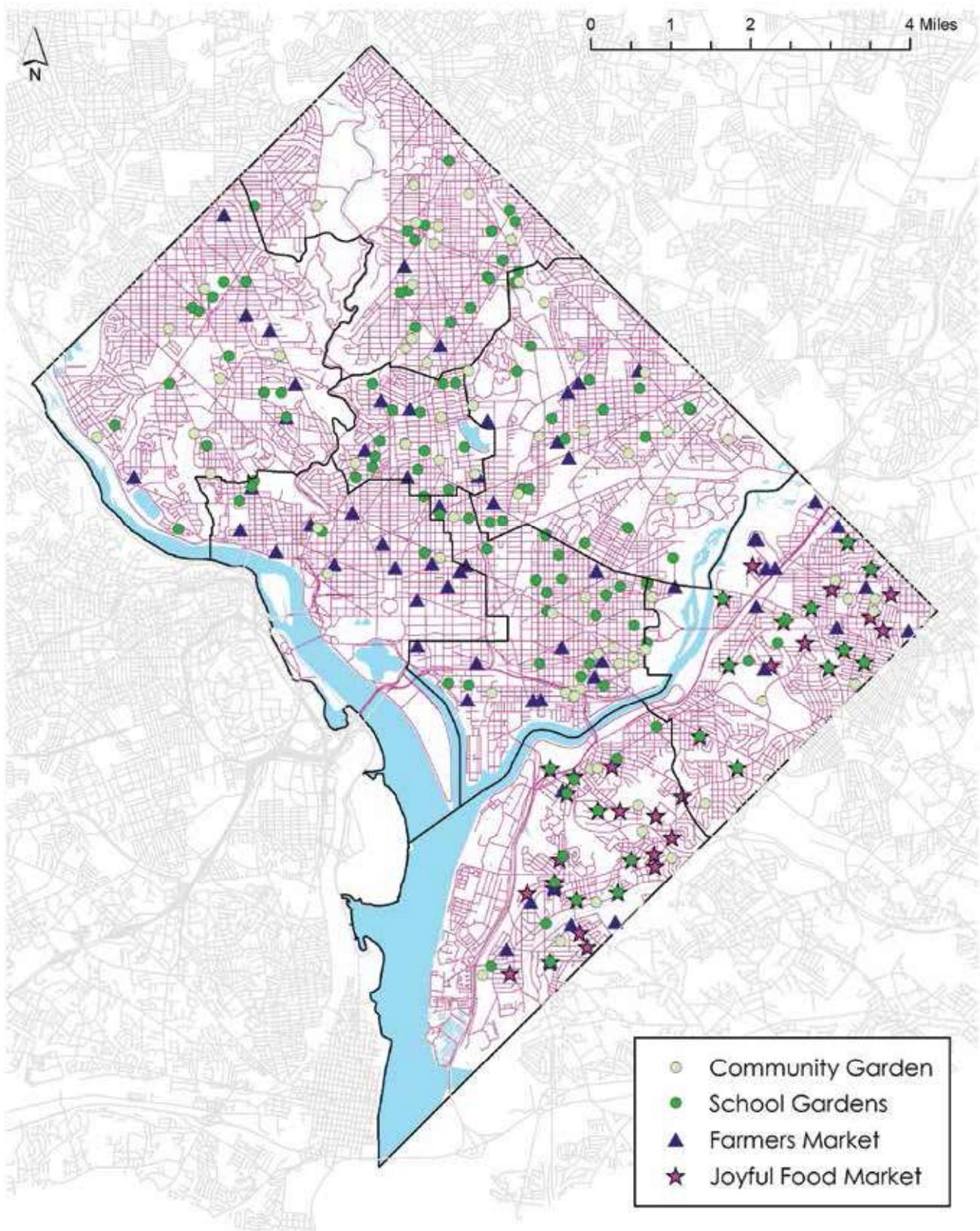
134 District schools had active school gardens.^{xli}



135 tons of food waste was diverted through community composting in FY 2016.^{xliii}



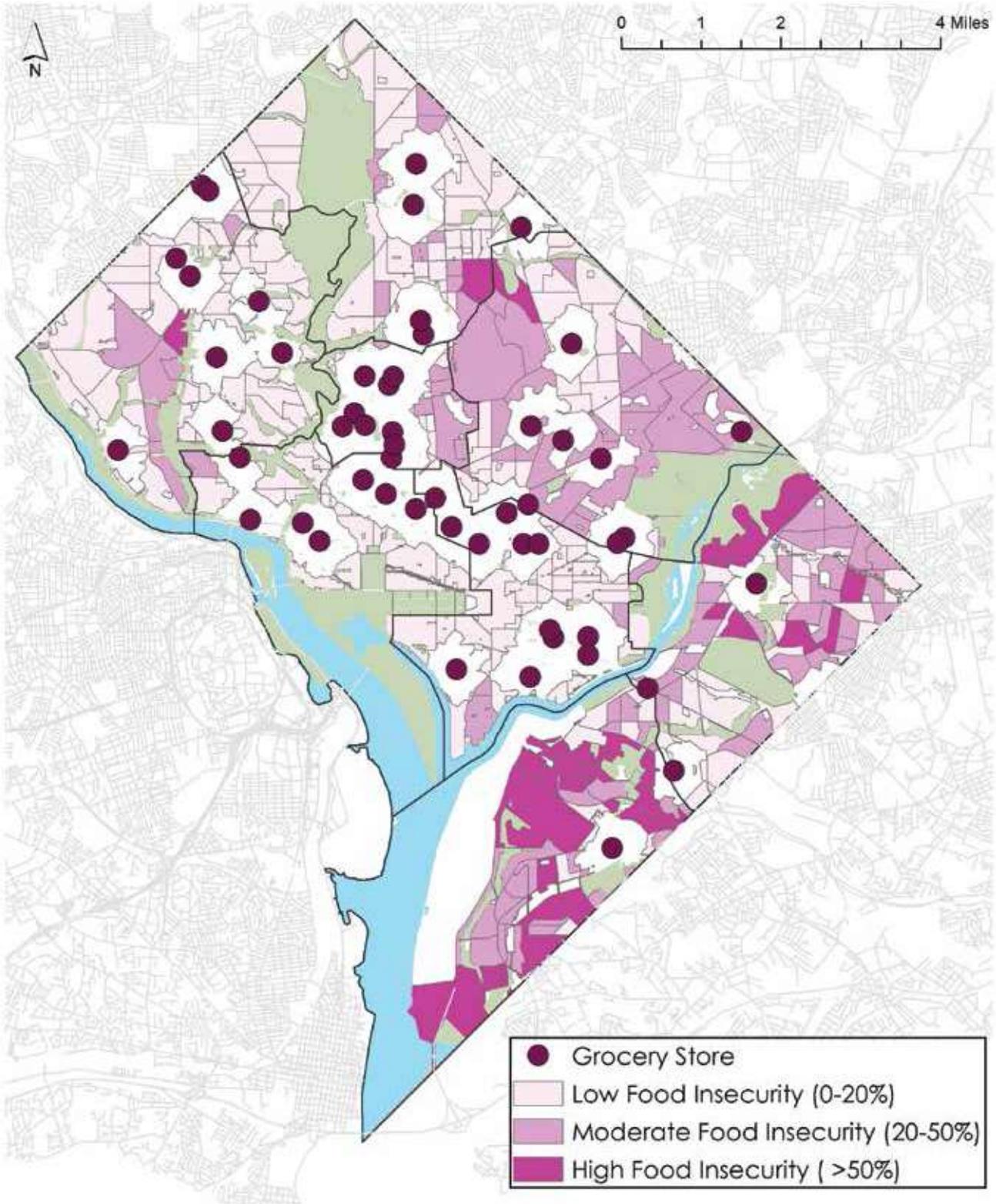
COMMUNITY FOOD ASSETS



Data Source: DC Food Policy Council & DC GIS

FOOD INSECURITY

Food security is defined as having consistent access to affordable, nutritious food throughout the year. Higher levels of food insecurity (darker shades) indicate areas with lower income. White areas surrounding grocery stores indicate walkable access to grocery stores so are considered food secure in this map.





GOAL 1

Expand agricultural uses and production within the District.



TARGET 1

By 2032, put 20 additional acres, including public right of way and rooftops, under cultivation for growing food.

FD1.1

Implement the “Urban Farming and Food Security Act” and expedite the process to make public and private lands available for a variety of urban agriculture uses.

The Department of General Services (DGS) coordinates with other agencies to implement the “Urban Farming and Food Security Act” through its Urban Farm Land Lease Program to lease available public land to District residents to develop urban farms. Private property owners that lease land and rooftops to urban farmers can also now receive significant property tax abatement. Additionally, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) should continue to expand the number of community gardens in the District, as the demand now currently outstrips the supply. Many residents wait for years to get off the waitlist for their neighborhood garden.

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

DGS,
DPR

PARTNERS

DCFPC, DC Health, DCRA,
DDOT, DOEE, EOM OP

FD1.2

Develop food-producing landscaping on five acres of District public spaces distributed throughout all eight wards.

Developing orchards and other food-producing landscaping contributes to both the tree canopy and food production in the District. While 1.7 acres of District public space currently contain orchards and other food producing landscapes, many opportunities such as public right of way, parks, recreation centers, and schools remain. It will be important to work with the community around potential sites to determine the types of urban agriculture and to ensure that they are maintained.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DGS

PARTNERS

DCFPC, DDOT,
DPR, DOEE, OP

FD1.3

Develop and support school gardens and garden-based food system education to engage DCPS and charter school students.

The benefits of school gardens are well documented, as they provide educational opportunities for children to better connect with their food system, and learn about environmental sustainability, nutrition, and health. The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE), DC Public Schools (DCPS), and the Department of Energy and the Environment (DOEE) will continue to develop school gardens and work with community partners to provide the resources for these gardens to thrive and for children to receive at least ten hours of garden-based learning per year at DCPS and public charters schools. While not all school facilities are equipped to have a school garden, the District Government will work to connect these schools with neighboring community or school gardens to provide access for students to garden-based learning.

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

OSSE

PARTNERS

DCPS, DGS, DOEE





GOAL 2

Ensure that all residents have access to affordable, quality, and nutritious food.



TARGET 2

By 2032, ensure that 75% of low-income residents live within a quarter mile of a quality full-service grocery store, with a focus on underserved communities.



TARGET 2 BASELINE

82%
(2017)

FD2.1

Identify and implement effective, innovative policies to recruit quality, full-service grocery stores to underserved areas.

Despite existing economic incentives intended for the development of grocery stores in underserved areas in the District, Wards 7 and 8 continue to have an inadequate number of grocery stores. While other wards have one grocery store for every 10,000 residents, Wards 7 and 8 have one grocery store for every 60,000 residents.³⁸ The DC Food Policy Council in collaboration with the District's Grocery Ambassador will examine the existing incentives provided thus far for grocery store development, determine why they have been ineffective, and then identify and implement more effective policies to attract full-service grocery stores to these areas.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DCFPC, DMPED, OP

PARTNER

DSLBD

FD2.2

Provide financial support and technical assistance to small retailers and mobile food vendors to expand healthy, culturally appropriate food options for neighborhoods with limited access to fresh and healthy food.

In partnership with the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) and local nonprofits, the District Government will launch a program providing financial and technical support for small retailers and mobile food vendors to offer healthier, culturally appropriate food options. Examples of mobile food vendors include healthy food trucks, produce stands, and mobile farmers markets. These innovative models are not substitutes for full-service grocery stores, but they can provide supplemental and diverse healthy food options.

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

DSLBD

PARTNER

DC Health

FD2.3

Expand and promote food assistance programs at grocery stores, farmers markets, and corner stores citywide.

In addition to supporting increased enrollment and participation in government food assistance programs and community food benefits in the District, the District Government will facilitate the expansion and use of those benefits in diverse retail settings. Benefits such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC), Produce Plus, and Produce Rx are currently accepted at a limited number of retail outlets. The District Government will assist in increasing acceptance of SNAP and WIC at all stores that offer the required variety of healthy food and will facilitate the use of Produce Plus and Produce Rx in grocery stores and corner stores in addition to farmers markets.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DC Health

PARTNERS

DHS, DSLBD

FD2.4

Support evidence-based nutrition and cooking education efforts across all populations to help residents make healthier choices.

Even with increased access to healthy food, consumers need experiential learning, nutrition education, and tools to make healthy choices and improve long-term health outcomes for diet-related chronic conditions. Nutrition education and cooking courses can give residents some of the tools they need to make lifestyle changes and improve their health and the health of their families. The District Government will provide resources and support to nutrition and cooking courses that have been tested to improve healthy eating and cooking, particularly for seniors and other populations at increased risk of diet-related chronic diseases.

TIMEFRAME

Short term

LEAD

DC Health

PARTNERS

DCFPC, DSLBD, OP

FD2.5

Implement the Nutrition Education Plan to make nutrition education as comprehensive as possible and to nurture students' healthy eating habits.

The Nutrition Education Plan is a guide that will be used by OSSE when developing nutrition education-related programming for and providing technical assistance in schools. Community Based Organizations (CBOs), District agencies, schools, universities, and others delivering nutrition education to District students will be important partners participating in actions that support the plan's goals and objectives.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

OSSE

PARTNERS

DCFPC, DCPS, OP, UDC

FD2.6

Improve the quality of institutional food grown or purchased with District local funds, including in DCPS and public charter schools, childcare centers, jails, homeless shelters, and other institutional settings.

Washington, DC spends significant dollars to feed many District residents in institutional settings. Although schools and childcare centers have standards related to nutrition and sourcing, other institutional settings lack consistent standards. The District Government will analyze all of its institutional purchasing, and will develop and implement a strategy to make food procured for District institutions more nutritious and sustainable while supporting the local economy, businesses that have fair labor practices, and animal welfare.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DCFPC

PARTNERS

DBH, DCPS, DHS, DOC, OCP, OSSE



GOAL 3

Develop and support the food industry as a vibrant and equitable sector of the local economy.



TARGET 3

By 2032, expand the food sector of the economy by 2,000 jobs that pay a living wage, offer safe working conditions, promote sustainability, and increase healthy food access for residents.



TARGET 3 BASELINE

71,300
people employed (2016)

FD3.1

Complete a comprehensive study of the District’s food system and recommend policies to improve the current system.

In accordance with the “DC Food Policy Council and Director Establishment Act of 2014,” the DC Food Policy Council will publish an annual analysis of Washington, DC’s food system. The report will include an assessment of the food-related policies, programs, and emerging trends within the District and provide recommendations to address opportunities for equitable and inclusive growth of the food economy, which contributes \$5.47 billion to the District’s economy.

TIMEFRAME

Ongoing

LEAD

DCFPC, OP

FD3.2

Collaborate regionally on the creation of a local food hub and other facilities for aggregation, processing, and distribution of local food products.

Due to rapid development in the District, historically robust food distribution hubs like Union Market have been displaced or repurposed, leaving Washington, DC with few wholesale distributors of regional food. Along with existing partners such as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) and regional stakeholders, the District Government will support the creation of a local food hub and associated food production and manufacturing infrastructure within 100 miles of the District that will expand the accessibility of local grown products directly to food retailers and consumers. These projects will also catalyze the procurement of local food through the coordination and aggregation of smaller farmers, processors, and distributors.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DCFPC, DMPED

PARTNER

OP

FD3.3

Develop a citywide workforce development strategy focused on expanding food sector jobs that promote public health and fair working conditions.

Currently, there is simultaneously unmet demand for skilled workers in some parts of the local food sector and significant unemployment in the District. Increasing the skilled workforce in the food industry can also create opportunities to improve healthy food access by increasing the supply and distribution of food in low food access communities. A workforce development strategy focused on the food sector can also help workers know their rights and demand fair working conditions. The District Government will analyze existing workforce development initiatives related to the food sector and develop a citywide workforce development strategy focused on expanding food sector jobs. The project will specifically focus on strategies to also improve the District's overall food system, including promoting public health, sustainability, and fair working conditions.

TIMEFRAME

Medium term

LEAD

DCFPC, DOES,
OP, WIC

PARTNERS

DOES, DMPED,
DSLBD



GOAL 4

Prevent, reduce, and recover food waste.



TARGET 4

By 2032, reduce food waste by 60%.



FD4.1

Conduct a food waste assessment to identify the types and quantities of food that are thrown away in the District.

Understanding the makeup of the food that goes to waste is the first step in better addressing the amount of food waste. The District Government will examine food waste in the Washington’s households and businesses, building upon initial research used for the 2017 District-wide compost feasibility study to pinpoint baseline levels of different types of food thrown away. This assessment will be used to develop recommendations on how to prevent and reduce food waste, and how to divert food waste from the solid waste stream.

TIMEFRAME Medium term	LEAD DPW	PARTNERS DCFPC, OP
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FD4.2

Educate businesses and institutions on how to prevent food waste, recover unused food, and understand liability protections.

The District Government will work with nonprofit and private partners to inform them of existing District and federal policies protecting food donation. While these policies have existed for several decades, information gaps remain regarding liability protections and best practices. The District Government will also publish guidance for businesses on how to reduce excess food in their business practices. The District Government will also change any regulations on date labels that arbitrarily limit the sale or donation of food after its quality-related date has passed and health inspectors will provide education on current food donation best practices.

TIMEFRAME Medium term	LEAD DCFPC, DPW, DC Health	PARTNERS DPR, DOEE, OP, ORM
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FD4.3

Incentivize food donations by businesses, schools, and institutions through policy changes.

The District Government will encourage food donations from various institutions by providing incentives such as local tax credits and expanded liability protections for food donors. Incentives should be targeted to businesses that donate nutritious, fresh foods that are often the most difficult to donate but the most needed by the recipient organizations. The District Government will help coordinate opportunities for enhanced connections among institutions providing and institutions receiving the food donations, such as the EPA Food Recovery Challenge.

TIMEFRAME Medium term	LEAD DME, OTR	PARTNERS DCFPC, DCPS, DPW, DSLBD, OCTO OP
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FD4.4

Educate residents and food related businesses on proper buying, storing, and disposing of food to minimize waste.

Properly storing food can preserve the freshness and safety of food, so residents can save on their grocery bills while also preventing good food from being thrown away or composted. In partnership with community groups such as the DC Food Recovery Working Group, the District Government will create awareness of best practices for minimizing food waste in households and food-related businesses. Potential activities could include demonstrations at community locations such as grocery stores and farmers markets, and public awareness campaigns. Further, the District Government will work with community partners such as nutrition education providers to educate consumers about how to better read and use “sell by” and “use by” labels.

TIMEFRAME Medium term	LEAD DCFPC, DPW	PARTNERS DCPS, DC Health, DPR, DPW, DSLBD, OP
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