LAND PRESERVATION AND THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

COG’s Role

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2017 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference
February 4, 2017
About COG

• The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association

• Brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland and Northern Virginia

• Membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 22 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress
Food & Agriculture in the National Capital Region

- COG’s 2012 *What Our Region Grows Report* found 28% of 8,629 sq mile Washington Agricultural Region in ag land use

- Preserves critical open space, contributes approx $1 billion/year to economy

- Commodity farming predominates, growing interest and production of a range of other agricultural products, local seafood

[Figure 1: Washington Agricultural Region from *What Our Region Grows*]
“A surge in consumer demand for locally-produced food is creating jobs and opportunity throughout rural America for farms as well as the small businesses that store, process, market and distribute food locally and regionally. Industry data indicate that local food sales totaled at least $12 billion in 2014 and estimate that the market value could hit $20 billion by 2019.” (emphasis added)

USDA Results: Local and Regional Food Systems
Growing number of food policy councils, nonprofits, local governments, businesses, and more, making food system improvements in the COG region and larger Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Local food is a regional issue.
Food & Agriculture at COG

- COG’s Department of Environmental Programs (DEP) hosted a Regional Agricultural Workgroup since 2006
- Selected to participate in USDA’s new Food LINC pilot
- Programming aligns with COG’s Region Forward vision
Regional Food System
Value Chain Coordination

Priorities:

• Foster Local Food Business Connections

• Support Food and Agriculture Policy and Infrastructure

• Expand Market Opportunities

• Increase Access to Local Food
Regional Food Distribution
Work Group: a “Local Food Chamber of Commerce”

- Background Issues
- Key Stakeholders
- Objectives

Regional farm products at Arcadia’s Mobile Market serving low-income communities in DC and Northern VA
Support Food and Agriculture and Policy Infrastructure

• Regional Data and Information

  Region Forward Goal: Maintain 450,000 acres of the Region's land in farms

• Working and Ad-Hoc Groups

• Emerging Issues and Best Practices

Rooftop garden at Bread for the City in downtown Washington, D.C.
Expand Market Opportunities

Example: Employee Community Supported Agriculture Incentive: “The Farm Card”
More Information

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