



# Growing Food Connections: *Improving Food Equity in Communities of Opportunity*

**Julia Freedgood**, *AVP American Farmland Trust; Co-PI, Growing Food Connections*

**Paul Forgey**, *Director of Planning - Albany-Dougherty County, GA*

**Jorge Castillo**, *Community Development Planner - Doña Ana County, NM*

**Susan Whitfield**, *Director of Operations – No More Empty Pots, Dougherty County, NE*

**New Partners For Smart Growth Conference**  
**February 2, 2017**

The logo features a stylized four-leaf clover or flower shape composed of four overlapping circles in purple, orange, and red. The word "GROWING FOOD" is in a grey sans-serif font, and "CONNECTIONS" is in a larger, bold green sans-serif font, with the clover shape partially overlapping the letter "C".

# GROWING FOOD CONNECTIONS

## Goal

Enhance community food security while ensuring sustainable and economically viable agriculture and food production

## Approach

Increase local government capacity to strengthen community food systems through planning, public policy and partnerships



RESEARCH



POLICY & PRACTICE



EDUCATION

# Project Leaders



**University at Buffalo**  
*The State University of New York*

cultivating  
healthy  
places



**American Farmland Trust**  
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



**JOHN GLENN SCHOOL  
OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

# and Partners



**American Planning Association**  
*Making Great Communities Happen*



Change happens when communities have the knowledge, resources and tools to grow connections between family farmers and underserved community residents.

Growing Food Connections aims to address the concerns of struggling family farmers and underserved community residents by building capacity of local governments and their partners to create, implement and sustain food system policies and plans that both promote food access and foster a healthy agricultural sector.



**Growing Food Connections** is made possible with a grant from the USDA / NIFA AFRI Food Systems Program NIFA Award #2012-68004-19894

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

*Two-Way Flow of Ideas and Information*

## 3 MAJOR ACTIVITIES

*Researchers, educators, students, planners and community partners will work within the communities to understand the barriers and innovations to create and provide policy tools and training.*

## TEAM & PARTNERS

*The project will be guided by a National Advisory Committee with representation from diverse disciplines, regions and research backgrounds.*



COMMUNITIES of OPPORTUNITY

Identify the barriers these communities face and the capacities that exist to build towards successfully connecting family farmers to underserved community residents.



COMMUNITIES of INNOVATION

Evaluate policies, strategies, and partnerships that are working in these communities to reconnect family farmers to food insecure populations.

### RESEARCH



Assess how local governments are using policy and planning tools to foster connections between family farmers and underserved community residents.

**OUTCOMES**  
Local and regional governments adopt and enact plans/policies to connect farmers with consumers in food systems.

### EDUCATION



Educate a new generation of students to continue the work of food systems planning in 10 partner universities across the U.S.

**OUTCOMES**  
Universities train students in food systems policy and planning.

### PLANNING & POLICY



Develop research-supported policy tools and training to help local governments develop and enact policies that reconnect underserved community residents with local and regional farmers.

**OUTCOMES**  
Consumers, farmers and farm advocates participate and shape local government food policy.

An interdisciplinary and multi-institutional team of researchers and practitioners to integrate research, education and extension to grow food connections across communities.



cultivating healthy places



For more information, follow us:



[growingfoodconnections.org](http://growingfoodconnections.org)

[growingfoodconnections@ap.buffalo.edu](mailto:growingfoodconnections@ap.buffalo.edu)

## Collaborating with Eight County Governments

- Chautauqua County, NY
- Cumberland County, ME
- **Doña Ana County, NM**
- **Dougherty County, GA**
- **Douglas County, NE**
- Luna County, NM
- Polk County, NC
- Wyandotte County, KS



## Panelists

- **Paul Forgey**, Director of Planning - Albany-Dougherty County, GA
- **Jorge Castillo**, Community Development Planner - Doña Ana County, NM
- **Susan Whitfield**, Director of Operations – No More Empty Pots, Douglas County, NE



# Dougherty County, GA

## Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

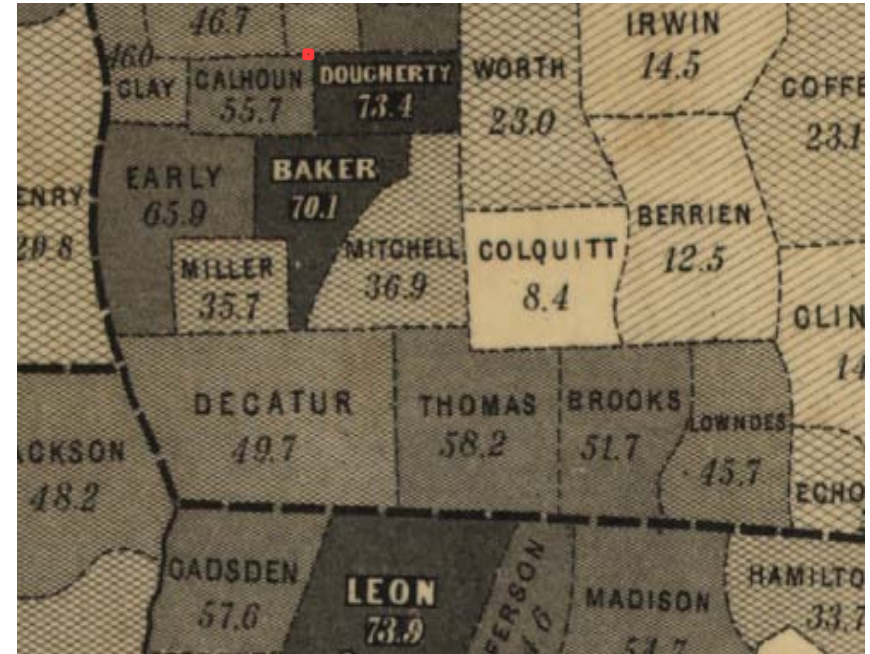
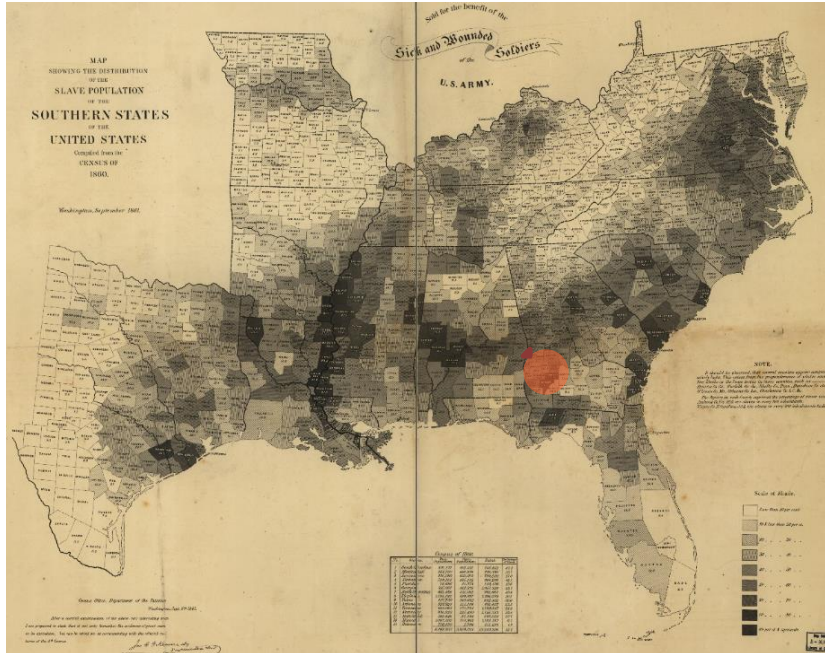


# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

- **Dougherty County in Southwest Georgia is a unique place that was shaped by its geography and history**
  - Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights era, Pigford Law Suit
- **Planning, and the lack of it, will shape the future**
  - The process, not the document
  - Public buy-in and education
  - Agritourism regulations, vineyard, microbrewery, farmer's mkt
  - COO, food hub, commercial kitchen, food, ag & equity conference
- **The right individuals make all the difference**
  - Charles and Shirley Sherrod
  - New Communities, Inc., Cypress Pond Plantation



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

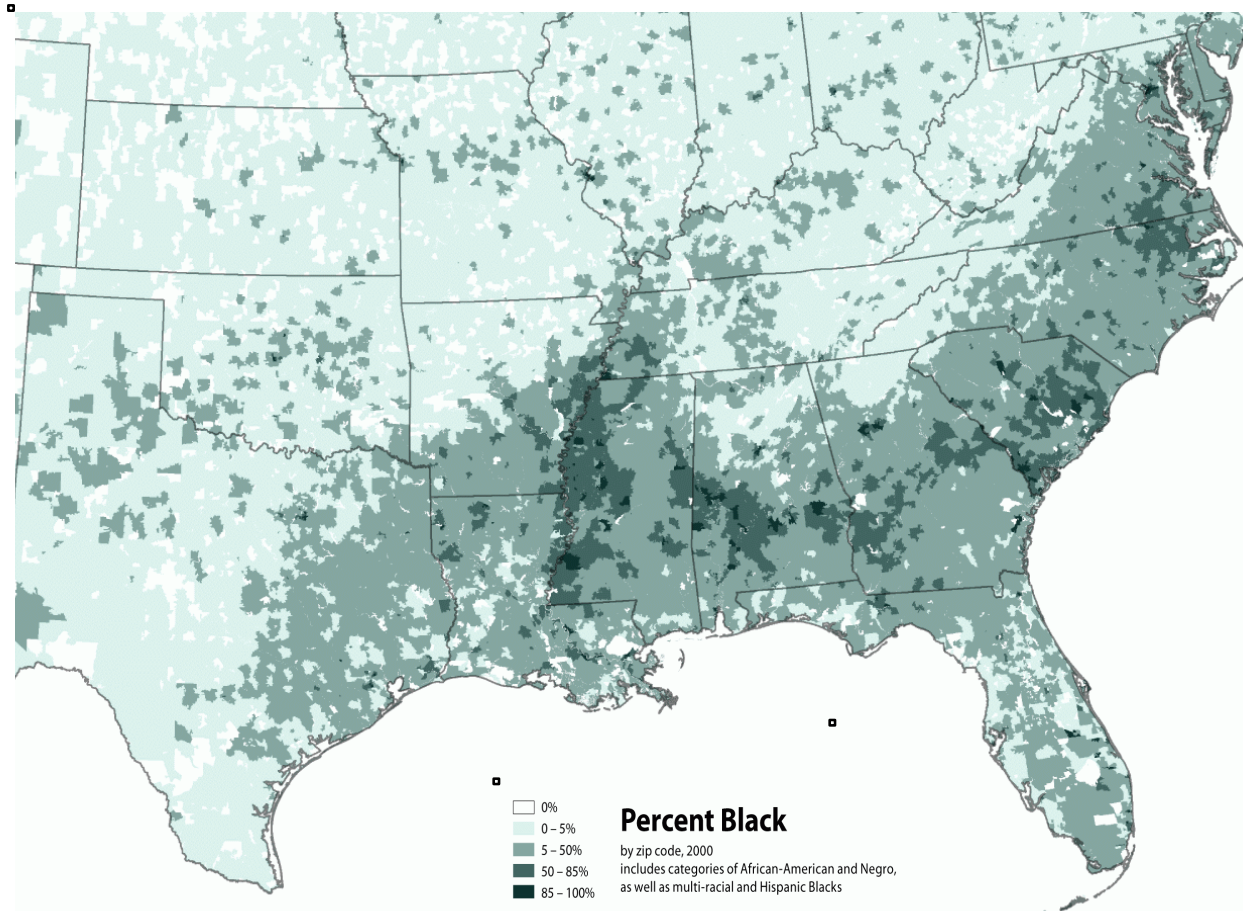


# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

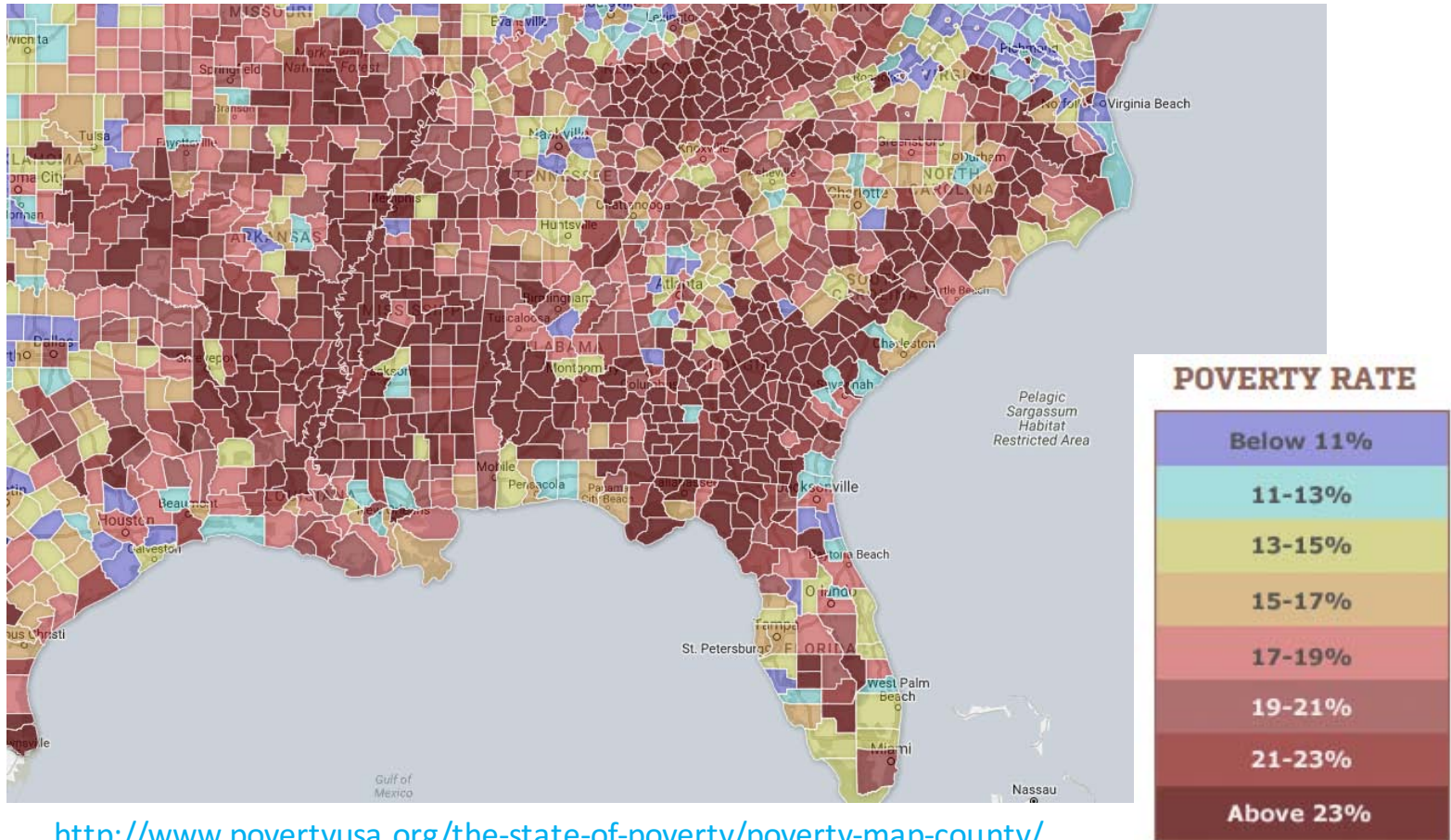




# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

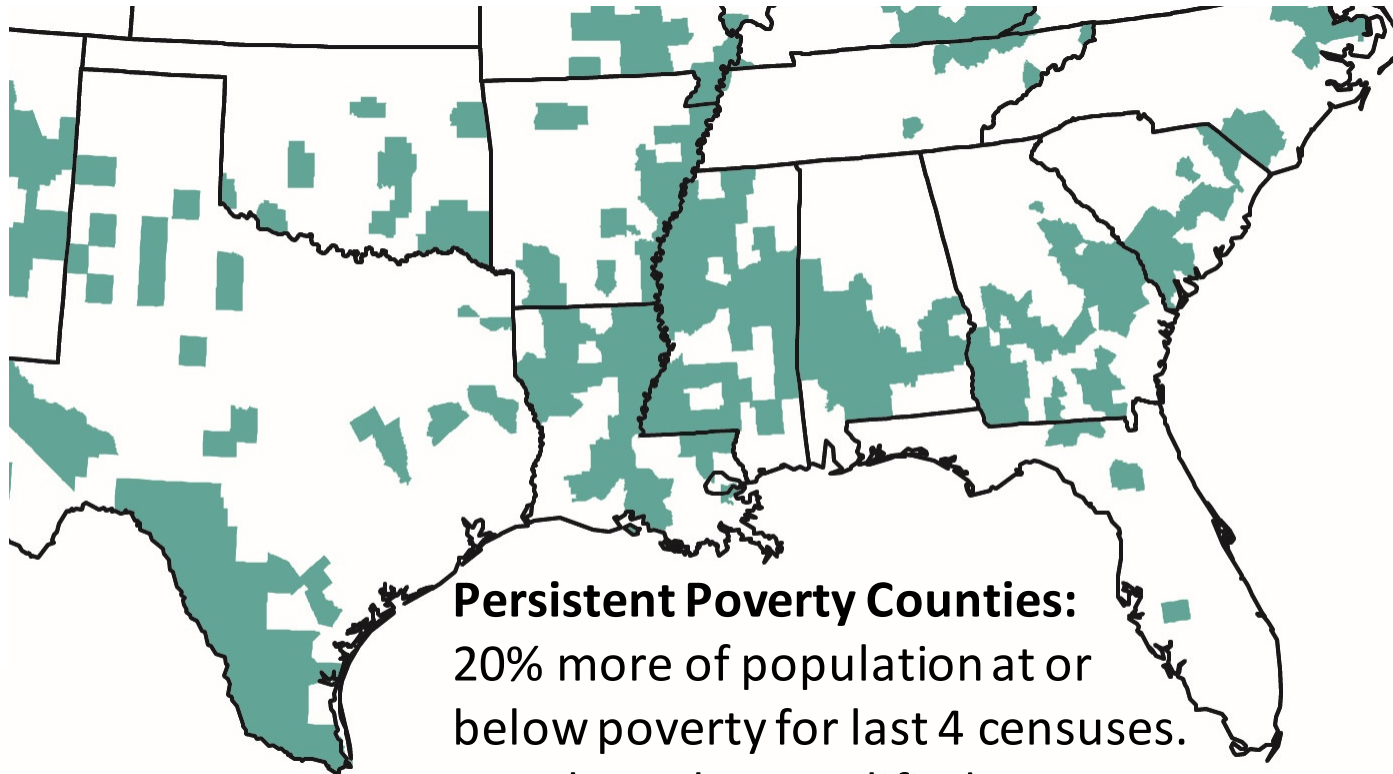


# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



<http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-map-county/>

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

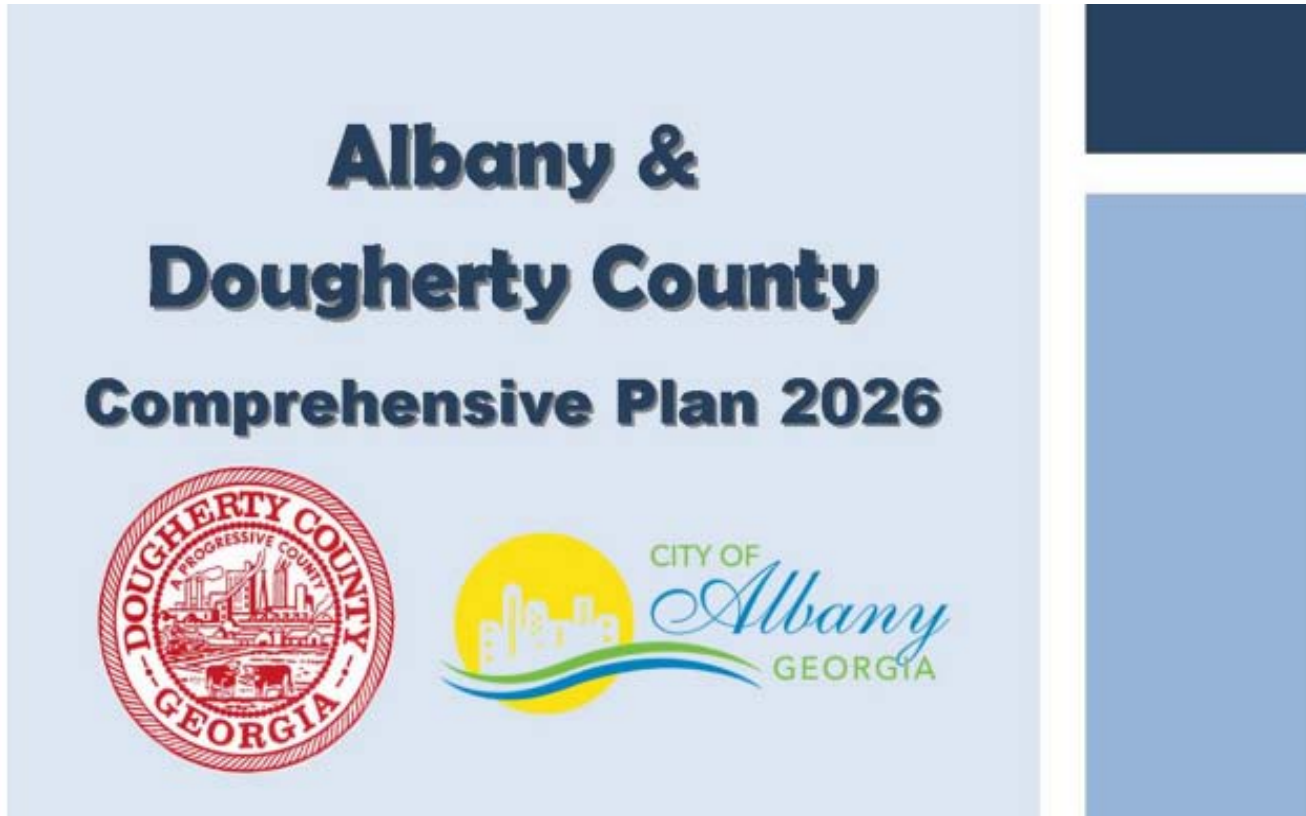


**Persistent Poverty Counties:**  
20% more of population at or  
below poverty for last 4 censuses.  
Dougherty has qualified every census.

<http://www.ruralhome.org/sct-initiatives/mn-persistent-poverty>



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



<http://www.albany.ga.us/content/1798/2879/2963/3320/default.aspx>



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

## What is Agritourism?

- A combination of agriculture and tourism
  - both leading economic sectors
- Provides farmers additional income
- Supports local food movement
- Crop and economic diversification
- Food security

**Make sure your regulations allow  
Value-added uses on agricultural land**

<http://www.albany.ga.us/content/1798/2879/2963/3320/default.aspx>

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



## East Baker Commercial Kitchen

- Started to preserve “separate but equal” school
- Evolved into commercial kitchen for community
- Provides education, training and support
- Intentionally inclusive



<http://eastbakerhs21.wixsite.com/eastbaker-hs/services>

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



NATION of ISLAM  
Ministry of Agriculture

*"Farming is the engine of our national life."*

The Most Honorable Elijah Muhammad



Mission: develop a sustainable agricultural system that will produce at least one meal per day to all of the black people in America.

Muhammad Farms: 1556 acres in Terrell County

<http://noimoa.com/>

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

*“We believe that the local food movement is not about 10 miles or 100 miles. We believe that the local movement is about the decentralization, deindustrialization, and decommoditization of the American food industry. We believe that it is grown by a group of passionate people who are bound by family core values, rather than by faceless corporations that are bound by quarterly earnings reports.”*



<http://www.whiteoakpastures.com/>



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



Shirley & Charles Sherrod

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



Southwest Georgia Project  
For Community Education, Inc.

Founded to “educate, engage and empower communities through grassroots organizing and advocacy.”



<http://www.swgaproject.com/>

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia



**Southwest Fresh** is a project to promote economic development and increase food access. The project's vision is to develop a self-reliant food system that supports economic growth and development. Sponsored by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation.



**Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Social and Economic Justice**  
To eradicate historical race, class, cultural, religious and gender barriers experienced by southern rural black women.

<http://www.swgaproject.com/>



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

## New Communities, Inc.

- Model community land trust
- Dream of self-contained community
- Political value of land ownership
- Denied USDA funding, foreclosed 1985



## Resora

- Formerly Cypress Pond Plantation
- Purchased with USDS settlement dollars
- Working farm, retreat, research, events



# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

## Key Points

- Every place is unique and shaped by its history and people
- Social justice must be addressed in all plans
- Intentional diversity
- Community buy-in critical for successful plan implementation
- Cultivate and support leadership

# Planning, Food & Equity in Southwest Georgia

**Paul Forgey, AICP, CFM**

Director of Planning,  
Development Services & Code Enforcement  
City of Albany

Phone: (229) 438-3932

Fax: (229) 438-3965

240 Pine Avenue, Suite 300

Albany, GA 31701

[www.albany.ga.us](http://www.albany.ga.us)





# Doña Ana County, NM

## Promoting Regional Food Connections Opportunities / Challenges

# PLACE



# People

**Population** 215,000

**Hispanic /Latino** 67%

**Persons In Poverty** 25 %

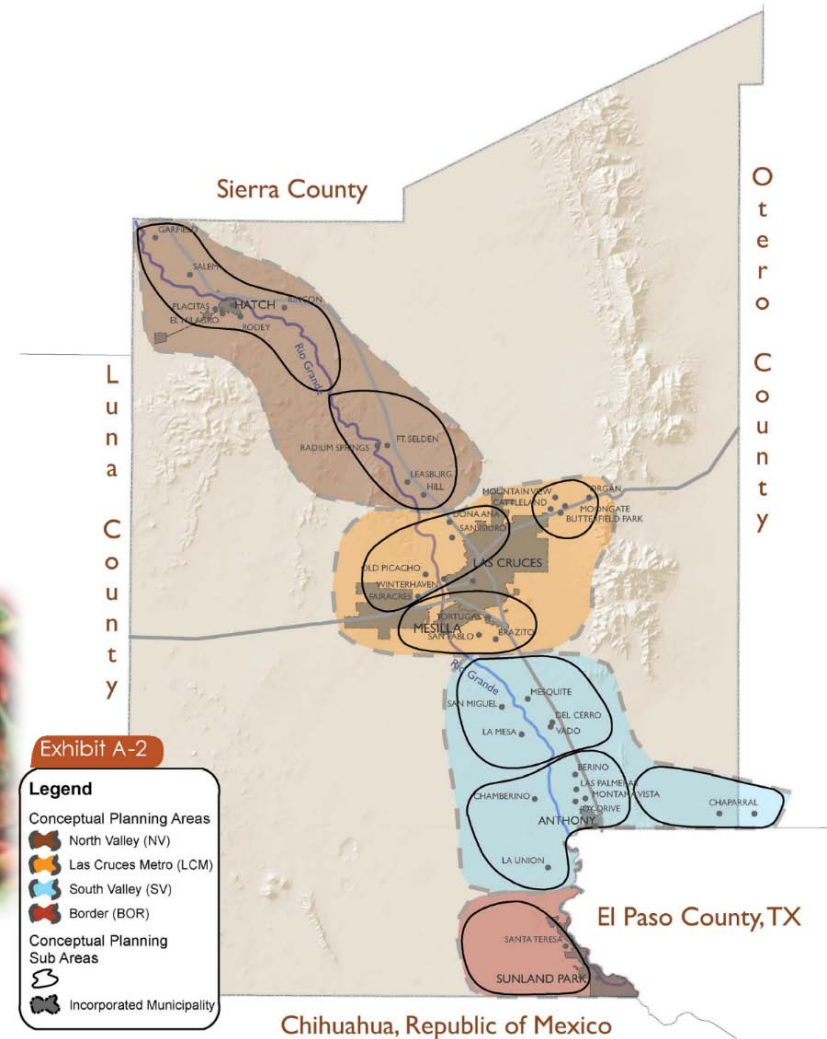


- In Doña Ana County, **59,300** people live in communities without access to good food.
- **28.4%** of children in DAC are food insecure
- Grocery Stores Per 100,000
  - DAC: **10.99**
  - NM: **12.2**
  - US: **21.2**
- DAC adults with inadequate fruit and vegetable consumption: **80.8%**
- DAC Adult Diabetes Rate: **14%**
- DAC Obesity Rate: **31.8%**



# Community

- **Colonias**  
Legacy developments
- **Historic Economic Development**  
Agriculture-based (cultivation, processing, distribution)
- **Crops – Mesilla Valley**  
Pecans  
Cotton  
Alfalfa  
Onions  
Grapes (wine)  
Chiles







# Community Engagement







**LA SEMILLA**  
LEARN GROW INSPIRE

<http://www.lasemillafoodcenter.org>



<http://www.vivadonaana.org>



<http://extension.nmsu.edu/index.html>

**ROADRUNNER**<sup>®</sup>  
**FOOD BANK**  
OF NEW MEXICO



<http://www.rafb.org>



PASO DEL NORTE

**Institute for  
Healthy Living**

<http://pdnihl.org>

# Back to the Future: Food Systems Economy

- Focus on agriculture-based business
- Balance traditional/new communities
- Local economic development



## Policy and Planning

- Urban Ag/Food Policy Plan (City)
- Comprehensive Plan (County)
- Unified Development Code (County)
- Health In All Policies (Regional)





## Local / Regional Dynamics

- **Regional food focus**
  - Processing , value added products
  - Seeking successful models
- **Small farms, community farms**
  - Cooperation vs. competition
- **Re-use: agriculture-based business**
  - Private-public partnerships
    - NM Greenhouse
    - Wholesome Family



# Healthy Food Financing Initiative

HEALTHY FOOD

Healthy Communities

C O A L I T I O N



# Social Integration



# Climate



# U.S. – Mexico Border





# Politics



# Tomorrow





¡ Gracias !

Jorge Castillo

Doña Ana County  
Community Development  
Planner

[jorgec@donaanacounty.org](mailto:jorgec@donaanacounty.org)

(575) 525-6106

845 N. Motel Blvd

Las Cruces, NM 88007



<https://www.donaanacounty.org>



# Douglas County, NE

## Food, Equity and Urban Agriculture



# Douglas County, NE

## Food, Equity and Urban Agriculture

## About Douglas County

- Population over 500,000
- One third of state population lives in Douglas County
- Poverty Rate 15%
- Unemployment 22%
- Eligible for free or reduce lunch 48%
- 1 in 5 children food insecure (state of NE)
- 1 in 7 adults food insecure (state of NE)



## Douglas County Steering Committee

- **22 representatives**
- **Local government, local stakeholders from nonprofits, profit, business, educational institutions, small farmers, health department**
- **Urban ag policies review, assessment, recommendations**





## Levels of Advocacy: Federal, State, Local

- **USDA Local Foods for Local Tables conferences in 2015 and 2016**
- **LB 175 Seed Saving and Community Garden Act**
- **Douglas Cty Environmental Services - Comprehensive Land Use Development Plan**
- **Urban Gardens and Vacant Lot Tool Kit**



# What is happening in Metro and Regional Area



- Metropolitan Area Planning Agency Heartland 2050 – Local Food Initiative
- City of Omaha – Planning Department – Urban Gardens
- Douglas County Health Department – Healthy Neighborhood Stores
- Tomato Tomato – Community Support Agriculture
- Center for Rural Affairs – State wide Food Policy Council
- Whispering Roots – Greenhouse (aquaponics)
- No More Empty Pots – Community Centered Food Hub
- City Sprouts – Decatur Urban Farm
- Omaha Public Schools – Farm to School

## Douglas County Health Department – Healthy Neighborhood Stores



- **Afoma Corner Store:** 5522 S. 30 St., Omaha
- **Cubby's:** CW Hadan Dr., Bennington
- **J-N-D Grocery:** 6341 N. 24 St., Omaha
- **T-N-A Grocery Store:** 3247 N. 42 St., Omaha
- **Las Nena's:** 4901 S. 24 St., Omaha
- **KNJ Grocery,** 3301 California St., Omaha
- **Phil's Foodway:** 3030 Ames Ave., Omaha
- **Selena's Market:** 3228 California St., Omaha

# City Sprouts partner with Crazy Gringa Hot Sauce

- Collaboration using local products
- City Sprouts grows them
- Provides revenue for City Sprouts Urban Farming Internship Program
- Viable model for urban food production, processing and sales
- Strengthen the local food economy





# No More Empty Pots



Rendering - 30th Street Exterior View  
No More Empty Pots



- 3.7 million capital campaign
- P1: Shared-use Commercial & Production Kitchens
- Create living wage earning opportunities;
- Support lifelong learning and self-sufficiency;
- Connect people and resources to an improved integrated and resilient food system.

**Susan Whitfield**  
Director of Operations  
No More Empty Pots

(402) 502-1642  
8511 North 30th Street,  
Omaha, NE 68112  
swhitfield@nmepomaha.org  
<http://www.nmepomaha.org>

