



# Local Food Systems Policy Analysis:

*Hillsborough County*

*Prepared by Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger*

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## **About Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger**

The Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is committed to ending hunger in Tampa Bay by bringing people together to find solutions that eliminate barriers, increase access and knowledge, and expand the amount of nutritious food available. TBNEH has over 350 members and serves a tri-county area, Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties. The Network's programs include: the Hunger Gap Map, Meals On Wheels St. Petersburg, Creating a Regenerative Community Food System and the Sunshine Summit to End Hunger. TBNEH has been serving our communities for the past 10 years and relies on its community for support. Learn more at [www.NetworktoEndHunger.org](http://www.NetworktoEndHunger.org).

## Abstract

The Local Food Systems Policy Analysis (“Analysis”) goal is to nourish food security in Hillsborough County. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defines food security as “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.”<sup>1</sup> The Analysis will examine Hillsborough County’s policies affecting food security. It will consist of four parts. The first will discuss general food security issues. The second will be outward reflecting, looking at best practices administered around the world. The third will be introspective, looking at Hillsborough County’s policies aiding the goal and creating gaps and barriers to the goal. Finally, the last portion will consist of recommendations to improve the current policies. This document will overview the research plan for the Analysis and include preliminary discoveries.

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## I. General Food Security Issues

Research begins with understanding food security in Hillsborough County and the general issues affecting food security. This section will first discuss food security in Hillsborough County and then move into the general issues. The general issues are split into two main categories: availability and accessibility. Availability and accessibility are direct products of a community's food system. A food system that is "influenced and shaped . . . by local government laws and" procedures.<sup>2</sup> Each of the main categories contain subcategories. These general issues will be carried through each section of the research and filtered into specific issues facing Hillsborough County.

Below are preliminary findings, not a comprehensive report. These topics will be expanded upon for the final Analysis report. Other topics will be added as research continues.

### A. *Food Security in Hillsborough County*

Food insecurity is rising across the globe. One (1) in nine (9) people are suffering from hunger.<sup>3</sup> Florida is ranked fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) in the United States for family hunger.<sup>4</sup> Sixty percent (60%) of people in West Central Florida are eligible for food stamps.<sup>5</sup> In Hillsborough County 13.3% of people are food insecure.<sup>6</sup> That is 179,280 people.<sup>7</sup> Of the 311,707 children in Hillsborough County, 59,270 (19%)<sup>8</sup> are food insecure. Of the 564,782<sup>9</sup> seniors in the Tampa St. Petersburg Clearwater Metropolitan Area, about 32,757 (5.8%)<sup>10</sup> are food insecure.

### B. *Availability*

Availability "addresses the supply side of food security and is determined by the level of food production, stock levels, and net trade," including sources of food aid.<sup>11</sup> Food security's concern for the level of food production and stock is a concern for the physical availability of food in general. But for all community member's to be food secure the food system must provide the physical availability of culturally diverse foods. These foods are directly applicable to the dietary needs and food preferences portion of food security. Many communities tackle physical availability by providing food aid. Examples of food aid are: food banks/pantries, food assistance programs, and income support programs.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, food aid is limited by community awareness. A lack of awareness for social programs creates multiple issues. First and the most obvious is hunger. A community member not knowing where to receive food or the opportunity to receive food causes rectifiable hunger. Second, community members not utilizing aid potentially creates the false perception that aid is not needed. Which can lead to the closing of indispensable aid programs. Thus, limiting the availability of food. Furthermore, the availability of aid programs is also impacted by the supply of product in the community.

The supply of product is motivated by land use, planning and zoning laws. Supply is encumbered by policies banning or limiting agriculture in a community. Community planning that does not incorporate food production further encumbers supply. Local governments promoting urban agriculture through policy can increase the supply of healthy affordable food. Moving away from the Euclidian era zoning will encourage urban agriculture. An era that put an emphasis on single family residential zones that explicitly ban the growing of produce or the

keeping of livestock animals.<sup>13</sup> Many of Florida's original zoning practices were derived from Euclid type reasoning. This historical zoning is still creating a barrier to urban agriculture. Specific regulations that negatively impact urban agriculture are: setbacks on land use for urban farming; prevention of catching rainwater, or keeping bees, or chickens; and restrictions on growing produce.

Urban agriculture is not a new phenomenon, it is one that fell into hibernation, and has been resurfacing. Throughout the United States history, gardens were grown in urban and suburban neighborhoods during times of crisis. Victory gardens, grown during WWI and WWII, helped feed the country since a large amount of food was being sent abroad. The world is in a time of crisis. Incentives for urban agriculture can help alleviate the hunger crisis.

Conquering availability alone will not create food security. Availability must harmonize with accessibility. Available food will go to waste unless the community can access and utilize the food.

### *C. Accessibility*

Accessibility is a community members ability to access available food. Accessibility “considers the economic, social, and physical access to food.”<sup>14</sup> Food retailers often do not want to place stores in low-income communities. Thus, community members have to rely on transportation to reach healthy food retailers. Unfortunately, public transportation tends to be unreliable, not accommodating to work/life schedules, and other methods of transportation are too expensive. Forcing these community members to obtain close in proximity foods from convenience stores and fast food outlets.<sup>15</sup> This food is predominantly highly processed, packaged foods causing these community members to “suffer more from diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes than those in higher income neighborhoods with easy access to healthy food.”<sup>16</sup> The highly processed, packaged foods tend to be lighter in weight and last longer. Which is necessary for easier transport (on foot or by public transport) and fewer trips to the store. The need to buy highly processed, packaged foods is also due to utilization.

Utilization encompasses the nutrition component of food security. The lack of access to food storage forces community members to buy the longer lasting possessed foods. Furthermore a lack of nutrition education (e.g. meal preparation, food safety, preparation, and storage education<sup>17</sup>), forces community members to buy the longer lasting possessed foods. Unfortunately, the utilization barriers paired with these foods that tend to be cheaper than fresh food, force community members to suffer.

Economic barriers hinder community members' access to food. Financial institutions do not want locations in low-income areas. Thus, the members of those communities cannot access their finances, cannot open bank accounts, cannot accumulate interest, cannot build credit, and must rely on cash advance businesses. Eliminating their opportunity and possibility to advance economically. Aside from financial institutions, members of the community cannot afford the fresh produce sold in higher income areas. Especially after the travel cost to find a store, far outside of their own neighborhood, with healthy food options. Other economic barriers include housing and work opportunities. Economic barriers do not only affect consumers.

Urban farmers experience economic barriers. Urban farmers need improved distribution systems. The farmers need access to sell products to larger business (e.g. restaurants, supermarkets, and other institutions) to create economies of scale.<sup>18</sup> Currently, urban farmers mostly have to sell small scale directly to the consumer, hindering their ability to expand

economically and logistically. The cost and value of land also creates barriers for urban farmers. Generally, the value of land in an urban area is higher if used for housing or businesses compared to farming. Thus, accessing land to cultivate food can cost more than the food production value of the land.

Availability and accessibility are the overarching issues impacting food security. Local governments can combat these issues through policies. Many communities have already begun to provide better availability and access.

## II. Best Practices

Section II will contain best practices that nurture food security. These practices will be used as templates/examples for Section IV, Policy Recommendations. The scope of the research will be global. United States cities that have already been identified for research are: San Francisco, CA; New Orleans, LA; Seattle, WA; and Detroit, MI. These cities have been on the forefront of creating food security. Thus, each will be studied in their totality. Many other locals will be studied and the best practices will be selected for this section.

Below are preliminary findings, not a comprehensive report. These topics will be expanded upon for the final Analysis report. Other topics will be added as research continues.

### A. *Urban Agriculture*

1. Collecting Rainwater
  - a. Cocoa, FL – Rain Barrel Rebate Program<sup>19</sup>
  - b. Manatee Country, FL – Rain Barrel Program<sup>20</sup> - Outdoor Water Conservation Rebate Program<sup>21</sup>
  - c. Key West, FL – Building Permit Allocation System Ordinance:<sup>22</sup> A prerequisite for all new permanent and transient residential units and major renovations “shall be constructed with a rainwater catchment system that will hold a minimum of 1,000 gallons of water or an amount equivalent to 100% of the new roof area in gallons whichever is greater.”<sup>23</sup>
2. Distribution Systems
  - a. Charlottesville, VA – Regional Food Hubs<sup>24</sup>
3. Complying with The American’s with Disabilities Act
  - a. “The City of Cambridge, Mass., requires all newly established community gardens to contain a minimum of 5 percent, but not less than one, of the plots to have raised beds.”<sup>25</sup>

### B. *Methods for Creating Access to Food*

1. Mobile Food<sup>26</sup>
  - a. Baltimore city, MD – Created a “virtual supermarket program . . . which bring[s] groceries to food desert communities.”<sup>27</sup>

### C. *Social Programs*

1. Promoting the reduction of food waste

- a. Oregon – Crop Donation Tax Credit: “gives a credit to a corporation or individual who donates crops to a gleaning cooperative, foodbank, or other nonprofit organization.”<sup>28</sup>
- b. Massachusetts – Additional protection: organizations do not want to face civil or criminal liability from donating food; thus, MA created a law protecting anyone who donates food “to a nonprofit corporation . . . without charge or . . . only to cover the cost of handling such food” from “civil damages for any injury arising out of the condition of such food” under certain conditions.<sup>29</sup>

D. *Transportation*

1. Reliable public transportation systems in Florida
  1. Miami-Dade County, FL – The Metrorail, Metromover, and Metrobus consistently rank highly nationwide in terms of accessibility and efficiency.<sup>30</sup>
  2. Orlando, FL – The Lynx system and SunRail have their pros and cons, however, they do rank higher than the Tampa Bay area.<sup>31</sup>
2. Successful public transportation elsewhere in the country
  - a. Top ranked systems in other areas of the country – what do they all have in common?

### **III. Hillsborough County’s Policies**

Sections I and II laid a base for the food security topic; this section will look directly at Hillsborough County. To make an effective plan to create food security it will be beneficial to not only point out gaps and barriers to food security, but also look at present policies aiding food security. Hillsborough County’s entire Code of Ordinances, policies, and programs will be reviewed to create this section.

A. *Present Policies Aiding Food Security*

This section will discuss any policies that aid food security. Thus far, research has shown an absence of hindering food security policies, not policies directly promoting food security. More research will be done to ascertain other policies aiding food security. This research will benefit creating recommendations. Positive food security policies can be used as a jumping off point for stronger policies.

Below are preliminary findings, not a comprehensive report. These topics will be expanded upon for the final Analysis report. Other topics will be added as research continues.

1. Availability
  - a. Urban Agriculture
    - i. Bees – the code defers to FL Chapter 586<sup>32</sup> – allowing bees in urban settings by permit and guidelines.<sup>33</sup>
    - ii. Collecting Rainwater – the code does not refer to collecting rainwater. In fact, the Hillsborough country website links to articles about the benefits of collecting rainwater.<sup>34</sup>
2. Accessibility

- a. Transportation
  - i. Mission Max – This program began in October of 2017 and intends to delivery more frequent service and more efficient routes. Research is being conducted for the 10-Year Transit Plan. Updates are found at: <http://gohart.org/Pages/about-transit-Dev-plan.aspx>
  - ii. The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority’s (HART) Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Study<sup>35</sup>

## B. *Gaps and Barriers to Food Security*

This section will identify the gaps and barriers to food security in Hillsborough County’s policies, procedures, and programs. This section will be integral to creating policy recommendations in Section IV. Section II Best Practices will especially be utilized in assessing gaps.

Below are preliminary findings, not a comprehensive report. These topics will be expanded upon for the final Analysis report. Other topics will be added as research continues.

1. Availability
  - a. Urban Agriculture
    - i. Selling Product
      1. Selling off Urban Farm Property - agriculture stands can only be established in agriculture zones and commercial zones (not in residential zones). Municipal Code 6.11.09<sup>36</sup>
2. Accessibility
  - a. Lack of efficient public transportation in the county
    - i. Follow up on the implementations of the 2040 and 2045 Hillsborough county transportation plans.<sup>37</sup>

## IV. Policy Recommendations

All of the research for the final Analysis will culminate in Section IV. The core purpose of this research is to ultimately recommend policies to enhance food security in Hillsborough County. This section will detail policy recommendations for Hillsborough County.

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<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (n.d.). *Food Security Statistics*. Retrieved February 2020, from FAO: <http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/en/>; Nations, F. a. (n.d.). *World Food Summit*. Retrieved February 2020, from FOA: [http://www.fao.org/wfs/index\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/wfs/index_en.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Healthy Food Policy Project. (n.d.). *Local Laws & Policies That Promote Access to Healthy Food: A Food System Crosswalk*: <https://healthyfoodpolicyproject.org/crosswalk> .

<sup>3</sup> SOFI 2019 - The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. (2019). Retrieved February 2020, from <http://www.fao.org/state-of-food-security-nutrition/en/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hunger Realities. (n.d.). Retrieved February 2020, from <http://feedingtampabay.org/hunger-realities/>.

<sup>5</sup> Hunger Realities.



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- <sup>6</sup> Gunderson, C., Dewey, A., Kato, M., Crumbaugh, A., & Strayer, M. (2019, May 2). Map the Meal Gap 2019: Overall and Child Food Insecurity by County in 2017. Retrieved February 2020, from [https://public.tableau.com/profile/feeding.america.research#!/vizhome/2017StateWorkbook-Public\\_15568266651950/CountyDetailDataPublic](https://public.tableau.com/profile/feeding.america.research#!/vizhome/2017StateWorkbook-Public_15568266651950/CountyDetailDataPublic).
- <sup>7</sup> Gunderson, C., (2019, May 2).
- <sup>8</sup> Gunderson, C., (2019, May 2).
- <sup>9</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: [https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_17\\_5YR\\_S0101&prodType=tablehttp://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US45300-tampa-st-petersburg-clearwater-fl-metro-area/](https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_S0101&prodType=tablehttp://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US45300-tampa-st-petersburg-clearwater-fl-metro-area/).
- <sup>10</sup> Ziliak, J. P., & Gunderson, C. (2019). *The State of Senior Hunger in America in 2017*. Feeding America.
- <sup>11</sup> Jenileigh Harris and Emily J. Spiegel, *Food Systems Resilience: Concepts & Policy Approaches* (Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, June 2019), <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/academics/centers-and-programs/center-for-agriculture-and-food-systems/projects>.
- <sup>12</sup> Jenileigh Harris (2019).
- <sup>13</sup> Pawlowski, T. Z. (2018). From Food Deserts To Just Deserts: Expanding Urban Agriculture In U.S. Cities Through Sustainable Policy. *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law*, 532-573.
- <sup>14</sup> Jenileigh Harris (2019).
- <sup>15</sup> Leib, E. B. (2012). *Good Laws, Good Food: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities*. Harvard Law School, The Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic. Harvard.
- <sup>16</sup> Treuhaft, S., & Karpyn, A. (2010). *The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Healthy Food and Why it Matters*. The Food Trust & PolicyLink: [http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/grocerygap.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/grocerygap.original.pdf).
- <sup>17</sup> Jenileigh Harris (2019).
- <sup>18</sup> Leib, E. B. (2012).
- <sup>19</sup> *Cocoa Rain Barrel Rebate Program*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 2020, from Cocoa Florida: <https://www.cocoaf1.org/1067/Cocoa-Rain-Barrel-Rebate-Program>.
- <sup>20</sup> *Rain Barrel Program*. (n.d.). Retrieved February 2020, from Manatee County Florida: [https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/utilities/manatee\\_county\\_water\\_division/water\\_conservation/rain\\_barrel\\_program](https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/utilities/manatee_county_water_division/water_conservation/rain_barrel_program).
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- <sup>22</sup> Period of allocation and ranking/review of applications, Key West, Fla., Code of Ordinances § 108-997(b)(1)(c), (Municode through Ordinance No. 18-11, § 5, enacted June 5, 2018), [https://library.municode.com/fl/key\\_west/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=SPBLADERE\\_CH108PLDE\\_ARTXB\\_UPEALSY\\_DIV2BUPEALSY\\_S108-997PEALRAREAP](https://library.municode.com/fl/key_west/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=SPBLADERE_CH108PLDE_ARTXB_UPEALSY_DIV2BUPEALSY_S108-997PEALRAREAP).
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<sup>34</sup> *Rain Barrels: Let Nature Water Your Landscape for Free.* (2019, July 18). Retrieved February 2020, from Hillsborough County Florida: <https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/en/newsroom/2019/07/18/help-nature-water-your-landscape>.

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<sup>36</sup> Agricultural Stands, Hillsborough County, Fla., Code of Ordinances § 6.11.09 (2011).

<sup>37</sup> Plan Hillsborough 2040. Retrieved from <http://www.planhillsborough.org/plan2040>. Plan Hillsborough 2045 Update. Retrieved from <http://www.planhillsborough.org/plan2045update/>.