



Office of Sustainability and Innovations

MEMORANDUM

TO: Milton Dohoney Jr., Interim City Administrator
FROM: Missy Stults, Sustainability and Innovations Director
DATE: January 31, 2022
SUBJECT: Recommendations Related to Sustainable Food Purchasing at City Facilities

CC: Sean Reynolds, Community Sustainability Coordinator

Background

On September 7th, 2021, City Council requested that the City Administrator review the City's food purchasing policies and practices and provide recommendations for making these actions more sustainable via Resolution [R-21-347](#) – Resolution in Support of Good Food Procurement Policies. This resolution builds upon Council's unanimous adoption of A²ZERO, our city's plan for achieving a just transition to carbon neutrality by the year 2030, which included the action: "*Support a Plant-Rich Diet.*" This action recognizes the environmental benefits of consuming less meat- and dairy-based products. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (UN FAO) reports that 14.5% of our planet's total anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions result from animal agriculture.¹ By 2050, it is estimated that the agriculture sector will contribute 70% of total allowable GHG emissions.² More locally, the average household in Ann Arbor contributes approximately 7 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent through food-related emissions per year, with more than half of those emissions coming from meat and dairy products.³

Decreasing meat- and dairy-based consumption and increasing plant-based consumption is an important step in achieving sustainability within the food sector. A recent study shows that the GHG emissions associated with animal-based agriculture amount to two times the emissions associated with plant-based agriculture.⁴ In addition, the University of Oxford reports that globally, 83% of farmland is used for livestock production that provides only 18% of human caloric consumption and 37% of human protein consumption. Replacing this animal agriculture with plant crops could free up farmland that would remove an additional 8.1 billion metric tons of CO₂ equivalent per year for the next 100 years.⁵ Plant-based diets may also add healthy minutes to an individual's life⁶, reduce chronic disease risk factors⁷, and improve mental health⁸.

However, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations recognizes that the sustainability, health, and equity benefits of a sustainable food purchasing policy will extend beyond the benefits of plant-forward diets. After interviewing the most frequent food purchasers within the City and consulting with a Sustainable Food Working Group consisting of members of the public entrenched in the food sector, OSI has developed the following food sustainability framework. This framework outlines criteria for determining the sustainability of various food, retailer, and eating place options. By

following the framework when making food purchasing decisions, the City can help move towards a more equitable, inclusive, and stable local food system.

TABLE 1. FOOD SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK.

SUSTAINABILITY CRITERIA	DETAILS
Nutritious and health-enhancing food for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to USDA Healthy Diet guidelines • Reduced salt, added sugars, fat, and oil content • Little or no artificial additives • Sensitivity given to food intolerances and allergies
Reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions throughout the food system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low carbon footprint • Decreased animal-based food consumption • Reduced plastics and single-use packaging • Reduced food waste and increased composting
Supports local food system economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food grown/produced in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, or Illinois • Supports local food producers
Valued workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe working conditions • Pays a living wage • Considers workers’ voices in decision making
Land stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices soil conservation and regeneration • Protection and conservation of farmable land
Food production practices do not harm the environment and other life forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced or zero use of synthetic fertilizers, harmful chemicals, GMOs, and antibiotics • Protection of watersheds • Conservation of wildlife habitats • Animal welfare practices in place
Repairs injustices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses owned and operated by women, people of color, disabled people, and/or members of the LGBTQIA+ community

Current Food Purchasing Practices

In fiscal years 2019, 2020, and 2021 a total of 1,188 food purchases were made by the City of Ann Arbor, totaling \$112,186.71 (excluding purchases made through the City’s contract with Pepsi)¹. The total amount spent on non-contract food by fiscal year was: \$39,123.43 in FY 2019; \$50,759.09 in FY 2020; and \$22,304.19 in FY 2021 (Table 2). On average, over the last three fiscal years the City spent approximately \$37,400 on non-contract food purchases per year.

TABLE 2. Number of non-contract food purchases and dollars spent on non-contract food in FY 19, 20, and 21.

	Number of Purchases	Dollars Spent
FY 2019	451	\$39,123.43
FY 2020	539	\$50,759.09
FY 2021	198	\$22,304.19
Total	1188	\$112,186.71

¹ In fiscal year (FY) 2021, approximately \$23,000 dollars were spent on beverages through the City’s contract with Pepsi.

Out of all 1,188 food purchases included above, approximately 62% were made at businesses located within Ann Arbor. Approximately \$83,000 (or 74% of all dollars spent) were spent at businesses in Ann Arbor (Figure 1). Approximately 48% of all food purchases were made at a grocery store or other retailer, while the remaining 52% were made at a restaurant, catering business, or other eating place (Figure 2). However, approximately \$77,000 (or 68% of dollars spent) were spent at restaurants, catering businesses, and other eating places (Figure 2). The number of purchases made at each retailer can be found in Tables 3 and 4.

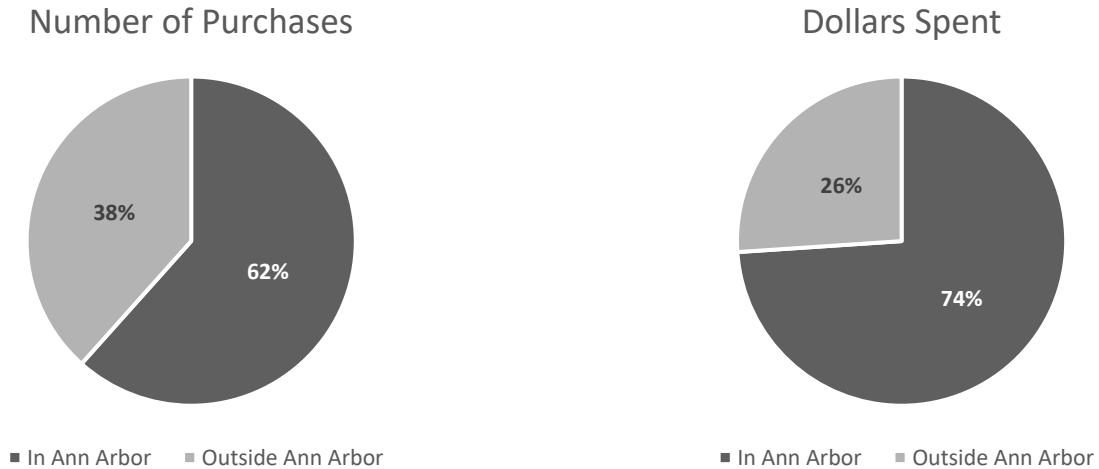


FIGURE 1. Percentage of non-contract food purchases and dollars spent on non-contract food at businesses located within vs. outside of Ann Arbor throughout FY 19, 20, and 21.

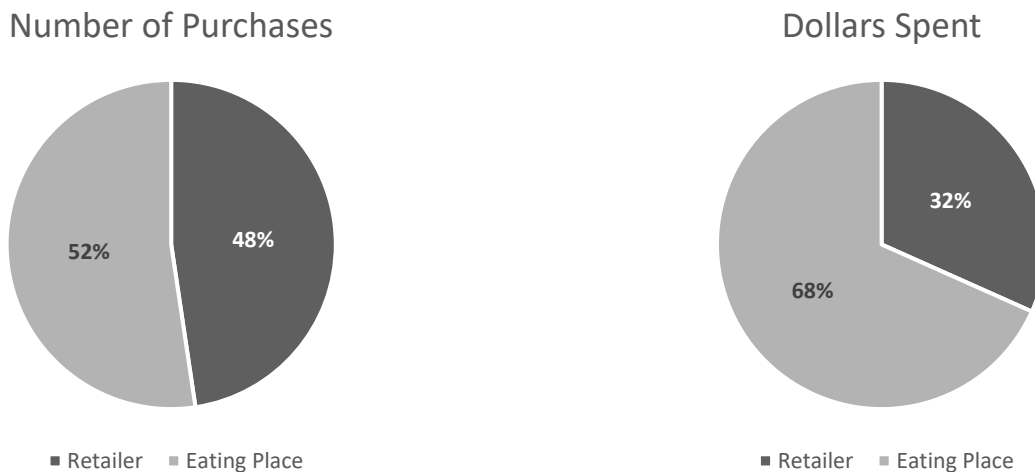


FIGURE 2. Percentage of non-contract food purchases and of dollars spent on non-contract food at grocery stores and other retailers vs. at restaurants, caterers, and other eating places throughout FY 19, 20, and 21.

Approximately 25% of all food purchases (and 24% of all dollars spent) were made by the Parks and Recreation department. Other departments and offices with large numbers of purchases (or dollars spent) include the Fire Department, Police Department, City Administrator, Office of Sustainability and Innovations, and Safety.

Interviews with primary food purchasers across City departments and offices revealed that Parks and Recreation primarily purchases food for external events and for sale at snack bars. Meanwhile, Water Treatment, Fleet & Facilities, and Safety are primarily purchasing food for internal events such as for employee recognition. Other departments and offices

purchase food for both internal and external events. In most cases, food purchased for external events comes from a grocery store or other retailer, while food purchases for internal events are primarily made through a restaurant, caterer, or other eating place. The Parks and Recreation department has a food purchasing budget of approximately \$19,000 per year; all other departments and offices make food purchases through other budget lines, such as employee recognition budgets.

Interviewed employees indicated that local food, food packaging, and plant-based options were the three most important factors to consider when buying sustainable food. Most employees were in favor of educational events centered on sustainable food and were interested in using a list of preferred vendors, based on sustainability factors, to improve the sustainability of their food-related purchasing.

TABLE 3. Number of non-contract food purchases made at different grocery stores or other retailers throughout FY 19, 20, and 21.

RETAILER	NUMBER OF PURCHASES
GFS Store	233
Meijer	146
Kroger	108
Target	36
Busch's	13
Other	30

TABLE 4. Number of non-contract food purchases made at different restaurants, caterers, or other eating places throughout FY 19, 20, and 21.

EATING PLACES	NUMBER OF PURCHASES
Jimmy John's	89
Panera Bread	46
Cottage Inn Pizza	44
DiBella's	38
Pizza House	38
Afternoon Delight	29
Washtenaw Dairy	25
Domino's Pizza	18
Hungry Howie's	13
Jerusalem Garden	12
Other	270

Near Term Recommendations

OSI wants to emphasize the importance of ensuring that food items maintain affordability for all residents in the implementation of any or all the recommendations outlined below. In recognition of the ongoing cultural shift towards more sustainable (and especially plant-based) foods, and the need for consistent exposure to such foods as a means of facilitating this shift, the following recommendations are focused on the next 1-2 years. The intention of these recommendations is not to immediately remove certain food and eating place options, but rather to provide more sustainable alternatives to those options, focus on outreach and education regarding sustainable food choices, and shift away from less sustainable options as more sustainable alternatives become more widely accepted.

Recommendation A: Through the existing contract with Pepsi or through the establishment of new contracts, re-work the drink options available at City vending machines and other points of sale to include more nutritious and health-enhancing, ideally locally sourced, choices.

Recommendation B: For food sold at City snack bars or distributed at City events, develop a list of preferred food items, with a focus on options that: have low GHG emissions; provide plant-based alternatives, especially when animal-based options are already provided; support the local food system; and minimize wasteful packaging.

Recommendation C: For catering of City events, develop a directory of preferred restaurants, caterers, and other eating places with a focus on options that: have low GHG emissions; provide plant-based alternatives, especially when animal-based options are already provided; support the local food system; and minimize wasteful packaging.

Recommendation D: Engage with, educate, and train City employees on the value of sustainable food and ensure that all employees who make food purchases are trained on the preferred food item and vendor lists.²

Recommendation E: Join the Washtenaw County Food Policy Council (WCFPC) and have City staff attend WCFPC meetings and work with the WCFPC to establish a sustainability working group.

Further Recommendations

In addition to the five recommended actions above, OSI recommends that the City of Ann Arbor explore the following, noting that each of these actions requires further investigation and refinement before being implemented (or considered for implementation):

1. Sign the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#) (MUFPP), which includes a framework of recommended actions for achieving more sustainable food systems and develop an action plan for achieving the goals outlined within this framework. By signing the MUFPP, Ann Arbor would join the cities of Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, Montreal, New York City, San Francisco, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington, D.C. in committing to develop a sustainable food system that is inclusive, resilient, minimizes waste, mitigates, and is adaptive to climate change.
2. Establish a permanent Sustainable Foods Steering Committee consisting of City employees and community members, for the purpose of guiding future actions towards sustainable food practices in Ann Arbor. This could be the creation of a committee within the WCFPC or a stand-alone Committee within the City.
3. Establish a sustainable foods point system - based on the sustainable foods framework found above – that can be applied to each food item or eating place to determine how closely it aligns with the City’s desired sustainability food practices.
4. Transition all City food purchases towards plant-based food products, providing plant-based alternatives to all animal-based options offered and eliminating all beef- and dairy-based food products from City food purchases by the year 2030.
5. Establish an “A²ZERO Preferred” labeling system to indicate more sustainable choices at vending machines, snack bars, and other City-operated points of purchase, and develop educational signage providing information on the reasons why certain food choices are more sustainable and the benefits they provide over less sustainable options. Work to make the labeling system and educational signage available to other members of the community for use at non-City operated food points of sale.

Financial Implications

Currently, the City of Ann Arbor spends approximately \$37,000 on food each year at retailers, restaurants, and other businesses that do not have contracts with the City. For food purchases at both retailers and eating places, costs are dependent on the business the City purchases from as well as on the items selected for purchase. In many cases

² In addition to internal engagement, the City will continue to engage with external stakeholders to support more sustainable food options in the community.

sustainable options may cost more than the less sustainable alternatives; however, more sustainable options can also result in cost savings and health benefits, and in some cases no net change to cost, as outlined in the examples below.

The City frequently purchases from Panera Bread for catering of events (Table 4). Example purchases from Panera Bread are: \$2.69 per bagel, \$19.49 per 0.9 gallons of coffee, and approximately \$10 per sandwich. Fabulous Food, Inc. is a family-owned and operated, Washtenaw County-based business that offers more sustainable options, including fresh and local produce. This business offers the same items listed above, at the following prices: \$1.75 per bagel, \$18 per gallon of coffee, and \$7.50 per sandwich.

The City also currently purchases frequently from Cottage Inn Pizza (Table 4). This business offers both plant-based and animal-based options. The cost for a plant-based pizza with no toppings is the same as the cost of a regular pizza with no toppings – both are \$10.99; in addition, all toppings cost the same – regardless of whether they are plant- or animal-based.

In FY 2021, approximately \$23,000 dollars were spent on beverages through the City’s contract with Pepsi. We estimate that reducing our purchasing of less healthy beverage choices by 50% (e.g., Pepsi, Mountain Dew, and Starbucks bottled/canned beverages) and replacing that volume with healthier choices (e.g., Gatorade, Aquafina, and Lipton products) would result in savings of approximately \$765 per year.

References

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