

September 2016

Local Foods, Local Places

A Community-Driven Action Plan for
Palmer, Alaska



A technical assistance program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Transportation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority



Local Foods, Local Places: Palmer

Community Story

Palmer is a community of approximately 7,000 people within the Matanuska-Susitna (“Mat-Su”) Borough of Alaska. Located less than an hour northeast from Anchorage, Palmer and the Mat-Su Valley are the most productive agricultural areas of Alaska, producing what is estimated to be \$32 million per year of commercial agricultural product. With a short but intense growing season, the Mat-Su area is famed for enormous vegetables such as huge cabbages, pumpkins, and zucchini. These vegetables are displayed annually at the Alaska State Fair held in Palmer and have won several state and world records. The soil composition and cool nights make carrots that are up to eight times sweeter than those grown elsewhere.



Grow Palmer has established edible garden beds and planters throughout downtown.¹

Palmer’s history is agricultural, established in the 1930s by the U.S. government as a Colony. Original Colony families were recruited from the Midwest of the continental U.S. to come homestead and farm the rich soils. The Class 2 soils in the valley can be as deep as 10 feet, owing to the confluence of water and glacial systems that has made this valley exceptionally fertile. It is also an area rich in wild local food resources including berries, moose and other

¹ Note: Credit for all photos goes to Erica Heller, Progressive Urban Management Associates, and Chris Freda, Sasaki.



game, and birch sap (which is made into syrup). Many locals also participate in wild harvest of many kinds of fish both in and beyond the Mat-Su Valley.

Prominent commercial crops in the Mat-Su include potatoes, carrots, broccoli, cabbage and onions. Root crops, which travel and keep relatively well, are available in Alaska year-round. In season, many other vegetables are grown for the Alaska market including lettuces, zucchini, swiss chard, spinach, potatoes, kohlrabi, herbs, beets, fennel, raspberries and apples. Some farmers also grow tomatoes, basil, and other warmer weather vegetables in hoop houses. Other local farmed products include eggs, beef, lamb, pork, bison, elk, barley, wheat and dairy.

Palmer's Edible Harvest
Self-Guided Map 2016

Look for the Logo!
grow PALMER
LOCAL FOOD FOR EVERYONE

1. The NEW Edible Rail Trail	6. NonEssentials	12. Turkey Red Cafe & Bakery
2. Palmer Train Depot	7. Fireside Books	13. Palmer Downtown Deli
3. Market Board (Local Food Directory)	8. Active Soles	14. Silvertip Design
4. Cover Ups Design	9. Vagabond Blues	
5. Megan Danz ND	10. B. Bella Hair Design	
	11. Forever Endeavor	

Look for the **grow** and help yourself!

Grow Palmer created this 2016 Edible Harvest self-guided map.



Assets

Palmer has a number of assets to build on for advancing placemaking, economy, and accessibility of local foods. Palmer has two weekly markets: The Monday Market and the Friday Fling. The Monday Market is primarily focused on food, while the Friday Fling has more of a craft, music, and entertainment focus, but does include some food vendors. Several of the Valley growers offer weekly farm stand hours where they sell to the local community, and many sell direct to local restaurant buyers at the farm.

Some of the downtown Palmer restaurants and vendors source foods locally and incorporate them in the menu, such as Turkey Red and The Palmer Alehouse. Some of them began doing this under a Restaurant Rewards state incentive program, and have continued to do so even since the funding for this program ceased. Generally, the restaurants may display a plaque in the lobby indicating they do some local sourcing, but do not indicate by menu item which foods are sourced locally. There are many reasons for this, including that while they may source locally during the growing season, they also use non-local foods for the same items during the balance of the year.



Grow Palmer has established edible garden beds and planters throughout downtown.

Grow Palmer is a local organization that has established garden beds and planters throughout downtown and filled them each year with edible plants that are free for anyone to harvest. This includes planters and other public garden beds. Most recently, Grow Palmer completed the first phase of an edible rail trail, placing 40 planters along the end of a regional bike trail that parallels an old rail bed. The project connects local food to active



living. Funding has been secured to double its size, which will be completed in 2017. The trail ends at the Palmer Depot, a community center where the Monday Market is hosted.



Historical and agricultural signage contributes to Palmer's tourism.

Palmer has agritourism assets. Within downtown are interpretive plaques telling the history of the Original Colony. The Alaska State Fairground is located in Palmer and is widely cited in visitor materials as a reason to visit the Mat-Su Valley. Occurring for twelve days per year in late August through Labor Day weekend in September, it attracts people from all over Alaska as well as out-of-state visitors. Year-round, the Palmer Visitors Center highlights the productivity of the valley, with public art showing the astounding size of some of the prizewinning vegetables, and during the summer months, a demonstration garden. Visitors can self-drive through the beautiful countryside and see the rows of vegetables growing. There are no farms that host visitors on a daily or drop-in basis, but in 2016, a local Palmer resident began a business called Alaska Farm Tours that has begun to offer tours to farms in the Valley.

Challenges

Although a wide range of crops are grown in Mat-Su Valley, even in summer most of the produce that is readily available to residents is imported. Although two of the three local grocers regularly carry local milk, carrots, potatoes, lettuce, and kale, they carry few of the other products. There are a number of challenges that make this so. For one, the grocers look for steady, reliable, sources for each product such as their consolidated distributors.



With a short growing and harvest season for each local product, many local products - such as zucchini - are only harvested locally for a few weeks per year. Grocers do not typically switch their buying pattern for that short term.

In addition, many of the products grown locally are grown on a small scale, and thus are only available at farmers markets and farm stands or through pre-paid shares. Many local residents are not aware of where and when these venues are open or what products are available at them on a particular day, and do not regularly patronize the local venues. Also, local producers find it more profitable to take market goods to farmers markets in Anchorage, where the greater number of patrons increases sales per hour/day compared to Palmer venues. Locals state that the Palmer Monday Market, which features local foods, is not very visible or well attended. This discourages local producers from making the investment of time and resources in participating.

Finally, many small-scale producers are at maximum capacity, and there are a limited number of small-scale farms. While the production farms are shipping significant quantities of the main crops throughout the state, there is still not enough market produce being grown for local, Alaskan consumption. They would need evidence of demand in Palmer at prices equal or better to what other customers will pay in order to keep more of the product local, or to produce more than current levels. Additional infrastructure, such as cold storage, could potentially alleviate some of the risk of over-production, as farmers take on a substantial financial risk producing for an unpredictable market.

There are significant barriers to starting up more small-scale farms in the Mat-Su Valley. Some of the most fertile agricultural lands are being converted to subdivisions as growth in Anchorage pushes more residents to Palmer, and some aging farmers are seeking to “cash out” of farming through land sales. Designated Mat-Su Borough agricultural land sales are a minimum of 40 acres, more than most new farmers can afford. Identifying and addressing these barriers will be key to growing a small-scale farm community in the Mat-Su Borough. While there are local restaurants in Palmer that source foods locally, some of them need the produce prepared due to preference, labor availability, and space constraints. For example, local restaurateurs report they lack the space to wash and chop lettuce, preferring to have it delivered pre-prepared. Local producers state they also lack the labor or desire to be involved in the food preparation business, preferring to sell lettuce to wholesalers and



retailers of whole product, rather than take up the processing, which comes with food safety requirements and regulations.

There is a desire to grow awareness and make Palmer a destination for local foods. Palmer is well known in Alaska as a farming region, but is not necessarily understood as a place to go sample and enjoy local food. Local restaurants do not prominently display the use of local foods in their marketing or menus, and are not included in statewide dining guides. The area and its history is not especially well known outside of Alaska. Despite the fact that data shows agritourism as a growing area in the travel industry, Alaska visitor materials make little mention of agritourism opportunities in Palmer other than the State Fair, which happens only twelve days per year.



Better connections are needed between producers, retailers, and restaurants.



In Downtown Palmer, connections among local foods assets and between local foods and other healthy living assets could be improved. Palmer has limited public transportation. Missing sidewalk segments, crosswalks, and a disconnect between the biking and walking trails and downtown hinder easy movement between residential areas, schools and businesses.

Project Assistance

In 2015, Grow Palmer, a local group organized to provide public food gardens in Palmer requested assistance through the Local Foods, Local Places program to develop an action plan for achieving its vision. The program is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and the Delta Regional Authority (DRA). Implementing the actions described later in this plan can bring several benefits to the community including:

- More economic opportunities for local farmers and business.
- Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- A revitalized downtown that is the economic anchor of the community.

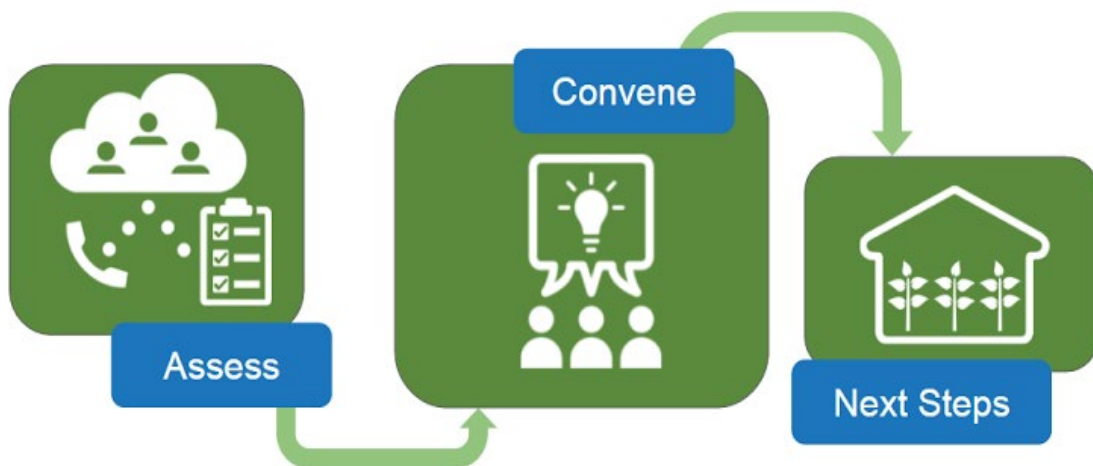


Figure 3. The diagram above lays out all of the steps leading to this action plan.



Engagement

Leading up to the workshop, a local steering committee and federal partners convened three times by conference call and webinar to discuss the community's goals and plan the event. The local steering committee was comprised of the following participants:

- Chair: Jan Newman, Grow Palmer
- Amy Pettit, Alaska Farmland Trust
- Frankie Barker, Mat-Su Borough
- Chantel Welch, NeighborWorks Alaska
- Terry Snyder, Alaska AARP
- Nate Wallace, Palmer City Manager

The main sessions of the Local Foods, Local Places workshop were held over two days in the Palmer Depot in Downtown Palmer on July 26 and 27, 2016. Prior to the workshop's first public session, the technical advisory team, local steering committee, and federal partners participated in an informal lunch.

Nearly five dozen people attended the workshop, with many participating both days. All sessions were open to the public. See *Appendix A: Workshop Participants* for details on attendees. A compilation of photos from the workshop and tour can be found in *Appendix B: Workshop Photo Album*. A link and visual representation of results of the asset mapping exercise are found in *Appendix C: My Community Asset Mapping*.

The first day began with a walking and van tour of food-related sites in Palmer, starting with a visit to the VanderWeele's farm. Patriarch Ben and his daughter Michelle Keyes shared with participants their experience as large-scale commercial growers who supply both local grocers and wholesalers with production items such as potatoes, carrots, and lettuce, as well as specialty foods for farmers markets, and a small number of other local restaurants. The group also viewed the State fairgrounds and several agricultural tracts protected by the Alaska Farmland Trust. Next, Jan Newman lead the group on a tour of Downtown food and healthy living assets including the rail trail edible gardens, placards that provide tribute to the original Colony families, the visitors center gardens and artworks commemorating the strength of Mat-Su agriculture, and several local restaurants offering local foods. She also pointed out deficiencies in walking and biking links between the downtown assets, such as disconnected sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, and a bike trail that terminates at the Palmer



Depot. After a lunch at Turkey Red Café featuring local foods, the participants toured Arctic Organics, a small family-owned farm that direct markets its produce through community supported agriculture (CSA) shares, farmers markets, and individual contracts with local vendors.

The workshop began in the afternoon with a welcome and commitment of support by the Palmer Mayor. In the initial session, participants were introduced to the program and the background leading up to the workshop. Exercises were then conducted to work through values, visioning, and tying vision to place. After the general session, a producers and vendors special session was held to get ideas and views from local producers. Attendees representing market farms, animal and egg processors, as well as representatives of the Alaska Farmland Trust, State Division of Agriculture and Mat-Su Borough were there. Attendees noted that wild harvested products, which are traditional in Alaska should also be considered in thinking about local foods.

On the second day, the workshop continued with exercises to learn about potential actions and mapping tools, brainstorm actions and select priorities, and develop specific action steps. The group completed actions in five goal areas to form the basis of the Action Plan. See *Appendix D: Workshop Exercises* for more details on the exercises. *Appendix E: Funding Resources* and *Appendix F: Additional Resources* are also included as comprehensive listings of federal, state, private, and local resources.

Two news articles were published locally, one leading up to the event and one reporting on it afterwards, and can be found in *Appendix G: Press Coverage*.

Vision

The community's vision encompasses many elements. Among these is to be a place where all residents have access to local food and awareness about its availability. The community also strives to leverage its agricultural identity to become a local foods destination. The community also envisions a region that protects farmland and expands the production, particularly of local market foods.



Opportunities and Challenges

Throughout Day One, participants had engaging conversations about their perceptions of opportunities/assets, and challenges in Palmer, as they relate to local foods goals.

Opportunities/Assets

- *Known for agriculture within Alaska*
- *Rich Class 2 soils - 10' deep topsoil*
- *Existing community-serving producers*
- *Rail trail and community edible "u-pick" gardens*
- *Existing supply chain for 2 of 3 local grocers*
- *30 year Alaska Grown program*
- *Farmers market SNAP grant dollars*
- *Startup small local distributor*
- *Existing farm stands and farmers market*
- *Mat-Su Borough agricultural land sales*
- *Experimental farm structures and coolers*
- *AK Farmland Trust preservation tools*
- *Farm-to-School program*

Challenges

- *Lack of awareness about local foods availability*
- *Uncertainty, inconsistency in growing conditions*
- *Short season/limited year-round production*
- *Subdivisions built/platted on prime agricultural lands*
- *Large scale distributors discourage local buying*
- *Farmers and small vendors have limited time/staff/motivation for distribution*
- *Limited quantity of market vegetables*
- *Cost of local products is higher*
- *Anchorage farmers markets are more profitable; inconsistent food regulations*
- *Timely information about availability*
- *Lack of local policies/goals to promote*



Action Plan

The following five overarching goals and action items were finalized at the workshop with input from all participants. A detailed description of the goals and actions items can be found in the implementation matrices, below.

Goal 1: Support local growers & vendors, and processors.

- Action 1.1 Establish a Mat-Su/Palmer Local Food Policy Council
- Action 1.2 Promote the education of local/seasonal eating and food preparation
- Action 1.3 Make the Monday Market stronger and more visible
- Action 1.4 Replicate Kenai Food Hub model in Palmer
- Action 1.5 Establish a commercial kitchen production and processing space for small local producers

Goal 2: Promote farmland and wild food resources stewardship and preservation.

- Action 2.1 Gather data on farmland to create the case for agricultural preservation, mitigation, and agricultural subdivisions.
- Action 2.2 Showcase Mat-Su farmlands on wayfinding and visitor maps
- Action 2.4 Create an Agricultural Lands Mitigation Bank
- Action 2.4 Create an Agricultural Special Use designation and identify areas to include (potentially) Agricultural Subdivisions

Goal 3: Improve local food accessibility and food security by increasing availability of Mat-Su Valley food to local residents

- Action 3.1 Research and identify a model for the “Kitchen Garden Project” and establish regular stakeholder meetings
- Action 3.2 Survey local producers to identify quantity and makeup of surplus crops on a weekly basis
- Action 3.3 Improve real time information system for what local food is available
- Action 3.4 Compile a report to identify the needs of local institutions, local supply, and actual/perceived barriers to introduce local foods to institutions

Goal 4: Build on agricultural identity to become a local foods destination.

- Action 4.1 Year-round showcase market for local foods
- Action 4.2 Local foods wayfinding and placemaking through maps, signage, apps, and decals
- Action 4.4 Fund a position at an existing nonprofit to coordinate work



- Action 4.5 Agree on the brand for Palmer local food

Goal 5: Increase collaboration and integration with efforts for a healthy, vibrant, walkable community.

- Action 5.1 Edible Rail Trail Phase II
- Action 5.2 Improve Downtown walkability and bikeability
- Action 5.3 Improve crosswalk and sidewalk segments

Implementation Matrices

Implementation matrices, which include specific details for each action to aid in implementation, are found below.

Time Frame Key:
Short = 0-6 months **Medium** = 6-12 months **Long** = 1-2 years

Goal 1: Support local growers & vendors, and processors

Action	1.1 Establish a Mat-Su/Palmer Local Food Policy Council	1.2 Promote education of local and seasonal eating and food preparation	1.3 Make the Monday Market stronger and more visible	1.4 Replicate the Kenai Food Hub model in Palmer	1.5 Commercial kitchen production and processing space for small local producers
Why is this action important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for small producers' needs • Create a unified voice for local agricultural concerns to speak to Alaska agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address disconnect between consumers and growers • Better identify local foods • Utilize available local food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate a market that focuses on food • Create a single, well-known visible food focused market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates supply and demand • Strengthens market for growers • Ease of access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more small business growth based on local foods • Increase year-round availability • Utilize existing resources
How will we measure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of committed LFLP group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales of local foods at local venues (restaurants, markets, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participating vendors • Number of consumers • Sales figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a functional food hub • Number of participating growers and consumers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hours of use of commercial kitchens by secondary users

Local Foods, Local Places Action Plan - Palmer, Alaska



Time Frame	Short	Short: advocate Medium to Long: Make available	Short: signage Medium: market and build	Long: implement in Spring 2018 season	Medium
Lead Role	Local Food Policy Council	Local Food Policy Council	Monday Market managers	Alaska Pacific University's Spring Creek Farm	Local Food Policy Council
Potential Supporting Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Food Policy Council Ag Commission Alaska Farmland Trust Alaska Food Coalition ARRC Mat-Su Health Alaska Pacific University AARP NeighborWorks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Now Health Mat-Su Health Foundation Restaurants, esp. Turkey Red SNAP Educators Alaska Pacific University ARRC AmeriCorps Vista Health/Exercise, Active businesses Chef At The Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday Fling Richelle Plumber Growers Grow Palmer Downtown Merchants Association PEDA Chamber of Commerce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growers, Customers University of Alaska Fairbanks City of Palmer NeighborWorks Cook Inletkeeper Arctic Harvest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Commerce Owners of commercial kitchens Chamber of Commerce Local Food Policy Council School District Producers
What will it cost, what will it take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer coordinators Monthly meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create, Compile and distribute educational materials Educators conduct 1 on 1 meeting Press release Coordinate with Branding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing materials Signage Newsletter ads and press releases Recreate Chef At The Market Meet Me At The Market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platform \$80/month Part time staff Distribution space Staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outreach campaign to identify potential users A system (an app or other) to match available space with users
Possible sources, contributions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Local foundations, e.g. Mat-Su Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNAP programs and educational materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Palmer Chamber and US Chamber of Commerce Vendor fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experimental farm Bogard Logistics AmeriCorps or students Sponsors e.g. Lions Club ARRC Alaska Grown USDA grants Mat-Su Health Foundation AARP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA Local foundations, e.g. Mat-Su Health



Goal 2: Promote farmland and wild food resources stewardship and preservation

Action	2.1 Gather data on farmland to create the case for agricultural preservation, mitigation, and agricultural subdivisions	2.2 Showcase Mat-Su farmlands on wayfinding and visitor maps	2.3 Create an Agricultural Lands Mitigation Bank	2.4 Create an Agriculture Special Use designation and identify areas to include (potentially) Agricultural Subdivisions
Why is this action important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To tell the story To convince residents to preserve ag lands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports farmland preservation efforts Encourages interest in Farm Tours and other Agricultural tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds the protection of additional acreage Creates perception of value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy planning Food security Knowledge retention Protecting most valuable lands
How will we measure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident awareness Information use If the data is used to set policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation & distribution of maps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of funding received Acres protected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of acres designated Percent of farmland designated
Time Frame	Short	Medium	Long	Long
Lead Role	Mat-Su 2050 and Alaska Farmland Trust	Mat-Su Borough , and New Local Food position (Action 4.3)	Alaska Farmland Trust	Local Community Councils
Potential Supporting Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University of Alaska - Institute of Social and Economic Research Mat-Su Borough The Nature Conservancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Farmland Trust USDA Visitors Center Farm Tours Grow Palmer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ag Advisory Council American Farmland Trust Great Land Trust Land Trust Alliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ag Advisory Council Alaska Farmland Trust Mat Su Borough Developers Cities
What will it cost/take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$50,000 for data Unknown cost for storytelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping Printing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public education campaign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public education campaign Focus groups
Possible sources, contributions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Farmland Trust USDA Mat-Su Health Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alaska Farmland Trust USDA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A special event or fundraiser 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rasmuson Foundation Cook Inlet Tribal NeighborWorks



Goal 3: Improve local food accessibility and food security by increasing availability of Mat-Su Valley food to local residents.

Action	3.1 Research and Identify a model for “Kitchen Garden Project” and establish regular stakeholder meetings	3.2 Survey local producers to identify quantity and makeup of surplus crops on a weekly basis	3.3 Improve real time information system for what local food is available	3.4 Compile a report to identify needs of local institutions, local supply, and actual/perceived barriers to introduce local foods to institutions
Why is this action important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combines Alaska Tilth, Yarducopia, and gardening support goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First step in understanding surplus and how it can be used Opens channels of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate and increase demand for local growers’ products Reduce waste Stronger local economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First step in building mutual understanding of existing and potential opportunities
How will we measure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A model is identified for the framework At least one convening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalog of surplus produce that can be salvaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and specificity of listings in local food information system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report is successfully completed
Time Frame	Short	Medium	Long	Long
Lead Role	Chantel Welch, NeighborWorks Alaska	Division of Agriculture	New Local Food position (see Action 4.3)	University of Alaska - Public Health, and Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) - Steve Colt
Potential Supporting Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Creek Farm Yarducopia CES Master Gardeners Alaska Cold Climate Permaculture Institute New Local Foods Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Churches Alaska Farmland Trust APU student Mat-Su College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grow Palmer Food Policy Council Alaska Farmland Trust Growers Monday Market Local Businesses AARP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spring Creek Farm Division of Agriculture and Mat-Su Borough put in joint request to ISER SPORK Consulting
What will it cost, what will it take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time and commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time App or electronic system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Improved bulletin board An app or similar University support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Student, intern, volunteer
Possible sources, contributions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NeighborWorks and Local Food Group (staff time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mat-Su Health Foundation Alaska Conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> USDA EPA Mat-Su Health Foundation AK Community Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff time Division of Agriculture - Farm to Institution



Goal 4: Build on agricultural identity to become a local foods destination.

Action	4.1 Year-round showcase market for local foods	4.2 Local foods Wayfinding & placemaking through maps, signage, apps & decals	4.3 Fund a position at an existing nonprofit to coordinate work	4.4 Agree on the brand for Palmer local food
Why is this action important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertainment • Education • Community Building • Improve local food sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lets people know what is available • Can promote what is important to the town • Identifies areas for opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a means to apply for grants and funding opportunities • Ensures coordination between efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding helps people remember the produce and place • Associate name with a location
How will we measure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of attendees (helps justify a larger permanent space) • Amount of sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of maps, signage, apps, and decals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofit identified • Funding and grants received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of searches • Number Facebook likes • Increased local food sales
Time Frame	Short: planning Medium: start activities in Spring of 2017	Medium: Wayfinding design plan Medium-to Long: Implementation	Long	Long
Lead Role	Monday Market Coordinator	City of Palmer, and, Dept. of Agriculture	Jan Newman, Grow Palmer	Local Food Policy Group
Potential Supporting Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ProStart - High School • Grow Palmer • Alaska Public Media • Library • Division of Agriculture - Farm to School • Job Corp - food demos • Career Tech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Local organizations to implement and provide data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Food Policy Council • AK Farm Trust • NeighborWorks • Local Foods Local Places attendees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New local food position • Local Businesses • USDA Rural Development • AARP • Mat-Su Borough • City of Palmer • Grow Palmer logo
What will it cost, what will it take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination • Pay stipends to chefs, musicians, and teachers • Food and supplies • Sponsorships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study • Printing • Marketing • Physical signage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time & effort to apply for grants or an intern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen input to agree on brand • Design work • Printing, production • Distribution
Possible sources, contributions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Visitors Center • USDA FMPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Palmer - \$35K available • USDA Rural Development • Chamber of Commerce • Visitors Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SNAP ED • USDA • Mat-Su Health Foundation • EPA • AmeriCorps VISTA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Palmer • Local Businesses • USDA Rural Development • Grow Palmer



Goal 5: Increase collaboration and integration with efforts for a healthy, vibrant, walkable community.

Action	5.1 Edible Rail Trail Phase II	5.2. Improve Downtown walkability and bikeability	5.3 Improve crosswalk and sidewalk segments downtown
Why is this action important?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible fresh food anytime! • Agricultural identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Economic vitality • Growing senior population • Transportation options year-round, all ages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Economic vitality • Growing senior population • Transportation options year-round, all ages
How will we measure success?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random harvesting happening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown walkability audit • Traffic accident data • Bikeability study • Maps/app 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and painting, downtown • Walking Map/app, and signage • Walk Score
Time Frame	Short: construction by the end of 2016 Medium-Long: Planting in 2017	Medium: Spring 2017 walkability and bikeability audits	Medium: 2016-2017 and Ongoing
Lead Role	Grow Palmer	Mat-Su Borough	City of Palmer , Public Works and City Manager
Potential Supporting Cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Palmer, fiscal sponsor, water and power • SDG Sustainable Design Group • Mat-Su Health Foundation • Mat-Su Trails and Parks • Rasmuson Foundation • AARP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Wasilla • City of Palmer • City of Houston • AARP • VMBAH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Wasilla • City of Houston • Mat-Su Borough • AARP • Active Soles
What will it cost, what will it take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$34-\$26,000 - in place • Volunteers: admin, marketing, garden design, year-round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25,000 • \$20,000 MSB • \$4,000 COW & COP • \$1,000 COH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paint, Labor & Design • City of Palmer - budget for existing
Possible sources, contributions etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mat-Su Health Foundation • Mat-Su Trails and Parks • Need open funds for future years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City mill rate • AARP • People for Bikes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer assistance with map location input • Rec Trails program - Federal Highway Administration.



Short-term Implementation Steps

The Action Plan identified many short-term action steps including several that did not require new funding sources. The project defines short-term action steps are those that can be completed within six months. Some of these Actions include:

- Action 1.1 Establish a Mat-Su/Palmer Local Food Policy Council
- Action 1.2 Promote the education of local/seasonal eating and food preparation - *begin to advocate*
- Action 1.3 Make the Monday Market stronger and more visible- *signage*
- Action 2.1 Gather data on farmland to create the case for agricultural preservation, mitigation, and agricultural subdivisions
- Action 3.1 Research and identify a model for the “Kitchen Garden Project” and establish regular stakeholder meetings
- Action 4.1 Year-round showcase market for local foods - *planning*
- Action 5.1 Edible Rail Trail Phase II - *construction by end of 2016*

In the three months following the workshop, progress has been made on a number of implementation efforts.

- The Edible Rail Trail Phase II construction is underway in Palmer. Recent additions to the edible garden landscape include raspberry plantings.
- The local Mat-Su Borough Planning Department is submitting the LFLP Palmer Report to the Alaska Chapter of the American Planning Association in late September for consideration for the Grassroots Initiative Award.
- The local and national AARP chapters have expressed enthusiasm for the LFLP Palmer plan, and are hopeful that food security will continue to be a major component of the organization’s work. The plan will be shared with folks at the AARP National Livable Communities Conference in Chicago in October.
- NeighborWorks Alaska and Alaska Pacific University’s Spring Creek Farm are collaborating to expand the Alaska Tilth program to include Kitchen and Community Gardens in the Mat-Su area, starting in Spring 2017.
- Steering committee members have taken the first steps in Goal 1.1 to establish a new Mat-Su/Palmer local foods group that will help carry forward actions outlined in this report. They anticipate the new group to be more of a coalition of groups that meets 3-4 times per year.

