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TO: City Climate Action Team & Charlottesville City Council

FROM: Cultivate Charlottesville Food Justice Network & C3 (Community Climate Collaborative)

RE: UPDATED Community Recommendations at the Intersection of Climate Justice & Food Justice

DATE: October 14, 2022

Thank you for incorporating edits to the updated Climate Action Plan at the intersection of Climate Justice and Food Justice. We specifically appreciate the emphasis on the importance of Urban Agriculture, increased tree canopy, and centering equity when evaluating the implications of climate actions. As we work to strengthen the plan, we further recommend the following:

- **Urban Agriculture:** Include specific urban agriculture action items that will enhance climate justice.
- **Organic Waste:** Increase city-wide residential, institutional, and business composting facilities and offerings, with a specific focus on gleaning/diverting institutional food waste.
- **Transportation:** While we understand the current transportation plan's recommendations are meant to include all critical routes to residents (school / work) it is important to focus specifically on food pathways for neighborhoods experiencing food apartheid.
- **Buildings and Energy:** Prioritize living pathway additions to new construction, with a focus on passive water collection measures.

With this letter, we hope that these efforts and added recommendations will be prioritized and included in the finalized Climate Action Plan. We thank you for your consideration and commitment to building a healthy and just Charlottesville community.



Sincerely,
Jeanette Abi-Nader & Richard Morris, Co-Executive Directors
and the **Food Justice Network Team**

- Onawa Dufresne-Barger, Food Justice Network Program Director
- Christopher Sims, Food Justice Network Community Engagement Program Director
- Quentia Taylor, Food Justice Network Program Associate

*For specific recommendations, application examples, and an overview of food equity related changes made to the current draft Climate Action Plan, go [HERE](#) to our Take Action webpage.

At the Intersection of Climate Action & Food Justice

Food Justice is a key part of climate action. The protection of climate is fundamental to sustaining the health and validity of our community. The effects of climate change are proven to have a direct impact on not only the environment but also on the Charlottesville community, with emphasis on historically excluded communities and communities of color. These effects further add to the already placed barriers our communities face, specifically with food equity.

The connection between climate and food equity is emphasized in the City's Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 7: Environment, Climate, and Food Equity. Leveraging this articulated priority to enhance specific climate action recommendations at the intersection of food equity is critical to building a healthy city and community.

Cultivate Charlottesville has partnered with the Community Climate Collaborative (C3) to highlight the city's continuous efforts to make policy changes to the current Climate Action Plan and advocate for further implementation in areas of the plan where we feel climate as it relates to Food Justice falls short. Additionally, we encourage the city to approach emission reductions in the specific measurable emission reductions steps as well as in the context of larger systems impacts.

Why we use Food Apartheid rather than Food Deserts

We use "*food apartheid*" (coined by Karen Washington) in place of "*food desert*" because it shifts the framing away from geographic and economic "access" and toward the root causes of food system injustices, such as decades of racially biased housing policy, zoning codes, and lending practices; food industry consolidation; union-busting; and wage stagnation.

A "desert" is a thriving natural ecosystem, while a "food desert" is a human-created environment rooted in systems of oppression. Additionally, using the term "desert" implies that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and low-income communities are empty, desolate places, lacking in value. This terminology minimizes the harmful impacts of systemic racism and capitalism, and it dehumanizes people of color and people living in poverty. Source: <https://www.beyond-buzzwords.com/food-desert-food-apartheid>



I. Key for components of this report

- Items in blue are recommended additions to the current language.
- We have included specific examples for each recommendation in green.
- [X] indicates not yet included in Climate Action Update which are further described in brackets.
- Previous recommendations that have been included are at the end of this report in section III.

II. Specific Recommendations for the Intersection of Climate Justice & Food Justice

1. Buildings and Energy

- 1.1. Strategy: Move new construction closer to Net-Zero through increased levels of energy efficiency, incorporation of onsite renewable energy and solar-ready building standards.

[X] 1.1.a. Prioritize green space/living pathway additions to new construction

Example: Designating green space in new construction such as the farm site being planned at Friendship Court. Living pathways are permeable surfaces, such as green parking lots with permeable or semipermeable paving and forest design to reduce stormwater runoff, include extensive landscaping, filters pollutants, and provides more opportunities for CO₂ (<https://nrcsolutions.org/solution-4/>)

[Not Yet Addressed: living pathways/permeable surfaces. Equity concerns, i.e. prioritizing low-lying neighborhoods and/or those with high energy burdens]

- 1.2. Strategy: Increase energy efficiency and onsite renewable energy use in existing buildings.

[X] 1.2.a. Increase energy efficiency, onsite renewable energy, and use of passive energy reduction strategies such as tree shade and water collection.

Example: Solar roofs and energy efficient appliances to be considered for new development construction

[Not Yet Addressed: plan for water collection, establishing solar canopy requirement in new parking lots and incentivize adding climate-resilient food trees or solar panels to existing parking lots]

2. Transportation

- 2.1. Strategy: Increase Travel by *Walking, Biking, Transit*

2.1.a. Leverage interconnections of pedestrian, bicycle, transit, parking, commuter networks, and food pathways.

Example: Food pathways indicate the routes that people take to access food. Ensuring low-to-moderate income families have access to climate positive infrastructure such as bike paths, transit routes and other options that reduce CO₂ emissions.

2.1.b. Continue planning and investment in a well-connected network of trails, shared use paths, sidewalks, bike lanes and community gardens.

2.1.c. [X] Advance transportation food pathways to make food markets more



accessible to residents with a specific focus in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food options.

Example: Food pathways indicate the routes that people take to access food. Ensuring low-to-moderate income families have access to climate positive infrastructure such as bike paths, transit routes and other options that reduce CO2 emissions.

Example: Creating formal, comprehensive Urban Agriculture plan and dedicating a specific bus route that travels between low-access neighborhoods and grocery stores.

[Not Yet Addressed: City does advocate for more urban gardens and identifies the need to create more accessible food pathways, but doesn't provide any concrete action plans outside of need for urban agriculture; Add a specific focus in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food options]

2.2 Strategy: Encourage alternative travel behaviors

2.2.a. [X] Expand availability and access to regional trails and shared use paths for recreation, community, and food pathways.

3. Waste

3.1 Strategy: Divert Organics from the Landfill

3.1.a. Organics within the City-provided comprehensive curbside services for residents, businesses, and institutions. [p. 51]

Example: Increase composting facilities ensuring easy pick up options for food waste and yard waste materials across ALL Charlottesville neighborhoods. Provide incentives for businesses and institutions to compost as well.

3.1.b. Organics for non-City-Curbside clients.

3.1.c. [X] Organics from Municipal Facilities (government, schools, and community and school gardens).

Example: Currently some of the schoolyard gardens do not have city services to pick up garden waste and not all of our schools compost food waste. Increase resources to facilitate improvement in these areas.

Note: Organic material that ends up in landfill is a significant source of methane, which is a gas with a greenhouse potential about 25 times bigger than carbon dioxide

[Not Yet Addressed: City-wide sorting bins that allow for composting of organic / food waste (bins that have separate compartments for trash/recycle/compost)]

3.2 Strategy: Reduce Amount of Food and other Organics-based material waste

3.2.a. [X] Diversion to glean/donation (add emphasis on areas of focus to include municipal facilities, businesses, and restaurants, etc.)

Example: Work with partners to create systems that limit good food from going into the waste stream by making connections with organizations that repurpose food and/or food pantries.

[Not Yet Addressed: plans to address food waste from institutions, i.e., leveraging existing food donation pathways/partners, incentivizing institutions (food retailers/ businesses / schools /



government buildings) to divert food from landfill and toward existing food organizations. City-wide sorting bins (bins that have trash/recycle/compost at restaurants / businesses / municipal buildings)]

4. Natural Resources

4.1. Strategy: Maintain a Robust Urban Forest on City-owned Lands

4.1.a. A robust Urban Forest Management Plan

4.1.b. Integrate shade to increase comfort of high priority walkable, bikeable, and transit corridors [with specific focus on heat-island areas.](#)

Example: Why Do We Need Shade: <https://toolkit.climate.gov/case-studies/where-do-we-need-shade-mapping-urban-heat-islands-richmond-virginia>

4.1.c. [A robust Urban Agriculture Management Plan with dedicated lands.](#)

Example: While the Botanical Garden of the Piedmont has nearly 15 city owned acres with a 40 year land lease, organizations who work primarily with low-to-moderate wealth residents such as International Rescue Committee and Urban Agriculture Collective, have been struggling with loss of land or flooded lands. Working with partners to create a robust urban agriculture management plan that includes land access for all Charlottesville residents.

[Not Yet Addressed: while City recognizes need for / benefits of urban agriculture, City has not yet created formal urban agricultural plan]

4.1.d. [Research and analyze land trust potentials for preserving land and community-based urban agriculture.](#)

Example: This could include acquiring land for a community garden at Washington Park and for the IRC New Roots refugee growers.

[Not Yet Addressed: [acquiring dedicated land for urban agriculture](#)]

4.2 Strategy: Encourage Healthy and Increased Tree Canopy on Privately Owned Properties

4.2.a. [Education/Engagement on tree maintenance and care, selection and Placement.](#)

Example: Provide incentives for homeowners to plant edible trees across the city.

[Not Yet Addressed: while City has planned for incentives for homeowners to plant trees, plan does not call for planting of *edible* trees]

4.2.b. Consideration of code standards for new developments

4.2.c. [Special consideration for tree canopy additions in neighborhoods with lower to moderate incomes.](#)

Example: Designating green space and planting trees in existing low-to-moderate income neighborhoods.

[Not Yet Addressed: concern of [green gentrification \(example: pairing increased green space planning with anti-displacement strategies\)](#)]



4.3 Strategy: Encourage Healthy and Increased Tree Canopy and Urban Agriculture on Public and Subsidized Housing Sites.

4.3.a. [Consideration of housing rules that limit garden and growing space for residents.](#)

Example: Currently some low-to-moderate income housing such as Hearthwood Apartments and Friendship Court do not allow residents to plant gardens. Work with developments to allow residents the ability to grow their own food either through community garden plots or individual gardens. These gardens could include water catchment practices, composting, and other environmentally sound practices.

4.4 Strategy: Non-Tree Canopy Actions

4.4.a. Soil Amendments (biochar)

4.4.b. [\[X\] Consider reduction in parking minimums to decrease impact on non-permeable surfaces and transition to more permeable parking options.](#)

Example: Cars are a significant contributor to harmful emissions. Providing more alternatives to car dependency and providing permeable parking lots when needed will reduce CO2 emissions.

[Not Yet Addressed: permeable parking surfaces]

4.4.c. [\[X\] Implement incentives to transition high maintenance green space such as lawns to productive urban agriculture, food forests, or prairie/native grasses.](#)

Example: See articles below for examples of how to utilize lawn and public spaces to increase carbon capture.

- **Storing Carbon in the Prairie Grass:**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2020/08/19/climate-change-prairie/>
- **Forests Combat Climate Change:**
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/forests/brief/forests-combat-climate-change>
- **Center for Urban Habitats:** <https://centerforurbanhabitats.com/>

[Not Yet Addressed: food forests or need for prairie/native grasses]

5. Guidelines for Implementation:

5.1 Prioritize financial incentives and assistance to support low-income and mid-income households.

5.2 Direct resources and programs to address racial inequities and drive outcomes.

5.3 [\[X\] Advance transportation food pathways to make food markets more accessible to residents with a specific focus in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food options.](#)

Example: Food pathways indicate the routes that people take to access food. Ensuring



low-to-moderate income families have access to climate positive infrastructure such as bike paths, transit routes and other options that reduce CO2 emissions.

[Not Yet Addressed: City does advocate for more urban gardens and identifies the need to create more accessible food pathways, but doesn't provide any concrete action plans outside of need for urban agriculture; Add a specific focus in neighborhoods with limited access to healthy food options]

III. Food Equity Recommendations that have been included in the October update of the Climate Action Plan

2. Transportation

2.1. Strategy: Increase Travel by *Walking, Biking, Transit*

2.1.a. [✓] Leverage interconnections of pedestrian, bicycle, transit, parking, commuter networks, and food pathways.

Example: Food pathways indicate the routes that people take to access food. Ensuring low-to-moderate income families have access to climate positive infrastructure such as bike paths, transit routes and other options that reduce CO2 emissions. [p. 53 - tree canopies, urban food gardens]

2.1.b. [✓] Continue planning and investment in a well-connected network of trails, shared use paths, sidewalks, bike lanes and community gardens. [p.53]

3. Waste

3.1. Strategy: Divert Organics from the Landfill

3.1.a. [✓] Organics within the City-provided comprehensive curbside services for residents, businesses, and institutions. [p. 51]

Example: Increase composting facilities ensuring easy pick up options for food waste and yard waste materials across ALL Charlottesville neighborhoods. Provide incentives for businesses and institutions to compost as well.

4. Natural Resources

4.1. Strategy: Maintain a Robust Urban Forest on City-owned Lands

4.1.a. [✓] A robust Urban Forest Management Plan [p. 52]

4.1.b. [✓] Integrate shade to increase comfort of high priority walkable, bikeable, and transit corridors with specific focus on heat-island areas. [p. 53]

Example:

Why Do We Need Shade: <https://toolkit.climate.gov/case-studies/where-do-we-need-shade-mapping-urban-heat-islands-richmond-virginia>

4.2 Strategy: Encourage Healthy and Increased Tree Canopy on Privately Owned Properties

4.2.c. [✓] Special consideration for tree canopy additions in neighborhoods with



[lower to moderate incomes.](#) [p. 52]

Example: Designating green space and planting trees in existing low-to-moderate income neighborhoods.

4.3 Strategy: Encourage Healthy and Increased Tree Canopy and Urban Agriculture on Public and Subsidized Housing Sites.

4.3.a. [Consideration of housing rules that limit garden and growing space for residents.](#) [pp. 52-53]

Example: Currently some low-to-moderate income housing such as Hearthwood Apartments and Friendship Court do not allow residents to plant gardens. Work with developments to allow residents the ability to grow their own food either through community garden plots or individual gardens. These gardens could include water catchment practices, composting, and other environmentally sound practices.