

# Opportunities to Increase Access to **Healthy Eating** Richfield, Minnesota

**Local policy initiatives** play a pivotal role in promoting the health of a community, including supporting healthy eating. A variety of policy options are available to provide opportunities for all residents to access and eat healthier foods. This document provides an overview of Richfield municipal ordinances impacting the local food system, and provides recommendations to support integration of healthy food policies into Richfield's' comprehensive plan update, as well as future plans and code amendments.

The review of Richfield policies identified the following key areas related to the food system and corresponding opportunities to enhance current municipal policies and create new policies where gaps exist:

- Growing and Producing Food
- Processing Food
- Distributing Food
- Getting Food
- Making Food
- Surplus and Waste Management

## STATE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

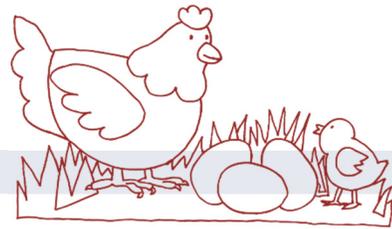
A number of Minnesota state laws impact the food system and the authority municipal governments have to regulate a certain area. Areas impacted by state law include, but are not limited to:

- Building construction standards,<sup>1</sup>
- Sale of personally grown, unprocessed agricultural products,<sup>2</sup>
- Licensing and inspection of food establishments,<sup>3</sup>
- Food safety standards,<sup>4</sup>
- Sale of Cottage Food products,<sup>5</sup> and
- Food sampling at farmers' markets and other community events.<sup>6</sup>



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY

### Growing, Producing, and Processing Food



#### Local Vegetable and Fruit Production

Richfield has a few ordinances that specifically address gardening, farming, food production or growing structures. Community gardens are permitted in all zoning districts as an accessory use to an established institutional use such as a school, church or park. In addition, greenhouses are allowed as an accessory building in the R, R-1 and MR-1 districts. Growing structures such as hoop houses, greenhouses, and cold frames are used to extend the growing season and can be effective tools to increase local food production.

#### Opportunities to improve local food production include:

- Incorporate additional support for personal and community gardens in local ordinances.
- Determine need for additional community garden sites on public property and ensure garden sites are available and accessible to all residents, especially renters and those without access to land.
- Assess interest in allowing other types of local food production, such as urban farms, market gardens or indoor aquaponics.
- Offer gardening opportunities as an amenity in mixed-use or planned unit developments.
- Allow alternatives to zoning standards if Planned Unit Development [PUD] includes site amenities, including active transportation and food production.
- Explore opportunities to allow structures used for extending the growing season and assess how current ordinances impact these structures.
- Consider allowing greenhouses on lots primarily used for food production, such as community gardens.
- Assess if growing structures would be better regulated under their own ordinance.

#### Beekeeping and Pollinator Protection

Richfield allows the keeping of bees on every lot or parcel of land in the City. Pollinator health is important, as pollinators support both ecological health and agricultural production. In Minnesota, pollination from honey bees for food production is valued at \$17 billion annually and pollination from other pollinators is valued at \$6 billion annually. There are two main contributors to the decrease in pollinator health: the loss of pollinator habitat and the use of neonicotinoid or other systemic insecticides.

#### Opportunities to improve pollinator protection and beekeeping in Richfield include:

- Develop a pollinator policy to decrease use of pesticides and increase native landscaping on public land.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of neonicotinoid and other systemic insecticides on public lands and educate residents to discourage use of harmful pesticides on private land.
- Increase pollinator friendly habitat.
  - Amend city law to allow a higher percentage of lawn cover to be native prairie and long grasses.
  - Encourage the use of pollinator friendly plants in landscape designs.
  - Plant pollinator friendly plants in rights of way
- Allow beekeepers to keep up to two colonies on one half acre or smaller.

## Farm poultry and farm animals

Richfield allows backyard chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons and other fowl birds on any residential property but does not allow other farm animals. The City does not specifically address shelter standards, location or setback requirements for fowl.

Opportunities to improve keeping farm poultry in Richfield include:

- Clarify shelter requirements and location to ensure that the keeping fowl does not become a nuisance to surrounding properties and ensures animal welfare.
- Consider increasing the number of birds or fowl residents are allowed to keep.

## Processing Food: Cottage food preparation and sale

Cottage Food is a term used for specific types of foods that can be prepared outside of a licensed kitchen, often in a person's home, and sold to the public. Cottage food vendors are often local food entrepreneurs that sell their product at farmers' markets or other small-scale local retail settings. Richfield's ordinances do not address cottage food, or any food related business, however, it does specifically restrict the sale of honey.

Opportunities to improve the ability of Richfield's residents to pursue cottage food activities include:

- Consider permitting cottage food as a home occupation.
- Evaluate need and create opportunities for licensed kitchens in Richfield to support local food entrepreneurs.



## Distributing, Getting and Making Food

### Farmers' Markets and Agricultural stands

Richfield's ordinances do not address the sale of locally grown produce at farmers' markets or produce stands.

Opportunities to support the sale of locally grown produce include:

- Determine if the locations of current farmers' markets are accessible to public housing, seniors, and other residents with fixed- or low-incomes and limited mobility.
- Assess how Richfield will plan for and promote farmers' markets.
- Evaluate opportunities to operate farmers' markets in areas that are accessible by active transportation means.
- Provide guidelines regarding selling produce at a home or community garden.
- Provide a definition for "produce or agricultural stand" to ensure the sale of small-scale, locally grown produce is not prohibited.
- Clarify how zoning restrictions and licensing fees impact location and occurrence of agricultural stands.

### Grocery stores

Richfield's ordinances allow for smaller grocery stores and convenience stores to operate in a wider variety of zoning districts as opposed to only one or two districts that only allow for larger grocery retail outlets.

Opportunities to increase access to healthy food in retail include:

- Assess if grocery stores are located in areas that are easily accessible, especially for people without a car or who have mobility issues.

- Allow grocery stores to be a principal use rather than as a provisional or conditional use in certain districts.
- Adopt a healthy corner store initiative.

## Restaurants

Richfield provides classifications for restaurants such as full-service, traditional, and fast food/drive-through. These distinctions allow a municipality to better regulate the location and density of different types of restaurants.

### Opportunities to increase access to healthy restaurants include:

- Assess how the location and class of restaurants available in the city may impact health.
- Allow restaurants of a certain class that serves healthier food options to be a principal use in mixed use residential, commercial and other mixed-use zoning districts.
- Include the health impact of different types of food establishments as part of regulatory framework.



## Surplus and Waste Management

### Organic waste and food packaging waste

Organic matter and food packaging waste make up a significant portion of the waste stream being thrown into landfills. Many of these materials ending up in landfills could be reduced, recycled, or composted. Richfield currently does not offer an organics recycling program or regulate food containers or carryout bags. Richfield's organized waste and recycling pickup service, which is coordinated through the city, may provide some opportunities for a more coordinated city-wide organics recycling effort.

### Opportunities for recycling organics and reducing food packaging waste include:

- Incorporate recommendation in comprehensive plan to expand organics recycling for businesses, single and multi-family residential buildings, and city facilities.
- Include strategy for Richfield to meet the 2030 state and county goals for waste reduction in 2018 comprehensive plan update.
- Coordinate with Hennepin County to provide organics recycling incentives and assistance to local businesses
- Ensure government agencies and public settings provide organics recycling.
- Amend contracts with solid waste pickup companies to include organics recycling for single-family residences, multi-family residences, businesses, non-profits, city buildings, schools, and other locations.
- Educate Richfield's residents, businesses, schools, and non-profits on separating organics for pickup.
- Establish drop-off locations for organics in Richfield.
- Evaluate opportunities to regulate take-out containers from food establishments.
- Explore possibility of imposing fee on single-use bags or incentivizing use of reusable bags.

<sup>1</sup> MINN. STAT. §§ 326B.101, 326B.41.

<sup>2</sup> MINN. CONST., art. 13, § 7.

<sup>3</sup> MINN. STAT. §§ 157.16, 28A.04; MINN. R. CH. 4626.

<sup>4</sup> MINN. RULES CH. 4626.

<sup>5</sup> MINN. STAT. § 28A.152 (2015).

<sup>6</sup> MINN. STAT. § 28A.151 (2014).