Meeting Notes

- The meeting will focus on healthy food retail and start with the 2010 Food, Environment, and Economy, Development (FEED DC) Act.
- Ona Balkus from Councilmember Cheh’s office presented the following background on the FEED-DC Act.
  - FEED DC has 3 goals – increase healthy food access, promote green energy, and promote employment and jobs in healthy food retail.
  - The first part of the Act focuses on grocery stores, the 2nd part focuses on other food retail incentives and promotion.
  - Creates a grocery store ambassador position at the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to entice grocers to come to DC.
  - Streamlined and expanded the tax exemption for grocery stores.
  - In FY 2017, $6 million in tax credits is available for supermarkets, $992,000 for building and personal property (i.e. equipment, freezers, coolers, etc.).
- DC Hunger Solutions Director Beverly Wheeler presented on the outcomes in grocery store development in DC since the FEED DC Act went into effect.
  - 2007 started Healthy Corner Stores program as a pilot, 2007 started farmer’s markets, in 2010 wrote a grocery store report (When Healthy Food is Out of Reach).
  - DC Hunger Solutions proposes these solutions:
    - Convene stakeholders
    - Assess the FEED DC Act
    - Explore WIC vendor grocery policy
    - Support other sources of food access, such as innovative grocery delivery
- Presentation from Chad Shusksy, Washington DC Economic Partnership (WDCEP).
  - WDCEP runs programs like participating in the International Council of Shopping Centers where most of the major grocery chains go to find locations for their expansion markets, Site Location Assistance, Monthly speaker series, DC development review: neighborhood profiles.
  - Another grocery store will go in on Rhode Island Avenue shopping center area, potentially replacing the Shoppers that is there right now.
  - In 2000: the city had 34 grocery stores, today in 2016 there are 51.
  - The city is growing from west to east, and centers of population growth tend to be located downtown or adjacent to downtown. 75%+ of population and development growth is also expected to be located within a quarter mile of metro stations.
  - There are currently 6 grocery stores in the development pipeline (i.e. they’ve been approved as part of development and may or may not yet be under construction.)
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- Community members have heard a rumor that the Safeway next to Benning Library is closing due to the shopping center being sold, but unsure about source of rumor or if there’s any truth to it.
- What about smaller grocery stores? Different models may be needed for different communities.
- Where does the identification of an emerging area come from? A need for basic services in the area
- WDCEP would like to hear from people if they know of space for grocery stores
- Harris Teeter uses educational attainment when deciding on grocery store locations, other stores use population and income, and others use parking lot space – models for access can include drive time, walk time, etc.
- Do grocery stores ask WDCEP / does WDCEP talk about incentives? Generally an incentive won’t bring a store to an area, they’ll look for their customer base first
- There is an amendment in the pipeline for FEED DC to add a zip code for the incentive program
- If there is no new development in Ward 7 & 8 up to 20130, what incentive is there for a grocery store to open there?
- Ward 5 has a wonderful range of grocery stores and it would be good to import that model to Wards 7 & 8

- **DMPED’s Grocery Store Ambassador, Marie Whittaker presented on the grocery store supermarket tax credit.**
  - She Works on supermarket tax incentive program and is the main point of contact for the program, new to it in the past 2 weeks
  - Works in business development – suggests the Great Streets program as another option for smaller grocery stores – gives capital improvement grants
  - Goal is to make process easier to get incentives

- **Nola Liu from DC Central Kitchen presented on their Healthy Corner Stores program**
  - Use NEM tool to see if a store is ripe for participating
  - 3 tiered membership for participation in the Healthy Corners Program
    - Classic corner – provide fridge, shelving unit, thermometers, baskets, etc., DCCK serves as a wholesale delivery service and gradually urges store to purchase more and more
    - Promotional corner – provide technical assistance and recipe cards when the store already has fresh produce
    - Pop-up corner with fruit and vegetables in $5 bags, only on certain days at corner stores that tend to have bulletproof glass/be separated from the customer
  - One corner store is partnering with 3 local or regional farmers
  - Freggie bucks – pass out $5 checks for fruit and vegetables at corner stores
  - Corner stores accept SNAP, but not often WIC or Produce Plus
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- Small business incentives may exist for people who want to start a grocery store in community, depending on details of where they’re located or want to locate

**How can we build on what’s working?**

- Cooperative model – finance it and work on capacity building for those who want to organize cooperatively
- DMPED could put out RFA for $5-15 million start up grocery store – this is not about bills and Acts, it is about political will and the city wanting to do these things
- Map out current funding
- USDA has technical resources
- Department of Health hosts a Diabesity committee – Want to hold a training/conference for coops, could bring in national experts – could implement their recommendations if some funding were available
- Funding ongoing sustainability of stores, not just start up funds, such as the Yes Market that closed in Ward 7
- How can we get our local retailers to apply for USDA delivery/online purchase? Can we take action as a community?

**How could FEED DC legislation be improved?**

- Look at local WIC vendor requirements, which are much stricter in DC than the federal requirement
- Weigh in on FEED DC amendment
  - Potentially change zip codes where incentive is offered in high income areas
- Change frequency at which zip codes should be reassessed
- Be accountable to communities of color

**What’s missing?**

- Subsidy for EBT delivery – Some Maryland groceries will drop you off at home if you buy $25 worth of groceries, could we do something like that model here?
- Calling out retailers to participate in USDA online purchase or delivery pilot
- Transportation subsidies – Transport DC program that provides discounted taxi rides has been cut.
- Continue to support Produce Plus and healthy food funding in local budget – on an ongoing basis
- USDA census of healthy food financing programs – possible budget source in future
- Matching local benefit for fruits and vegetables in DC
- Look at Health Impact Zone metric for some neighborhoods in DC
- Ability to get USDA commodities home can be limited (heavy!) – especially for some seniors
What topics should we focus on for the next Working Group Meeting?

- Consumer nutrition education
- Culinary education

Next Steps

- Council Hearing or Roundtable on Feed DC/grocery access
- Reach out to ANC to publicize meetings
- Reach out to local organizations like EastBank DC to help publicize meetings