

CSRA Efforts to Improve Food Access

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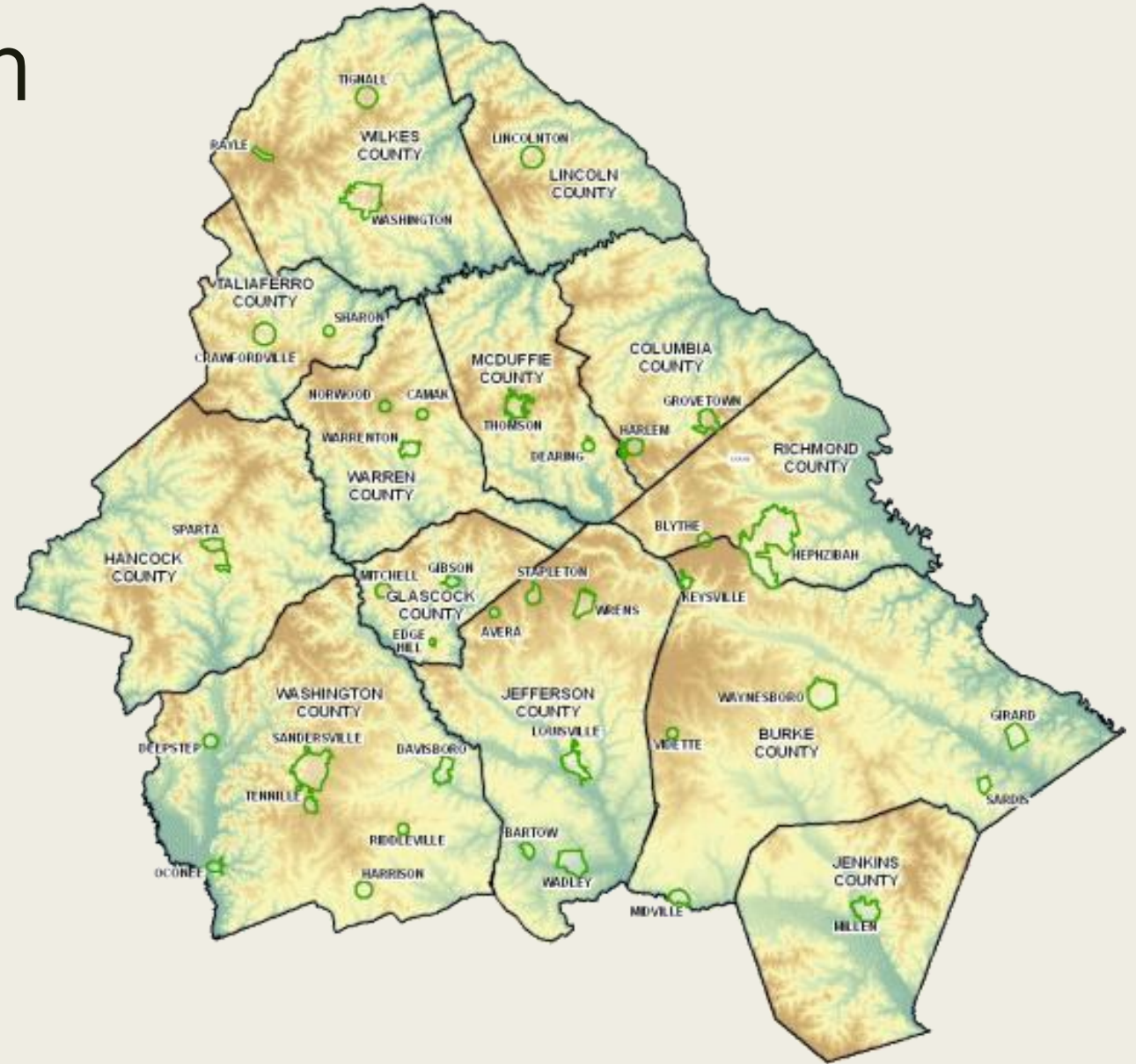
CSRA-RC's Mission

To provide planning, management, and information services to our members in a professional, ethical, cost effective, and efficient manner; and to serve as a forum for addressing local government and its citizens needs

Our Clients

50+ Local Governments

488,000+ Residents





We Represent Urban And Rural Communities

Our Goals for Food Access Efforts

Inform

Utilize our resources and contacts to provide information to the local governments, agencies and the public

Support

Encourage and promote local solutions and programs

Advocate

Utilize our position to elevate issues and programs



Overview of Local Issues and Barriers

- Governments & Service Providers
 - Locating older adults who are not currently being served under a federally or locally funded meal program
 - Very limited financial avenues for local support
 - Unclear or non-existent codes and ordinances
 - Limited local non-profit capacities
 - Inner competition for resources
 - Retaining passionate and dedicated staff with expertise in food systems

- Businesses
 - Aging farmers – average age ranges from 56 to 63 across counties in the region (based on the 2017 Census of Agriculture)
 - Challenges with succession planning and incentives for future farmers
 - Lack of start-up capital for new healthy food ventures
 - Variations across jurisdictions with farmers markets (organization, frequency, marketing, fees, etc.)
 - Lack of resident or farmer participation in farmers markets
 - Inability to locate major retail in smaller communities
 - Business liability concerns related to food donation

- Residents
 - More grandparents are raising grandchildren, many on fixed incomes
 - Increased food insecurity due to COVID 19 isolation
 - Lack of knowledge around available services, existing ordinances and ways to access healthy foods
 - Insufficient internet access in rural areas to research options and/or apply for food benefits
 - Lack of a major grocery store for 20+ miles in some areas
 - Limited options for healthy food beyond grocery stores
 - Lack of financial means to travel and purchase food
 - Challenges with walkability to local stores and markets (safety, lack of sidewalks, narrow road shoulders, terrain, etc.)
 - Lack of fresh, affordable options at small retailers
 - Culturally sensitive options at local establishments



Overview of Local Efforts

Local and Regional Government

- Congregate and home-delivered meals (through CSRA Area Agency on Aging)
- Supporting school gardens and farm-to-school programs
- Community farmers markets with waived fees for farmers and other vendors
- Funding the creation of community gardens and providing space for farmers markets
- Addressing food access in our regional plan as an important regional priority
- Creating a database of local food assets that will be accessible digitally and in print
- Encouraging local policy/ordinance review and adjustment, including mixed-use developments or zones, keeping of urban animals, updating definitions, and more
- Coalition building and participation
- Working with developers to locate stores in underserved areas
- Examining transit, bicycle and pedestrian access from neighborhoods to retail destinations

CSRA Regional Plan 2040

REGIONAL PRIORITY

Increase access to healthy, affordable food.

STRATEGIES

Educate the public and local government officials on what is currently available and address what is missing in our regional food system.

Examine and update local land use polices as they relate to community food systems.

CSRA

Regional Plan 2040



OUR COUNTIES
BURKE
COLUMBIA
GLASCOCK
HANCOCK
JEFFERSON
JENKINS
LINCOLN
MCDUFFIE
AUGUSTA-RICHMOND
TALIAFERRO
WARREN
WASHINGTON
WILKES

Current & Future Activities



Create a regional map of farmers markets, community gardens, school gardens, etc.



Fund at least one community garden with an older adult focus.



Host a multi-day agri-tourism tour and/or workshop.



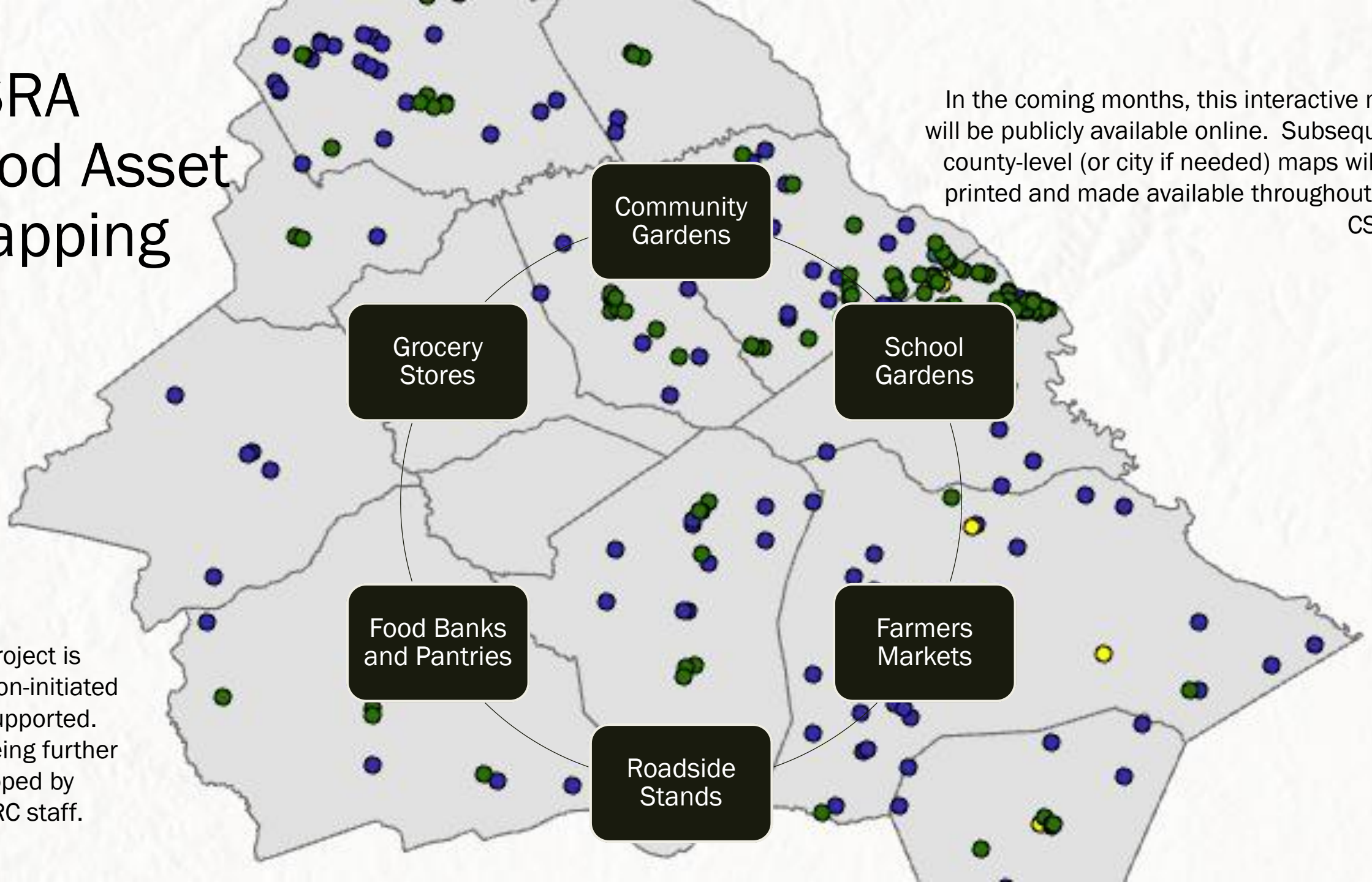
Research opportunities for a regional food policy council.



Participate in the operations of CSRA Community Food Coalition and Senior Hunger Coalition.

CSRA Food Asset Mapping

In the coming months, this interactive map will be publicly available online. Subsequent county-level (or city if needed) maps will be printed and made available throughout the CSRA.



This project is coalition-initiated and supported. It is being further developed by CSRARC staff.

CSRA Community Food Coalition

- The CSRA Community Food Coalition (aka Augusta Food Oasis) was formed in 2015 in partnership with Georgia Organics (GO). It received financial support from GO and included government/non-profit staff as core members.
- Between 2015 and 2019 community members gathered regularly (50-80 ppl on a bi-monthly basis) to develop and support diverse resident-led projects to local food access.
- During this time, GO awarded together \$35K in mini-grants and \$25K educational scholarships. Projects ranged in scope but sought to address:
 - improved physical proximity (more physical points of access to where residents live/work/learn/play)
 - improved affordability (high quality food that is low cost)
 - improved acceptability (meets cultural preferences and lifestyle demands of individual)
 - improved consumer education/know-how: how to handle and prepare healthy foods

- Awardees included:
 - \$2,500, GROW Harrisburg, 'Sibley Soilworks': pilot project to build compost operation in Harrisburg neighborhood, and harvests canal nuisances or hyacinth overgrowth to produce compost for '100's in Harrisburg's Residential Raised Bed' program
 - \$5,000, Burke County HeadStart Pop-Up Market: funds used to coordinate market, procure produce for recipe taste tests, and provide a weekly farmer stipend for travel expense
 - \$1,000, J+L Farms & Stables, 'A Healing Farm': support for pilot farmer training program and therapy for developmentally disabled adults
 - \$1,380, Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise after-school life-skills education program with Ray of Hope Haven for Tweens Adventures: funds used to build small raised bed garden, procure classroom supplies, and farmer-educator stipend
 - \$1,500, FoodCorps of Georgia: provided matching funds to Richmond County Board of Education; \$8,000 stipend to secure first-ever FoodCorps servicemember for 2018-2019 school year
 - \$3,550, Soul + Soil Initiative: assist multi-partner collaborative in leading forums, education workshops and pop-up dinners to activate the South Augusta community around health and agriculture
 - \$2,600, Augusta Locally Grown: planning grant, farm vendor scholarships for 8 BIPOC and/or socially disadvantaged beginning farmers

CSRA Senior Hunger Coalition

- In 2016, a group of stakeholders worked collectively to create a unified regional and statewide plan to address Georgia's food insecurity. As a result, the group decided on five impact/ focus areas: Today's Seniors, Impact of Senior Hunger on Health, Food Access, Food Reclamation and Waste, and Meeting the Needs of the Community.
- Georgia State Plan to address Senior Hunger was published in December 2017.
- A few recommendations from the state plan:
 - Creation of regional hunger coalitions (Twelve total)
 - Department of Human Services Division of Aging Services Senior Hunger Position, Dr. Temitope Walker
 - Provide education and training for agencies, stakeholders and individuals
 - Provide entrepreneurial grants

- The CSRA Senior Hunger coalition is comprised of a diverse group of nonprofit, for profit, government and faith-based groups combating hunger for the 14-county service area.
- The coalition works diligently to identify resources that address hunger, gaps in services, award entrepreneurial mini grants, and share knowledge of local and regional food issues.
- Quarterly meetings take place on the second Tuesday of the month (January, April, July, October)
- The main goal is expanding community partnerships in each county and support member activities, not create new projects every month.

- Senior Hunger Entrepreneurial Mini Grants
 - The purpose is to support creative initiatives at the local and regional level to alleviate issues of senior hunger, food deserts and isolation.

- Application Process and New Guidelines
 - One-time grants designed to support an ongoing project or provide seed money to initiate a new project. The project must be based on one of the following impact areas identified by the state: Food Access, Food Reclamation and Waste, and Meeting the needs of the Community. Seniors served by the mini grant can't be enrolled in CSRA AAA congregate, home delivered or material aid services. Grants can't be used for food supplements for current clients.

- Mini Grant Awardees
 - *State Fiscal Year 2020*
 - Augusta Dream Center - Supported the operating cost of the Dream Pantry for one month. The Dream Pantry provides emergency food assistance and groceries to individuals and families.
 - Salvation Army - Provided two hot meals a day to approximately 480 seniors, ages 62 and older
 - Sylvania Senior Center - Provided a fresh fruit and vegetable box to seniors
 - *State Fiscal Year 2021*
 - Golden Harvest Food Bank - Distributed 306 non-perishable food boxes to seniors



Suggestions for
Continuing and
Expanding Our Efforts

- General
 - Fund programs that incentivize or require collaborative partnerships
 - Review other states' policies and initiatives that have a low rate of food insecurity
 - Provide long-term staff, technology, training and support to assist residents with applying for food benefits electronically
 - Advocate for a streamlined application process for food benefits
- Schools
 - Support and maintain farm-to-school programming
 - Incentivize farmer participation in rural markets
 - Enable and support school gardens that have excess produce to sell it
 - Review and update regulations for utilizing local food producers in schools if needed
 - Work with schools and other institutions to allow farmers markets on their grounds
- Transportation
 - Expand home-delivered meal programs offered through the various agencies on aging
 - Create delivery options for healthy food to older adults
 - Provide transit vouchers for resident “quality of life” trips

- Retail and Industry
 - Work with small, local retailers to add or increase affordable, healthier options
 - Address the creation and utilization of food waste at all levels
 - Standardize a process for retailer food donation, including differentiation of food types and associated regulation

- Planning and Land Use
 - Encourage the use of food access policies and activities in comprehensive plans and other plans
 - Create, strengthen, and support urban agriculture and related policies
 - Assist with creating local food forests at community locations like parks
 - Incentivize or require dedicated space in new housing developments (single and multifamily) and housing authority complexes for community gardens and mobile markets
 - Develop food systems model ordinances through the Dept. of Community Affairs, local/regional governments and other agencies
 - Expedite the permitting process for grocery development in priority areas
 - Provide resident guides that simplify local ordinances and provide clear direction

Contact Information

<https://csrarc.ga.gov/>

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THANK YOU

