

Library and Garden District

Conway, Arkansas

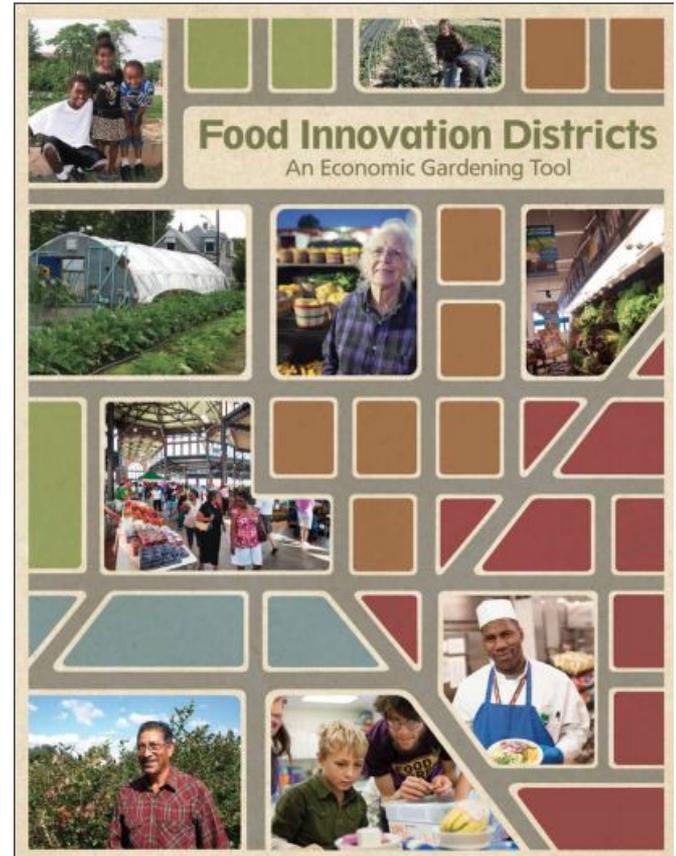


Acknowledgments

Food Innovation Districts: An Economic Gardening Tool was developed as part of a collaborative project by Regional Food Solutions, LLC; the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems; and the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provided funding for the project with a Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG).

<http://www.networksnorthwest.org/planning/planning-policy/food-systems-and-food-innovation-districts/>

“The fundamentals of the examples and tools the guide presents are universal in nature, from common planning and zoning scenarios to well-known types of organizations, entrepreneurs, and policy makers involved.”

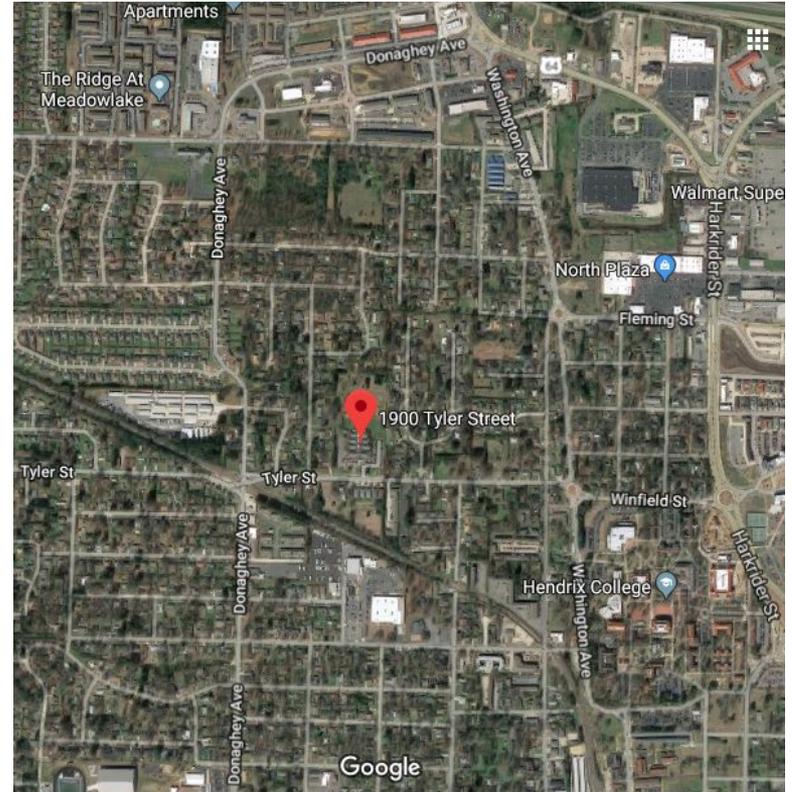


Executive Summary

This is a guide for developing a food innovation district in the neighborhoods and businesses surrounding the Conway Public Library.

Throughout this presentation we will ask questions, present research and offer ideas that will help Conway grow more healthy food markets and food based economies.

The geographic boundaries of the Library and Garden District (LGD) are not yet defined and should be determined by obvious barriers, current districts and community wants and needs.



Geographic Borders of the Library and Garden District

Action Plan

Section I: Learning and Research

Introduction

Who, Where, How

Section 2: Assessment

Community Meetings - Wants and Needs

Conducting the Assessment - Assets and Opportunities

Initiating the District

Section 3: Implementation

Planning and Zoning

Economic Development

Section 4: Tools and Resources

Food Innovation District Development Worksheet

Food Innovation District Overlay – Zoning Guidance

Figure 1: Overview of Food Innovation District Development Process

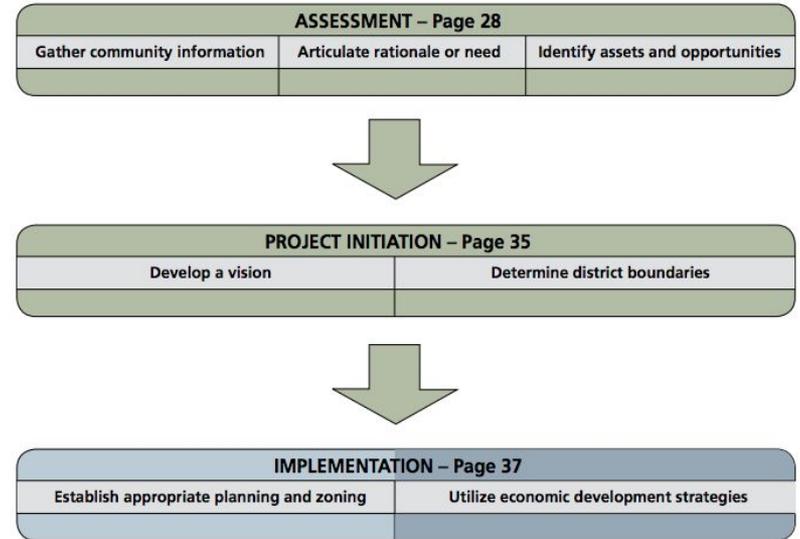
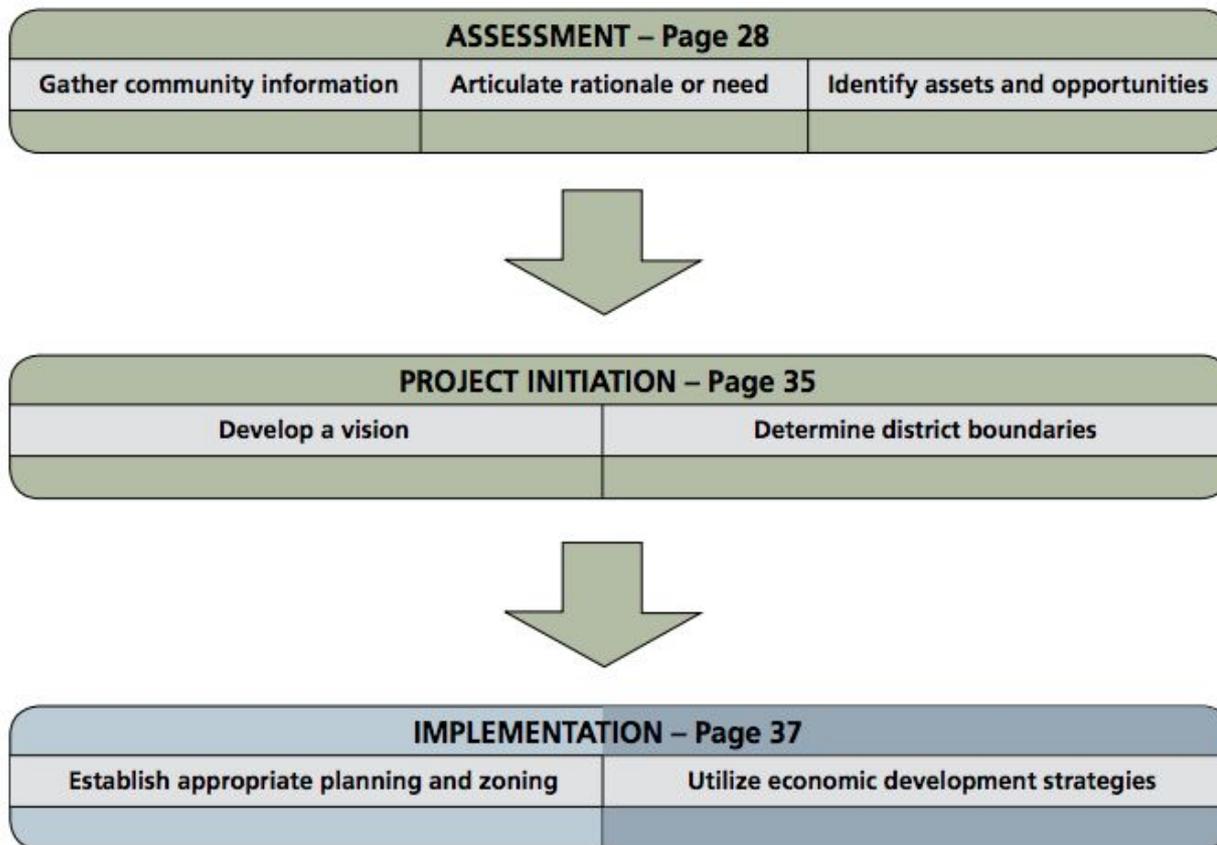


Figure 1: Overview of Food Innovation District Development Process



Section I: Learning

Introduction - The Library

The Conway Public Library is well established and already successful in its mission without the support of an established district.

Since the Conway Public Library is well established and operates on its own the LGD's primary mission would be to promote street and sidewalk improvements, signage, walker and bike friendly lanes, art, landscape gardens and to largely concentrate on a Food Innovation District.



The Conway library serves as the headquarters library for the county system of six libraries as well as the Faulkner County–Van Buren County Regional Library.

The Conway library began as a city library in 1935 relying on the donations of the citizens and civic groups in Conway for its survival. Upon the passage of the one-mill county tax in 1954, the library became a self-supporting county institution.

Our mission is to open access to ideas and communities through shared collections, shared spaces and shared activities.

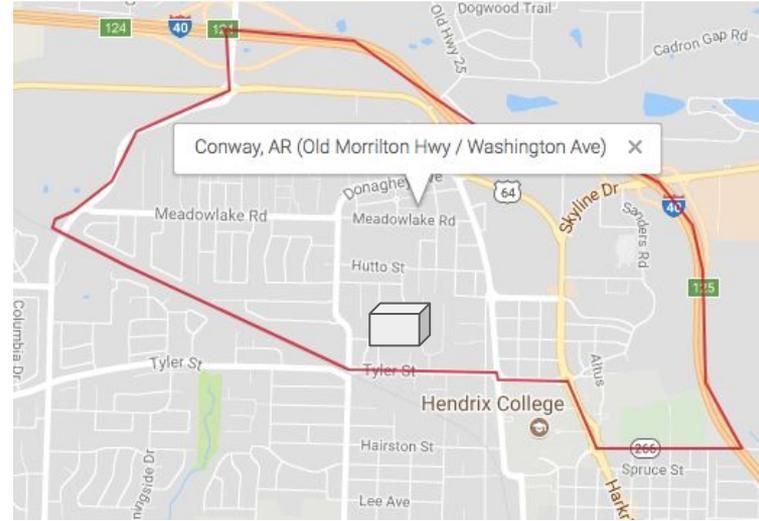
Section I: Learning

Introduction - The People

The residents, students, visitors and business owners concentrated in the area around the Conway Public Library have already established many key elements that support a “Food Innovation District.”

The people also have a diversity of needs and wants that a Food Innovation District can support.

- Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- Quality Food Options
- Vibrant Local Economy



“In the Old Morrilton Hwy / Washington Ave neighborhood, 36.2% of the working population is employed in executive, management, and professional occupations. The second most important occupational group in this neighborhood is sales and service jobs, from major sales accounts, to working in fast food restaurants, with 27.0% of the residents employed. Other residents here are employed in manufacturing and laborer occupations (24.9%), and 11.9% in clerical, assistant, and tech support occupations.” <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/ar/conway/old-morrilton-hwy>

Section I: Learning

Introduction - The “Garden District”

The residents, students, visitors and business owners concentrated in the area around the Conway Public Library have many fast food and chain restaurants in the periphery of walking distance. There are a few options popping up within walking distance to purchase naturally grown food and also to be involved in the growing process.

- Faulkner County Urban Farming Project
- New South CSA Pickup (Heifer)
- Bell Urban Farm
- Downtown Farmers Market
- Farm to School Processing Kitchen

Food innovation districts support the resource- and idea-sharing that occurs when food entrepreneurs and related initiatives work in close proximity.

Activities in these districts include:

- Regional food hubs
- Business incubators
- Farm-to-table retail and restaurants
- Farmers markets
- Food festivals and other events
- Nutrition and cooking education
- Healthy food assistance
- Urban agriculture production
- Community kitchens
- Public spaces, neighborhood uses

Section 1: Learning

FOOD

INNOVATION

DISTRICT

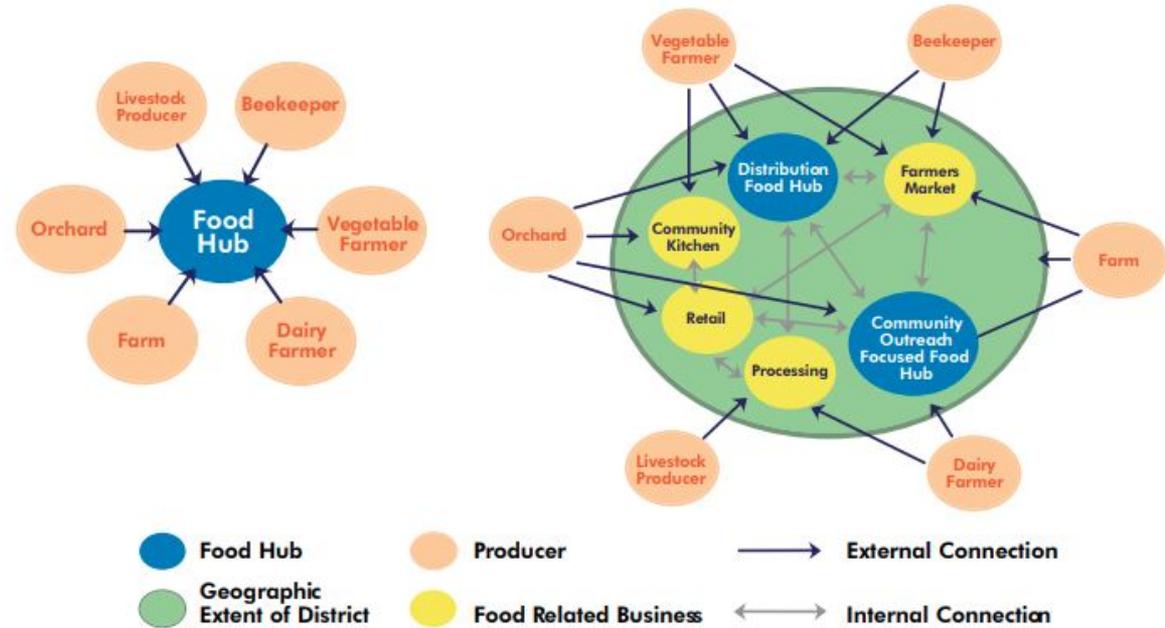


Figure 2: Food Hubs and Food Innovation Districts

Food hubs and food innovation districts might both aggregate and distribute products from nearby farms. Districts, however, are defined by a specific spatial area and include networked businesses of different types. Districts are likely to form around food hubs. Or, where food hubs do not exist, the community of food entrepreneurs and healthy living initiatives that cluster in districts will likely incubate or attract food hubs.

Faulkner County Urban Farm Project



The Urban Farm Project began in the spring of 2010 as a gardening competition between Conway's three colleges. As students and professors turned a grassy yard into a blossoming vegetable garden, it became clear that this was no competition, but a collaborative effort towards a greater good. Through natural, local food production, this garden is an effort to foster sustainability and a sense of community in Conway.



The Faulkner County Urban Farm Project is located behind the Faulkner County Library at 1900 Tyler Street in Conway, Arkansas.

New South CSA Pickup

Supported by Heifer International
Community Supported Agriculture

www.newsouthcoop.com



Hosted by The Locals Food Hub >>>

www.thelocals.be

Located @ Bell Urban Farm
2001 Tyler St. www.bellurbanfarm.com



Bell Urban Farm



[Home](#) [About](#) [Events](#) [Store](#) [Contact](#)

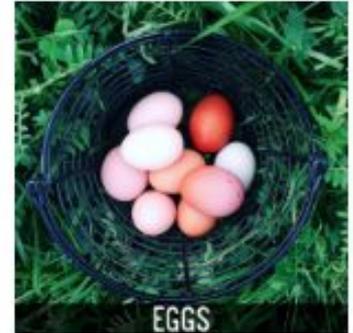
Mission:

1. Produce quality, healthy and nutritious food.
2. Be a positive influence on the local food system.
3. Create community through growing and sharing food.

#BUF

#foodvibrations

The logo for the farm is a "vibrating" bell. By growing and sharing healthy food, we like to think of our farm as a central location that is sending out food vibrations into the surrounding community.



Conway Farm to School

Across the country, an increasing number of schools and districts have begun to source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition. This nationwide movement is designed to enrich children's bodies and minds while supporting local economies is often referred to as "farm to school."

The objectives of the Conway Public Schools Food Service Department are to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias and improve student nutrition, while providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities...and we want to support our local and regional farmers.

The key is to make these fresh options available and to get kids to try new things. Farm to School programs link school students and farmers in a way that improves foods offered in schools, educates kids about healthy eating and local foods, and creates income opportunities for farmers supplying to schools.

A Farm-to-School Program can be an important catalyst for change in our efforts to combat childhood obesity by helping children learn more healthful eating habits. It has also been proven to be a successful way to introduce kids and teens to a variety of produce that they otherwise might not have the opportunity to sample.

<http://conwayfoodservice.com/?page=farmtoschool>



Faulkner County Seed Library

Faulkner County Seed Library

The very first in Arkansas!

What IS a seed library?

A place where seeds are stored and participants are encouraged to check out seeds, grow them out, save and donate a portion of the seeds back to the library!



Why is a seed library important?

- Preserve heirloom seeds
- Maintain biodiversity
- Grow seeds suited to our climate

What do we hope to accomplish?

- Preserve the natural biodiversity of seeds found in Arkansas.
- Empower Arkansans to grow their own foods and participate in seed saving

What can YOU do to help?

- Donate materials!
- Volunteer to maintain the library!
- Participate!



Like us on facebook at Faulkner County Seed Library 

Faulkner County Library, 1900 Tyler Street Conway AR, www.fcl.org

The Faulkner County Seed Library began in the spring of 2013 and is the first public no-cost seed library in Arkansas.

The FC Seed Swap held in the late winter annually since 2008

The Faulkner County Seed Library is located inside the Conway Public Library at 1900 Tyler Street.



“Backyard Gourmet” and “FC Urban Farm Fest”



<< Backyard Gourmet is held every spring and organized by the Friends of the Library and the FCUFP as celebration of food, cuisine and culture.

The Faulkner County Urban Farm Festival is held annually in the fall to celebrate the harvest and local culture. >>



Hendrix College

“Hendrix College is located in Conway, Arkansas, a city of 60,000 people and the second-fastest growing city in Arkansas. Despite its growth, the city still maintains a small-town feel and provides for a very safe environment. Conway is a mix of the progressive and the picturesque. The traditional downtown shopping district is a 10-minute walk from campus. Just to the north and west of campus you will find opportunities for great outdoor adventures in the Ozark Mountains, and just to the south of Hendrix you will find the cultural amenities of Little Rock, Arkansas' capital city.” <https://www.hendrix.edu/>



Section I: Research

Further investigate the food systems that currently support the area.

What is the socio-economic impact of the current food system and how can it be improved?

What health systems do the current food businesses support in the LGD?

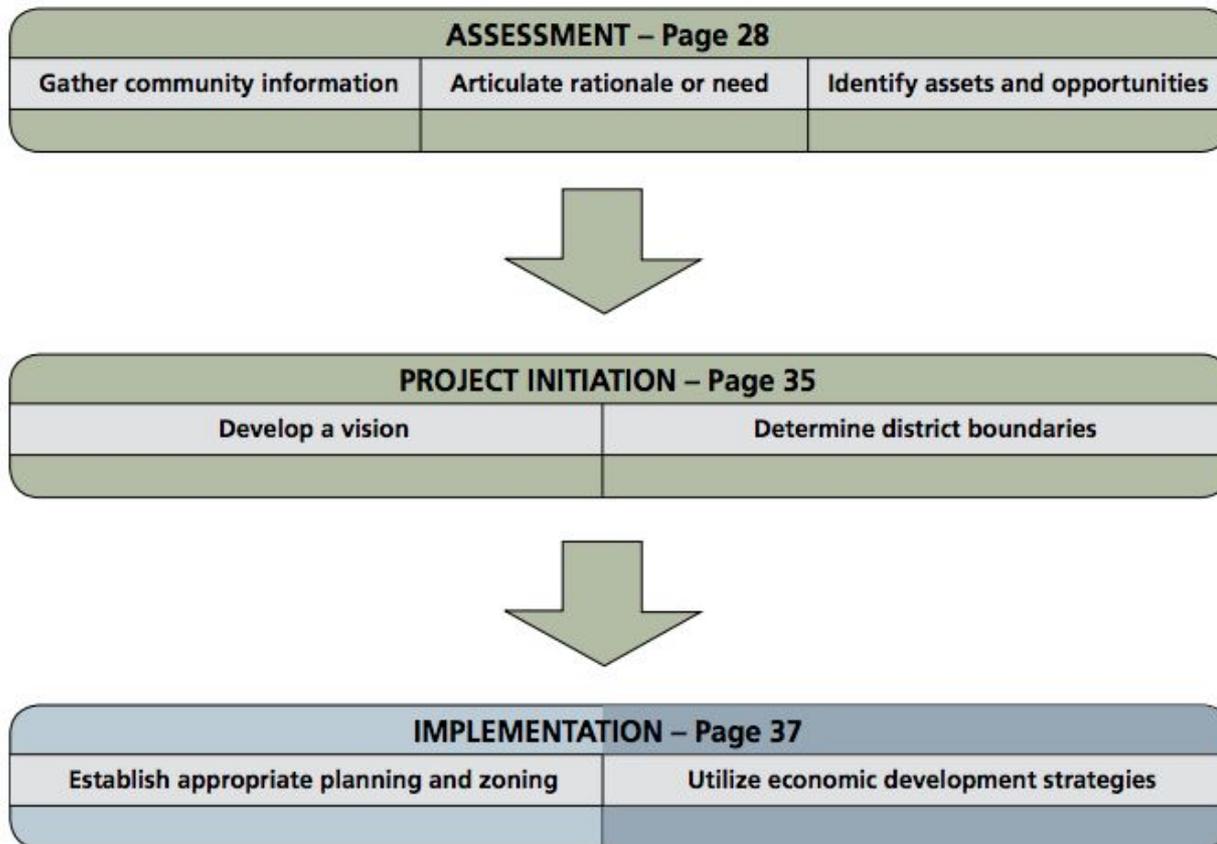
Business Acceleration Zones

Food innovation districts operate a lot like business acceleration zones, which are common for sectors like technology or art-and-design.

Boston's new Innovation District on the city's waterfront, for example, has become a magnet for high-tech companies in part by making sure creative entrepreneurs have space to meet, work together, and start small.

Similarly, Detroit Eastern Market is a food innovation district, which managers describe as a "food-centric creative place." Entrepreneurs enjoy affordable startup space amid a collaborative community of vendors, independent distributors, community activity, and retail and wholesale customers.

Figure 1: Overview of Food Innovation District Development Process



Section 2: Community Meetings

What are the wants and needs of the community within the proposed Library and Garden District?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Section 2: Assessment

STRENGTHS:

1. 10 years of community development around food based events.
2. Affordable housing and rent.
3. Undeveloped lots that can be used for farming.
4. Diverse demographics.
5. Educated population.

WEAKNESSES:

1. Lack of sidewalks and bike lanes.
2. Has not been a focus of development the way Downtown and Historic Districts have.
3. Zoning is majority residential and office. (Single Family, Multi-Family, Mixed Use, Commercial)
4. Food Desert
- 5.

What is the ability that this area can establish itself as a Food Innovation District?

Section 2: Project Initiation

DEVELOP A VISION:

Ward 2 representatives as sponsors.

- Wes Pruitt
- Shelly Mehl

DETERMINE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES:

<http://cityofconway.org/media/government/planning-development/GIS/ComprehensivePlan.pdf>

Signage and Identification

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-

Section 3: Implementation

PLANNING:

ZONING:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: