



Community Action Plan for Helena-West Helena, Arkansas

LOCAL FOODS, LOCAL PLACES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

November 2018



For more information about Local Foods, Local Places visit:

<https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/local-foods-local-places>

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Cover photo credit: EPR-PC. Top: Inside the Bus Shed building. Bottom left: Helena Community Garden sign. Bottom right: Main Street.

COMMUNITY STORY

Helena-West Helena, Arkansas is a key economic and cultural center of the Arkansas Delta region. It is advantageously situated at the junction of major highway and water transportation routes, which has supported its historic role as a hub for the region's agricultural economy and culture. The city was created in 2006 through a merger between the cities of Helena and West Helena. The consolidated city has a population of about 12,000 people. This action plan benefits the entire city, but its geographic focus is on Helena, which is the eastern half of the city that abuts the Mississippi River.

Helena has an abundance of unique assets upon which it is working to build an economic revival. Helena sits just south of where Crowley's Ridge meets the Mississippi River. The ridge gives Helena-West Helena a unique topography for the Delta region. The city has many hills and even borders on a national forest.

Helena is also known for its music and Civil War history. King Biscuit Time, the longest continuously running radio show in the United States, has been broadcast daily from the city since 1941. Several famous musicians are associated with the city, including Sonny Boy Williamson, Roosevelt Sykes, and Conway Twitty. Many other famous blues musicians performed in the city's music halls. This musical history has been celebrated each fall since 1986 during the King Biscuit Blues Festival.¹

Helena also has a unique Civil War history. The city was largely occupied by Union forces throughout the war due to its strategic position and importance on the river. Helena was also a place where many former slaves sought the protection of Union forces and enlisted in the U.S. Army. One of the earliest "U.S. Colored Troop" regiments formed at Helena in 1863, and this troop fought for the freedom of slaves across Arkansas. As a result, Helena was among the first places in the southern states where slaves became free.²

Surrounded by the vestiges of this history, Helena in 2018 is working to chart a new course around some long-standing economic and health challenges. The median income in Helena-West Helena is about 50 percent of



Figure 1 – Among Helena's many assets is a music history that the city celebrates with several murals in its downtown area. Image credit: EPR



Figure 2 – Downtown Helena is compact and walkable, but many of its buildings and storefronts are in need of new retail, commercial, and residential uses. Image credit: EPR

¹ Personal communication/visit to the Delta Cultural Center. <http://www.deltaculturalcenter.com/>. Visited September 6, 2018.

² Civil War Roundtable of Arkansas. "Helena, Arkansas War Sites driving Tour." <http://www.civilwarbuff.org/Places/Phillips/helena.html> Accessed October 25, 2018.

the state median income, and about 43 percent of residents are below the poverty level.³ Helena-West Helena is also grappling with several health challenges. The city's obesity rate is about 45 percent, and the Helena side of the city is about 7 miles from the nearest supermarket offering a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.⁴

Helena-West Helena is working to tackle these challenges by increasing opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy foods. The city's Advertising and Promotion Commission used local hotel, motel, and restaurant tax revenues to build a shared-use path on Biscoe Street. The Walton Family Foundation is supporting active living in Helena-West Helena by providing bicycles for local children and bicycle repair stations at various locations in the city and by funding an extension of the Big River Trail into downtown Helena-West Helena. The trail will connect the city to Memphis along the Mississippi River levee system.⁵

Meanwhile, the Helena-West Helena/Phillips County Port Authority is playing a leading role in increasing access to healthy foods, especially for residents of the Helena side of the city. The Authority owns an old bus shed where the school district's buses were once serviced. The Authority envisions repurposing the bus shed into a multi-use facility with space for a farmers market, business incubation, community gardens, and several other uses that will support the health of local residents. The Authority views this investment as a key component of the city's economic development strategy. In its view, investing in the health of residents and the quality of the city's neighborhoods and public spaces will attract business and support economic development.

These efforts received a further boost in 2018 as Phillips County was selected to receive assistance from the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's High Obesity program. The program provides technical and implementation support to counties



Figure 3 – Outside view of the bus shed. Image credit: EPA



Figure 4 – The old bus shed at the intersection of Biscoe and Arkansas has an open floor plan and large windows that bring in plenty of natural light. The Port Authority owns the building and would like to repurpose it as a community facility and events center where people can access healthy local foods. Image credit: EPR

³ U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey (ACS) and Puerto Rico Community Survey (PRCS), 5-Year Estimates. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/helenawesthelenacityarkansas>

⁴ CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2013, ACS 2009-2013. USDA ERS Food Access, Census County Business Patterns, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Reinvestment Fund Study of Low Supermarket Access. <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/access-101/research-your-community>. Accessed October 25, 2018.

⁵ Personal communications/visit of Helena with the Local Foods, Local Places Helena steering committee. Visited September 6, 2018.

with an obesity rate exceeding 40 percent to make changes to the built environment that increase access to healthy foods and provide safe places for physical activity.

In 2017, the Helena-West Helena/Phillips County Port Authority requested assistance through the Local Foods, Local Places program to develop an action plan that supports and builds upon these efforts. The community's interest in growing its local food system and creating a healthy, walkable, economically vibrant community is well-aligned with the goals of the Local Foods, Local Places program, which are:

- More economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses.
- Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- Revitalized downtowns, main streets, and neighborhoods.

The Local Foods, Local Places program is supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Delta Regional Authority. Helena-West Helena was one of 16 communities in the United States that participated in the program in 2018.

The Port Authority took the lead on establishing a Local Foods, Local Places steering committee in Helena-West Helena, which supported preparation for the technical assistance, and is comprised of a variety of community partners (see Figure 5). They were supported by a technical assistance team comprised of consultants and multiple federal and state agency partners (Figure 6).

The Steering Committee decided to use the technical assistance to plan for:

- Viable and community-supported uses for the old bus shed, with an emphasis on those that provide access to health foods for residents, provide an events venue, and support entrepreneurship.
- Near-term and feasible investments in downtown Helena that improve quality of place and life.
- Better food access for all people in the city, especially those lacking transportation options.
- More production of local foods in the city and region.

Local Foods, Local Places Steering Committee

- **John Edwards**, Helena-West Helena/Phillips County Port Authority
- **Alana Shannon Pinchback**, Visit Helena
- **Zipporah Mondy**, KJIW FM Radio
- **Harrison Pittman**, The National Agricultural Law Center
- **Julie Goings**, Main Street Helena/County Agent Cooperative Extension Service
- **Jennifer Conner**, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension
- **Darby Waites-Treat**, Arkansas Community Foundation

Figure 5 – Steering Committee Members

Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Team

- **Michelle Madeley**, EPA
- **Tressa Tillman**, EPA Region 6
- **Américo Vega-Labiosa**, USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- **Gregory Dale**, USDA Rural Development
- **Aury Kangelos**, Delta Regional Authority
- **Jason Espie**, EPR (consultant)
- **Mike Callahan**, EPR (consultant)

Figure 6 – Technical Assistance Team

The remainder of this report and appendices document the engagement process, the workshop activities, and most importantly, the outcome: a community action plan to achieve Helena-West Helena’s goals.

ENGAGEMENT

The technical assistance engagement process for Local Foods, Local Places has three phases, illustrated in Figure 7 below. The plan phase consists of three preparation conference calls with the steering committee and technical assistance team to clarify goals and arrange workshop logistics. The convene phase includes the effort’s capstone event—a two-day workshop in the community. The act phase includes three follow up conference calls to finalize a community action plan and strategize on how to maintain momentum generated during the workshop.

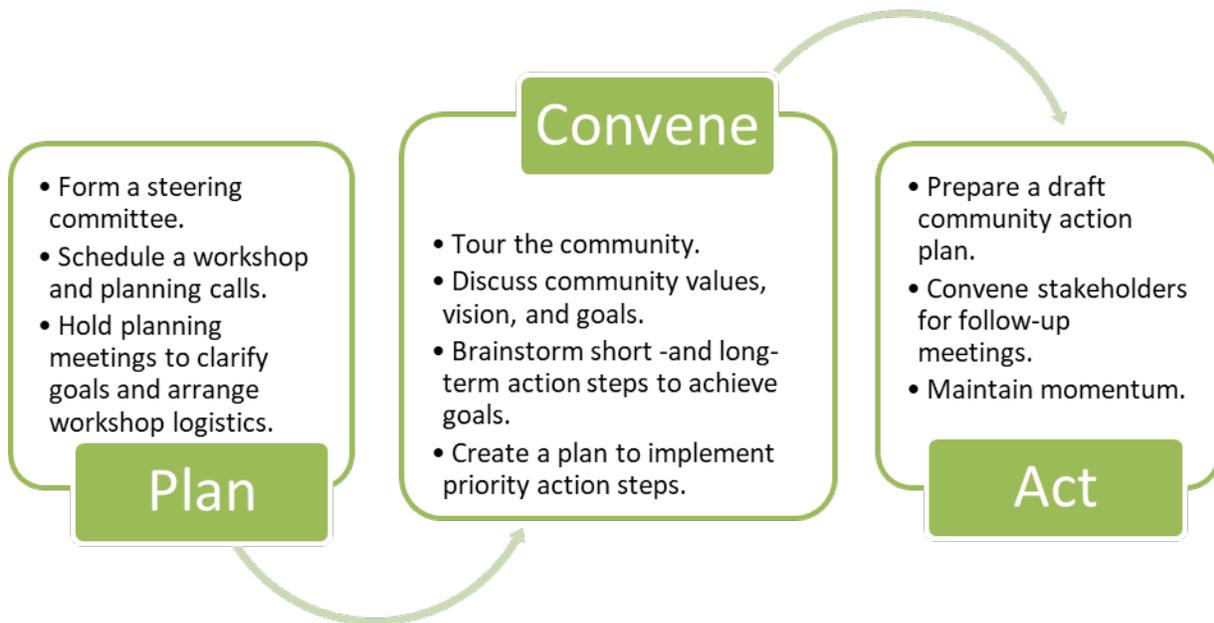


Figure 7 - Local Foods, Local Places Technical Assistance Process Diagram

The community workshop was held on September 6 and 7, 2018. The first day featured a community meeting at the American Legion Post on Porter Street. The second day included a pair of technical work sessions, also at the American Legion Post. The first session focused on strategies for achieving the community’s goals, while the afternoon focused on actions needed to implement the highest priority strategies.

Workshop sign-in sheets are provided in **Appendix A**, a workshop photo album is provided in **Appendix B**, a data profile in **Appendix C**, funding resources in **Appendix D**, and general references in **Appendix E**.

COMMUNITY TOUR

The workshop began with lunch at the Southbound Tavern in downtown Helena, followed by a walking tour of the downtown area and a driving tour of outlying neighborhoods and points of interest. John Edwards, who

serves as economic development director for the Port Authority, led the tour for the steering committee and technical assistance team. The tour showcased several assets on Cherry Street downtown.

The Kipp Delta College Prep High School is a charter school in the heart of downtown that brings life and vitality to the streets. Adjacent to Kipp is the Delta Cultural Center, which tells the story of the music, culture, art, and history of the Delta region. The state's Department of Arkansas Heritage owns and operates the museum. Across from the Delta Cultural Center is a large green open space with a stage that hosts the annual King Biscuit Blues Festival. The festival celebrates the unique musical heritage of the region and draws tens of thousands of visitors from across the United States and world each fall. It is the oldest blues festival in the United States.

The tour also highlighted some of the infrastructure challenges facing the city. Many of the buildings downtown are vacant and need roof repairs to prevent water damage and further deterioration. Several buildings have collapsed, leaving many streets downtown with widespread vacant lots. Main Street Helena, an organization focused on preserving the historic fabric of downtown and promoting economic development, provides financial support to property owners that want to fix broken windows or restore facades. Their efforts have supported several successful building renovations and new businesses.

Next the tour showcased some of the significant historic sites surrounding the downtown area, such as Battery C Historical Park. This park, owned by the Delta Cultural Center, interprets the Civil War history of the city from one of four batteries constructed in 1862 by the Union army. The Civil War and music history of the area are important assets that have attracted tourists for many decades.

The Freeman Playground was another important tour stop just outside of the downtown area. The new park is named after Freeman Ellis Staley, who passed away in 2016 at the age of 10 months old from heart and lung complications. The park is fully accessible to all children and features swings, a merry-go-round, and free-standing playground equipment. Nearly the entire \$250,000 cost for the park was raised through donations,



Figure 8 - The Community Tour emphasized several of Helena's downtown assets, such as the Delta Cultural Center and the site of the King Biscuit Blues Festival. Image credit: EPR



Figure 9 - Downtown Helena and the Mississippi River are visible from Battery C, which was built by the Union Army in 1862 on the bluffs west of downtown. Image credit: EPR



Figure 10 - The Freeman Playground was funded almost entirely from private donations. Image credit: EPR

which makes it an important story about what is possible when people come together.

The tour concluded with a detailed inspection of the old bus shed, where the Port Authority envisions an indoor farmers market and events center. The bus shed was the primary focus of the workshop, and the tour provided an opportunity to see conditions around and inside of the structure. The property is well maintained, with no obvious roof or structural damage. According to the Port Authority, the primary environmental issue that would require attention is the presence of lead paint. Because it was a bus repair facility, the building has a long central aisle that allowed buses to drive in one side and out the other. The shed also has large windows on the east side, which could be opened during events or on market days.



Figure 11 -- The tour included many stops that told the history and unique stories of Helena and its residents. Shown is the gravesite of Dr. Emile Overtone Moore, a doctor who had a rival with another doctor and was murdered, with his faithful dog continuing to wait for him. Image Credit: EPR

VISION AND VALUES

The community meeting featured two activities designed to quickly reveal the core values of residents and community leaders. Understanding these qualities of the community is an important first step in the Local Foods, Local Places program and informs the action plan presented later in this report. The first activity, called “This I Believe,” entailed community members standing and completing the sentence, “I believe our community is....” A summary of responses is provided in Figure 12.

Next community members imagined it was five years later and something good had happened at the old bus shed to revitalize the downtown or to improve access to healthy foods. They developed a future news story and headline to capture the good thing that happened. Among the headlines shared at the meeting are the following:

- *Cherry Street Helena Returns to its Heyday*
- *Chronic Disease and Obesity Rates in Phillips County are Down*
- *Downtown Helena is Revitalized with Restaurants, Hotels, and Entertainment*
- *Revitalized Bus Shed Now Home to 7-day Farmers Market with Food from Local Farmers*

Vision and Values

I believe our community is...

- Resilient and capable.
- Progressing.
- Full of potential.
- Beautiful and endearing.
- Inviting and hospitable.
- Giving-minded.
- Willing to dream.
- Strategically positioned.
- Challenged, but it never gives up.
- Unique.
- Valuable.
- Rich in heritage and culture.
- The home of lots of great farmers.
- Filled with untapped potential and assets.
- Forgiving.

Figure 12 – Community members shared several of the attributes of Helena that they most appreciate and value during an activity called “This I Believe.”

- *Helena Food Hub Saves City*
- *Vacant Community Lots Now Feed the Entire Community*
- *Helena Transforms Downtown Food Scene*
- *Safe Routes to School Project Complete; 100% Occupancy Downtown*
- *Access to Healthier Food Increases Life Expectancy*
- *20th New Food Business Graduates from the Old Bus Shed Market*
- *Downtown Revitalization Complete*
- *Healthy in Helena; Old Eyesore Became a New Beginning*

OPPORTUNITIES DOWNTOWN

Downtown revitalization was also a major focus of the workshop. The city, Main Street Helena, and the Port Authority see potential in the historic fabric of the downtown area. But many parts of the downtown are blighted, and the Port Authority shared an anecdote about a prospective employer that once passed the community over after seeing the quality of the downtown.

Conditions have improved due to the efforts of Main Street Helena and its partners, which have made improvements to the buildings and streets. But work remains, and the purpose of one of the small groups discussion questions was to elevate near-term steps that residents, the city, Main Street Helena, the Port Authority, and other partners could take to improve conditions and the perception of downtown. A summary of those opportunities identified is included in the adjacent figure. Additional details are provided in Appendix A.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE OLD BUS SHED

The exercises at the workshop were designed to elicit ideas about how the old bus shed could be repurposed to meet community needs. Some of the ideas generated by the community and considered during a subsequent design activity include the following:

Downtown Revitalization Opportunities

- Façade improvement program
- Streetscape improvements
- Bicycle trail along the levy with connection to downtown
- Development incentive program
- Road diet on Biscoe (4 to 3 lanes) with roundabout
- Grow an Extra Row program
- USDA Rural Facilities grant for bus shed renovation
- Farm to restaurant program
- Food program at Kipp School that maintains the community garden
- A small-scale urban farm on the bus shed site
- Arts district
- Cleaning up and improving downtown lighting

Figure 13 -- Downtown revitalization opportunities identified during workshop exercises and discussion.

Programing or future uses

- Artist residency program
- Arts and crafts area for making and selling crafts
- Bike hostel – swing space / overnight
- Child care center
- Coffee shop with different amenities than downtown
- Community garden, plots (relocate existing)
- Consignment bakery
- Consignment sales of food, arts, and crafts
- Consignment shop
- Craft market
- Double food bucks (Supplemental Nutrition Access Program)
- Farmers market and craft sales
- Food pantry
- Helena gift shop with Helena Cultural Center
- Meal service for hungry
- Retail space

Physical features or design elements (to support uses and programming)

- Administrative office space
- Air conditioning and heat
- Bathrooms and electricity
- Bike friendly stopping place with repair and parking
- Children's area (childcare)
- Classroom area (training)
- Designated entry and exit (circulation)
- Dog park (40'x40')
- Eating areas for food trucks, picnic tables
- Efficiency apartment for a caretaker
- Efficiency apartments/tiny houses
- Extended shared-use path

- Freezer section, cold storage
- Flexible incubator and retail space
- Open roll up doors
- Kitchen (cooking classes, culinary program, for rent)
- Meeting space
- Outdoor deck
- Parking, on site
- Patio space for café, dining, or retail
- Planters, landscaping
- Restrooms
- Shaded gathering areas
- Shipping containers
- Stage
- Walking paths
- WiFi

Questions that need answering

- Can there be kitchen space?
- Highway 49 and Arkansas Department of Transportation?
- How does the existing bike plan fit in?
- Is Supplemental Nutrition Access Program accepted and affordable?
- What about the existing community garden?
- Regarding new consignment or retail, downtown merchants exist so how to include them?
- Restaurant on a short-term or longer lease?
- What does the food pantry look like with other food pantries?
- What is the process for determining use?
- Who will manage the facility?
- Who will run the hostel?
- Zoning questions - what is allowable, permitted here by right, or by special use?

A small group design exercise was held on day two. After identifying programmatic needs, design features, and elements shown above, three groups worked to sketch these ideas on paper. Figure 14 shows a mock up that combined all three workshop groups into one design. Figure 15 shows a somewhat simplified version following feedback from the first post-workshop call of October 11, 2018.

HELENA/WEST HELENA COMMUNITY CATALYST SITE - OPTION 1
"The Shed" "The Front Porch" "Helena Health Shed" "Helena Food Shed"



Existing Site



Existing Building



One example of a great porch (A) concept with garage door openings, another concept could be removing all walls, and inserting wooden posts to create a large front porch.



Outdoor gym equipment (N)



Pedestrian 'refuge' crossing (K)



Shading for outdoor flex space (P)



Colored pavement calms traffic while allowing for turns (S)

BUILDING ELEMENTS:

- A. The "Great Porch" – Flexible covered outdoor event space with bike parking and repair stations, and a space for market stalls or other flexible uses. The concept is to remove the walls from the front portion of the building but leave the roof and add either garage doors or wooden posts to hold it up.
- B. Lobby into multipurpose space for Food Hub and Business Incubator training, or events.
- C. Local foods restaurant or cafe
- D. Second multipurpose meeting or indoor event space. Could become kitchen or cold storage.
- E. Miscellaneous support spaces – bathrooms, showers and offices
- F. Covered side porch and patio for restaurant/ cafe
- G. Outdoor patio for meeting space

SITE ELEMENTS:

- H. Parking for 10 vehicles
- I. Entrance court with adjacent loading area
- J. Pull ins for food trucks and temporary drop off
- K. Refuge island for traffic calming with flashing beacon for pedestrian crossing
- L. Regional shared bike/pedestrian trail to downtown
- M. Fitness trail around the site
- N. Fitness park with 8 fitness stations
- O. Flexible market stalls for overflow of vendors from Great Porch on market days.
- P. Children and teen play area for structured outdoor games, triangles are removable shade awnings.
- Q. Community gardens, water feature, and shed
- R. Caretaker's cottage "tiny house" with dedicated caretaker parking and personal entrance
- S. Landscaping and entrance sign in existing traffic island, which also has a pedestrian beacon. Colored pavement in the slip will calm/slow traffic.



Prepared by EPR, PC for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Local Foods Local Places Workshop in Helena Arkansas, September 2018.

Figure 14– Site Design Option 1 - produced based on combination of all three working groups design input.

HELENA/WEST HELENA COMMUNITY CATALYST SITE - OPTION 2
"The Shed" "The Front Porch" "Helena Health Shed" "Helena Food Shed"



BUILDING ELEMENTS:

- A. Main hallway, open for flexible use, temporary markets, exhibits, stalls, teaching, etc. Bus shed doors on north and south ends are preserved for large vehicle access to the main hall as needed. The large interior is kept open.
- B. The "Great 'Back' Porch" – A flexible covered outdoor event space built onto the existing main hall to expand its capacity. The porch would be covered, and garage doors installed to close/secure the space when not in use.
- C. Local foods restaurant or cafe.
- D. Second multipurpose meeting or indoor event space. Could become kitchen or cold storage.
- E. Miscellaneous support spaces – bathrooms, showers and offices.
- F. Side patios with shading, restaurant/cafe/shop. Stage area potential in back.
- G. Caretaker's apartment on site.

SITE ELEMENTS:

- H. Parking areas for 23 vehicles on-site
- I. Flexible market/loading area for Great Porch. Can be used for parking during non-market times.
- J. Outdoor patio/meeting space around flex stalls
- K. Refuge island for traffic calming with flashing beacon for pedestrian crossing
- L. Regional shared bike/pedestrian trail to downtown
- M. Fitness trail around the site
- N. Flexible market stalls for overflow of vendors from Great Porch on market days. Converted shipping containers are one possibility (see example images)
- O. Flex green space for passive uses, picnicking, gathering or music events if a stage is built. Can be developed in future if desired.
- P. Landscaping and entrance sign in existing traffic island, which also has a pedestrian beacon. Colored pavement in the slip will calm/slow traffic.
- Q. Rain garden with underground catchment
- R. Protected green/play area, shaded, possibly fitness stations.

Figure 11 – Site Design Option 2 - produced based on steering committee feedback to streamline Option 1 by leaving more flexibility for future options and maintaining the central bus bay area of building.

ACTION PLAN

The technical assistance helped the community coalesce around four high priority goals, which are listed below. Each goal includes a set of supporting actions, which are concrete steps the Port Authority, the city, and their partners can take in the near term to advance towards the goals.

The goals and supporting actions for the Helena-West Helena Community Action Plan are listed below. The tables that follow provide additional detail for each action.

- **Goal 1 – Local Market:** Plan and launch a successful market and events center that improves and contributes to making Helena an attractive place to live and invest.
 - *Action 1.1* – Clean the bus shed lot and adjacent lots, landscape the street frontage incorporating edible landscaping, paint the bus shed building, and hold a community-wide clean-up day for preliminary site beautification.
 - *Action 1.2* – Conduct preliminary repairs of the bus shed building and perform any relevant studies.
 - *Action 1.3* – Start a local fund with Arkansas Community Foundation to benefit the bus shed project.
 - *Action 1.4* – Bring together all key stakeholders around plans for the old bus shed to define success for the project.
 - *Action 1.5* – Set up a pop-up market with local food and craft vendors to test concepts and interest in a market and to activate the site.
- **Goal 2 – Placemaking:** Attract economic development by investing in feasible and near-term projects that improve the quality of place and life in downtown Helena.
 - *Action 2.1* – Install public art or signage that informs people that something new and good is coming to the bus shed site.
 - *Action 2.2* – Share the vision for the bus shed with the community to obtain their input and hold a naming competition to generate excitement. Identify a name and brand for the building; consider calling it “The Shed.”
 - *Action 2.3* – Install a bike rack and repair station, outdoor exercise equipment, and a walking path at the bus shed.
 - *Action 2.4* – Install temporary lights in the bus shed and other vacant downtown buildings to inspire people about what’s possible.
 - *Action 2.5* – Create a space for food truck rodeos and other fun events on the site, such as large games (Jenga), bike rodeos, space for outdoor movies, and other community events.
- **Goal 3 – Food access:** Improve food access for all people in the city by increasing use of SNAP for the farmers market, improving transportation options, and supporting new community gardens.
 - *Action 3.1* – Hold periodic events on food and cooking matters, such as classes and demonstrations, to help people learn new ways of using fresh fruits and vegetables, including those grown in gardens at the bus shed site.

- *Action 3.2* – Host a food bank at the bus shed in cooperation with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, and host a community-supported agriculture (CSA) drop off at the shed and at Helena Housing Authority sites in conjunction with educational classes.
- *Action 3.3* – Research the many models of food delivery systems that could be used in Helena, such as the Mid-Delta Community Services system that provides rides to medical appointments, the Pine Bluff neighbor-to-neighbor system, and mobile markets using a vehicle or trailer (McCrary model).
- *Action 3.4* – Identify a community garden coordinator to manage the existing garden and potential future gardens, such as one envisioned at the shed.
- *Action 3.5* – Create a bike library that will allow people to use shared bikes to ride to shops, doctors’ appointments, pharmacies, employment, and other critical needs.
- **Goal 4 – Local food production:** Increase production of local foods in the city and region to increase economic opportunity, add farmers market vendors, and create a customer base for a community kitchen.
 - *Action 4.1* – Map the local food system mapping using the Local Foods, Local Places process and regional maps as a workshop follow-up activity. Create an inventory of local farmers who are growing fruits and vegetables on their land or may be willing to donate a row for the cause.
 - *Action 4.2* – Ask local farmers if they are willing to “grow a row” to supply local foods, and identify and publicize city-owned vacant properties to use for urban agriculture or community gardens.
 - *Action 4.3* – Use the bus shed as an opportunity to help develop and coordinate the local food system. Consider including in the site plan uses such as a food pantry, community garden, farmers market, and edible landscaping; and consider starting a farmer/producer interest group or co-op.
 - *Action 4.4* – Hire a Helena Community Garden Director that can also take on responsibilities for developing the local food system.
 - *Action 4.5* – Launch a marketing, promotion, and public education program aimed at increasing the demand for local foods in Helena-West Helena and beyond.

GOAL 1: Local Market – Plan and launch a successful market and events center that improves and contributes to making Helena an attractive place to live and invest.

The Helena side of Helena-West Helena is a food desert, with the nearest supermarket located about seven miles away. The city has also experienced economic and population contraction that has left many properties vacant and in need of new uses that will inject life into the city and contribute to a positive image that helps attract new employers and residents. The old bus shed property on Biscoe Street is owned by the Helena-West Helena Phillips County Port Authority, which wants to repurpose it as a market space with a variety of community-oriented uses and public spaces. This will enhance the city’s southern gateway, provide an outlet for fresh local foods, and support entrepreneurship. The actions in support of this goal are aimed at getting the concept off the ground over the next couple of years.

Action 1.1: Clean the bus shed lot and adjacent lots, landscape the street frontage incorporating edible landscaping, paint the bus shed building, and hold a community-wide clean-up day for preliminary site beautification.

What this is and why it is important	<p>Beautification will make a visible change to the community and spark interest in the project. Visible projects can signal progress to residents and visitors while some of the structural renovations that take much longer to implement occur. It can also transform the building from an eyesore to something appealing and inviting, which is important on Biscoe Street, as a gateway to downtown.</p> <p>An additional sub-action to further engage community residents is to install an idea wall at the bus shed so people can share their ideas for how to use the shed. The old chalkboard in the shed could be used for the idea wall.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a new coat of paint is applied. • When the blight is removed. • When planters are installed. • When a new sign that says, "Future home of..." is up.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could start immediately after being funded. • Spend two months implementing.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Foods, Local Places steering committee • John Edwards – Port Authority
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean-up day volunteers, including school groups • Community foundation with non-profits outreach • University of Arkansas Extension for youth outreach • Chamber of Commerce • KIPP Delta Public Schools
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and volunteer time • Paint, planters, and materials
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Regional Authority Local Foods, Local Places implementation assistance • Local and state foundations

Action 1.2: Conduct preliminary repairs of the bus shed building and perform any relevant studies.

What this is and why it is important	<p>This bus shed is well maintained but needs some basic repairs to be repurposed for the intended uses. This could happen in phases.</p> <p>Phase 1: Secure the site and develop plans and specs for the following basic priorities and early uses: plumbing and bathrooms, electric, parking, an indoor stage for music, and a dog park.</p> <p>Phase 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a feasibility study and prepare a business plan for the preferred concept for the old bus shed. • Obtain a preliminary architecture report that lays out the building needs, condition, and rehabilitation cost. • Make zoning changes needed to allow for a multi-use project on the property.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building is safe for entry and public use. • The blueprints/design and business plan are complete. • Photo-documentation of progress occurs.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD by contractors and funding sources • General progress by around 1 year
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Edwards – Port Authority • Local Foods, Local Places steering committee
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension for feasibility study (Julie Goings) • Licensed contracting company for work • Engineer/architect/planner for a preliminary architecture report, feasibility study, and business plan
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor for electrical and plumbing • Cost for consultants to prepare the various studies
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Regional Authority • USDA Rural Development

Action 1.3: Start a local fund with Arkansas Community Foundation to benefit the bus shed project.

What this is and why it is important	<p>The Arkansas Community Foundation works across the state to help fund community projects. The Foundation could create a single space for people to safely donate to the bus shed repurposing effort. The Foundation brings credibility and a wider network of resources from across the state. They also have experience in the community, recently helping to raise funds for the Freeman Playground.</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an action fund is created and people are donating funds. • When the first big fundraising pitch occurs (need \$1,000 to start).
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a fund with \$1,000 in the short-term. • Create the fund with a first fundraising push within 6 months.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Authority • “Shed Heads”

Action 1.3: Start a local fund with Arkansas Community Foundation to benefit the bus shed project.

Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philips County Community Foundation (Darby Waites-Treat)
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time and set-up costs Minimal fees associated with the fund
Possible funding sources	N/A

Action 1.4: Bring together all key stakeholders around plans for the old bus shed to define success for the project.

What this is and why it is important	It's important to give the community hope, a clearer vision and one that is based in the community's interests. As the LFLP steering committee and other stakeholders begin to perform improvements to the site, and work on long-term uses for the bus shed, broadening the dialogue to include community members and other stakeholder groups is key. Developing a shared vision and mission statement that reflects the buy-in will also allow stakeholders to effectively and accurately communicate about what they are working on to all audiences.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A "success story" or goal/vision statement is defined and shared publicly Newspaper or other media publicity
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After completion of the Local Foods, Local Places project In the short-term, hold a local planning meeting and form an action committee to support the Steering Committee; determine if the Steering Committee needs additional representation Build vision statement concurrently with clean-up, etc.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Port Authority "Shed Heads"
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community residents to provide input
Costs and/or resources needed	Staff and volunteer time
Possible funding sources	N/A

Action 1.5: Set up a pop-up market with local food and craft vendors to test concepts and interest in a market and to activate the site.

What this is and why it is important	A pop-up event will activate the space, show progress, increase interest and awareness in the shed project, and invite the community to the space for a celebratory event. This is another way of engaging with the community, demonstrating progress, and providing an opportunity for local entrepreneurs and food and craft vendors to see their role as well.
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Action 1.5: Set up a pop-up market with local food and craft vendors to test concepts and interest in a market and to activate the site.

Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An event is held with lots of participants.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan in winter and kick off in with an event in early summer
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Authority • “Shed Heads”
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local vendors, including Darby’s Art • Arkansas Delta Arts Partnership • Thrive
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • Start-up money for entertainers, tables and chairs, tents, and other event costs
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Regional Authority • Port Authority

Goal 2: Placemaking – Attract economic development by investing in feasible and near-term projects that improve the quality of place and life in downtown Helena.

Downtown Helena is filled with historic buildings and a walkable form marked by short blocks, a mix of uses, sidewalks, and street furniture. However, the city’s contraction has also caused widespread vacancy and some instances of blighted property. The blight is an impediment to tapping into the city’s strengths to attract prospective companies to the city and its port area. This goal is about reducing blight, incorporating local art and locally driven placemaking into the city’s economic development efforts, and improving quality of life for local residents. The end goal is a thriving downtown Helena that will attract new jobs and residents.

Action 2.1: Install public art or signage that informs people that something new and good is coming to the bus shed site.

What this is and why it is important	<p>There is nothing on the old bus shed site presently to indicate that there are any plans to repurpose it as a community amenity. This action is about providing information to the public so they become more interested and take pride in the site and the possibilities it could hold for the neighborhood and city. Among the ideas for public art include using recycled bus parts (hub cap flowers, old bus hood for a flower bed on the corner, etc.) and incorporating music notes and blues instruments (squash growing out of a saxophone on a fence, sweet potatoes in an old drum, drums as outdoor game tables, etc.)</p>
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs are up at each phase providing updates on the status of the project. • When Facebook page updates are made.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 days
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit Helena (Alana Pinchback) to ask Historic Helena to take the lead

Action 2.1: Install public art or signage that informs people that something new and good is coming to the bus shed site.

Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • Port Authority • Main Street Helena • Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission • City of Helena-West Helena • Misti Staley; Phillips Community College and high school welding classes
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City (fire department workers could potentially install)
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission (funds for sign)

Action 2.2: Share the vision for the bus shed with the community to obtain their input and hold a naming competition to generate excitement. Identify a name and brand for the building; consider calling it “The Shed.”

What this is and why it is important	This action is about creating a recognizable brand and creating excitement about what could happen on the site of the old bus shed. It will provide residents with an understanding of the vision and goals of the project, and an opportunity to shape what happens on the site. Thrive, a local non-profit planning and design organization, could play a key role in the execution of this action.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the steering committee has a hard copy of the branding and marketing plan. • Deadlines are met and updates/check-ins with Thrive occur. • Progress reports given to steering committee.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30-60 days preferably, but depends on Thrive’s availability to be involved. • Use the planning meeting envisioned in Action 1.4 to put this action in motion.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thrive
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Marketing Solutions • Interns • “Shed Heads”
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interns
Possible funding sources	N/A

Action 2.3: Install a bike rack and repair station, outdoor exercise equipment, and a walking path at the bus shed.

What this is and why it is important	The city and region have successfully obtained funding for bicycle infrastructure from the Walton Family Foundation. Projects such as the Big River Trail are poised to bring bicycling tourism into Helena-West Helena. This action will help to position the Shed as a bike-friendly place where tourists can get a bite to eat or shop for locally-produced foods and goods.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair station and rack are installed. • Main Street Helena (Julie Goings) will schedule the installation with the city. • Main Street Helena (Julie Goings) could potentially make the purchase.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 days
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Street Helena/University of Arkansas Extension Service (Julie Goings)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walton Family Foundation • UPS • City of Helena-West Helena • University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City may be able to install the rack and repair station
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walton Family Foundation • UPS • State Physical Activity and Nutrition grant (CDC) • Tour da Delta grant • Recycled Bikes for Kids

Action 2.4: Install temporary lights in the bus shed and other vacant downtown buildings to inspire people about what's possible.

What this is and why it is important	Lighting will contribute to public awareness that something is going to happen with the bus shed and help to dissuade vandalism while the project gets underway. It will also improve the look of the area and inspire people with what would be possible if lights were returned to other vacant buildings around the city. Other ideas shared by the steering committee following the workshop are using window clings, colored lights, and old traffic lights in the project.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights are installed and lit.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 days after branding is completed
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Street Helena
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed cost of lighting and electrical improvements; variable cost of electricity service

Action 2.4: Install temporary lights in the bus shed and other vacant downtown buildings to inspire people about what’s possible.

Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Helena (set-up) • Main Street Helena • Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission
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Action 2.5: Create a space for food truck rodeos and other fun events on the site, such as large games (Jenga), bike rodeos, space for outdoor movies, and other community events.

What this is and why it is important	This action is about using the site for community events even before the bus shed is renovated. It will provide a glimpse into what is to come and of the broader vision for the site. A first step could be to develop an outdoor pop-up event with local food and crafts onsite while the building is being renovated. A second step could be to start a farmers market while renovating other parts of the shed. Other ideas shared by the steering committee following the workshop are ordering large games to set up on site and painting a large area for projecting movies.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events are hosted. • Report on attendance and lessons learned discussed with steering committee.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring 2019
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic Helena Association
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Street Helena • Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost for small tents, a screen, projector, seating, and other equipment needed to create a temporary pop-up space for community events, such as a market and movies.
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banks and other local businesses could be sponsors. • Historic Helena Association.

Goal 3: Food access – Improve food access for all people in the city by increasing use of SNAP for the farmers market, improving transportation options, and supporting new community gardens.

The city’s only two grocery stores are in the West Helena part of Helena-West Helena. Median household income is low in Helena, many people lack access to reliable transportation, and there is no public transportation in the city. People depend on friends and family for rides to the grocery stores, which are about seven miles from Helena. This goal is about bringing an outlet for affordable and fresh local foods to Helena. This will benefit the people living in the area and breathe life into the old bus shed site and other vacant properties that could be used for community gardens.

Action 3.1: Hold periodic events on food and cooking matters, such as classes and demonstrations, to help people learn new ways of using fresh fruits and vegetables, including those grown in gardens at the bus shed site.

What this is and why it is important	Data show that fruit and vegetable consumption is low in Helena-West Helena. This may have many causes, including low household incomes and a lack of knowledge about the preparation and potential uses of fresh produce. This action is about addressing the second obstacle, raising awareness of nutrition and food, and helping equip people with the skills needed to cook and prepare healthy food.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of participants in attendance • The number of events held • Before and after interviews and follow-up conversations with event participants
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: 0-12 months; start planning and form coalition sub-committee to develop curricula and find instructors • Phase 2: When the shed opens and regular events are held there
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension (Julie Goings)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East • Boys and Girls Club • Schools (KIPP, Helena-West Helena schools) • “Shed Heads” • Chamber of Commerce
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost for instructor time, produce, and a kitchen with equipment
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Health Foundation • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • University of Arkansas Extension • University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences East

Action 3.2: Host a food bank at the bus shed in cooperation with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, and host a community-supported agriculture (CSA) drop off at the shed and at Helena Housing Authority sites in conjunction with educational classes.

What this is and why it is important	Helena is a low-income area and a food desert. This action is about improving access to fresh and local foods in Helena. The Arkansas Food Bank is interested in establishing a new pantry location and summer and after-school feeding program in Helena to assist Helena families. Establishing the new pantry at the centrally located old bus shed can also help activate the shed as a community-oriented place that is open to all residents.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase in the number of people eating 5 servings daily of fruits and vegetables • Survey results
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: 0-12 months for planning and forming a committee • Phase 2: Shed opens with a food bank and CSA drop off among the elements

Action 3.2: Host a food bank at the bus shed in cooperation with the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance, and host a community-supported agriculture (CSA) drop off at the shed and at Helena Housing Authority sites in conjunction with educational classes.

Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Bank • Evelyn Chambers, Gracie Gonner, and Pat Roberson
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churches • Ministries Alliance • Schools • Boys & Girls Club • Arkansas Food Bank (summer feeding site and after school site)
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost for cold storage, space for the food bank and CSA drop off point, and effort to recruit people to participate in the programs.
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention • Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance • Helena Health Foundation • USDA • Arkansas Food Bank

Action 3.3: Research the many models of food delivery systems that could be used in Helena, such as the Mid-Delta Community Services system that provides rides to medical appointments, the Pine Bluff neighbor-to-neighbor system, and mobile markets using a vehicle or trailer (McCrorry model).

What this is and why it is important	Transportation is a major impediment to food access. The workshop revealed anecdotal reports of people paying upwards of \$20 for rides from Helena to supermarkets in West Helena. The city lacks public transportation, taxis, and ride sharing. Bicycling and paying for rides are the only options for accessing healthy and fresh foods for people that lack access to a vehicle.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a plan has been developed and services are in use.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: 0-12 months to form a committee, conduct the research, and develop a plan • Phase 2: 1 year to implement the plan
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Housing Authority • Local churches • Texas Transportation Institute
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost for a vehicle or vehicles, a service that provides rides, a mobile market vehicle or trailer, or whatever other solutions may come out of the research effort.
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention High Obesity Program grant opportunity • USDA

Action 3.4: Identify a community garden coordinator to manage the existing garden and potential future gardens, such as one envisioned at the shed.

What this is and why it is important	The Helena Community Garden is in need of a coordinator. Also, this garden is not a traditional community garden that is open to local residents. Someone will be needed to manage the existing garden and expand community gardening to other areas, such as the shed.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A coordinator is hired and retained
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediately
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta Cultural Center • Lisa Frasier, SPAN Grant with University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to support • University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension (Jenn Conner)
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part-time stipend or wage perhaps shared with Delta Cultural Center
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention High Obesity program grant opportunity • USDA • AmeriCorps • Arkansas GardenCorps (part of Americorps)

Action 3.5: Create a bike library that will allow people to use shared bikes to ride to shops, doctors' appointments, pharmacies, employment, and other critical needs.

What this is and why it is important	Transportation is a critical community need. The health of Helena's residents relies on more than medical services. People also must be able to access jobs, healthy foods, education, and other basic human needs. A bike library program is one opportunity to address these needs and improve food access by providing transportation. The shed could be a site for a bicycle library and bicycle skills park.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the system is in place • Use of the system
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: 0-3 months to form an exploratory committee to research feasibility and develop a plan
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension (Julie Goings)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Health Foundation • University of Arkansas Medical Sciences East • Texas Transportation Institute rural transportation coordinator
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost to plan and then acquire the bicycles and stations. The system will also likely depend on grant or foundation support so that lower-income households and those lacking the typical method of payment (credit card) in the city can access the service.

Action 3.5: Create a bike library that will allow people to use shared bikes to ride to shops, doctors' appointments, pharmacies, employment, and other critical needs.

Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helena Health Foundation • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention High Obesity grant program opportunity • Walton Family Foundation
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Goal 4: Local food production – Increase production of local foods in the city and region to increase economic opportunity, add farmers market vendors, and create a customer base for a community kitchen.

The Delta region is known for its rich soils and agriculture. However, most of the agricultural products that come from the Delta are commodities such as soybeans, cotton, corn, and rice that are sold on national markets. While nearly all available land is planted, very little is used for the production of foods that can be consumed locally. This goal is about using the fertile soils to meet some of the local demand for foods.

Action 4.1: Map the local food system mapping using the Local Foods, Local Places process and regional maps as a workshop follow-up activity. Create an inventory of local farmers who are growing fruits and vegetables on their land or may be willing to donate a row for the cause.

What this is and why it is important	This action will yield insights about who is growing food and where. It will show strengths and gaps in the local food system and hopefully help the participants identify specific opportunities to grow the local food system or develop gleaning programs, etc.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust map of local producers is available.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate and lasting for 1 to 3 months
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension (Julie Goings and Jenn Conner)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Medical Sciences • Local farmers (Darby Waites-Treat to connect with them) • Phillips Community College of University of Arkansas
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time (very low cost)

Action 4.2: Ask local farmers if they are willing to “grow a row” to supply local foods, and identify and publicize city-owned vacant properties to use for urban agriculture or community gardens.

What this is and why it is important	The region has an abundance of farm land, and many of the farms have more than a thousand acres in production. This action is about recruiting farmers who are willing to plant a row for a crop that can support local food production. Likewise, the city has a lot of vacant land that could be used to grow food. This action will identify where and what lands may be available for food production. This information could also support a beginner farmer program in the County. The USDA Farm Service Agency provides financial and technical assistance to beginning farmers across the country. Urban agriculture, community gardens, and “grow a row” programs could be used as opportunities to create a pipeline into using these programs to launch new farms in Phillips County. This action would benefit from a facilitator that intentionally works to encourage participants in these programs to enter a career in agriculture.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complete list of vacant lots is available. • A list of farmers willing to support a “grow a row” program is available.
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate and lasting for 1 to 3 months
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension (Julie Goings and Jenn Conner)
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Helena-West Helena (to identify vacant land) • EAST Lab (high school students that could lead such a community service project) • Jordan Treat and other local growers over time.
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time (very low cost)
Possible funding sources	USDA Farm Service Agency Beginning Farmers and Ranchers loans, including the Direct Farm Ownership Loan, Direct Farm Operating Loan, and Farm Ownership or Farm Operating Microloan. ⁶

Action 4.3: Use the bus shed as an opportunity to help develop and coordinate the local food system. Consider including in the site plan uses such as a food pantry, community garden, farmers market, and edible landscaping; and consider starting a farmer/producer interest group or co-op.

What this is and why it is important	The local food system is underdeveloped, and the bus shed presents an opportunity to seed the development of a more fully developed local food system. It is also important to connect growers and producers that are interested in being part of the growth of the local food system.
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging coalition/working group forms. • A market starts up. • A Food Policy Board is formed in the long-term.

⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency. Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Loans. <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/beginning-farmers-and-ranchers-loans/index>.

Action 4.3: Use the bus shed as an opportunity to help develop and coordinate the local food system. Consider including in the site plan uses such as a food pantry, community garden, farmers market, and edible landscaping; and consider starting a farmer/producer interest group or co-op.

Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months to 1 year • An early action may be for the steering committee to visit other places attempting a similar project to learn what's worked and other key considerations
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community champion • Centers for Disease Control High Obesity grant opportunity
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chamber of Commerce • University of Arkansas Extension • Food Bank of the Delta • Faith-based organizations
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time (Low cost)
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Authority • Delta Regional Authority • Centers for Disease Control High Obesity program grant opportunity • Winrock International (small grants and technical assistance)

Action 4.4: Hire a Helena Community Garden Director that can also take on responsibilities for developing the local food system.

What this is and why it is important	The community garden is a great resource that is in danger of being lost if a director is not hired. The community also needs a champion that can support the development of the local food system. This person could end up taking on a wide range of responsibilities related to this effort.
Measures of success	Director is hired
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 months (by spring planting)
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Extension • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City • Port Authority
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wage for a part time position (\$10,000 plus)
Possible funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention High Obesity program grant opportunity • AmeriCorps • Arkansas GardenCorps

Action 4.5: Launch a marketing, promotion, and public education program aimed at increasing the demand for local foods in Helena-West Helena and beyond.

What this is and why it is important	The local food system is underdeveloped in part because of a lack of demand. Yet Helena-West Helena is close to larger metropolitan areas and is a substantial food market in its own right. This action is about promoting the Delta region’s local foods in the community and to nearby metropolitan areas. This issue can also be addressed by introducing more children to locally-grown foods. An idea shared by the steering committee following the workshop was to introduce local school children to the Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit. ⁷
Measures of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community survey gauging awareness of local foods • Increase in farms dedicated to specialty crops, and production of specialty crops • Social media metrics
Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-year post mapping, coalition building, surveys, etc. • Marketing efforts should be ongoing.
Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalition
Supporting cast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Arkansas Medical Sciences East • Thrive (other marketing people) • Port Authority • Visit Helena
Costs and/or resources needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design cost for logo and marketing materials • Printing and advertising cost
Possible funding sources	TBD

IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Following the September workshop, the steering committee held three follow up calls. They reported that they received a lot of positive commentary about the entire experience from those that participated. There was also a lot of local media, social media coverage, and excitement generated in the community. Julie Goings, Main Street Helena/AK Cooperative Extension, reported several people coming forward and showing interest. Below are some notable post workshop next steps and thoughts for implementation funding that were discussed during the post-workshop calls.

- Conversations have started between the Arkansas Community Foundation and the Helena Health Foundation regarding contributions to the shed project.
- A local grower has expressed an interest in the Grow a Row idea of Action 4.2.
- The Port Authority has been in communication with the Delta Regional Authority about the shed project and other infrastructure priorities.

⁷ USDA. “Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate.” <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it>

- The Arkansas Minority Health Commission was introduced as a potential funding partner in the shed project.⁸
- The Arkansas Community Foundation grant cycle is Jan 10-Feb 15 for small grants. Though these are small grants of around \$5k, they could be used for select parts of the action plan or bus shed renovation and improvement.
- Consider setting up a community action fund, with Arkansas Community Foundation and local affiliates that allows for community contributions to build a small monetary pool for community projects.

The Local Foods, Local Places implementation funds of up to \$15,000 offered by the Delta Regional Authority were also discussed by the steering committee, and these funds are to be used for actions associated with the clean-up activities and infrastructure repairs needed on the site, which are addressed largely through actions 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, and 2.4 of the action plan. The steering committee aims to make a visible difference on the site through these actions and generate excitement and momentum towards the realization of the shed vision.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Workshop Participants
- Appendix B – Workshop Photo Album
- Appendix C – Community Data Profile
- Appendix D – Funding Resources
- Appendix E – Reference

⁸ Arkansas Minority Health Foundation. “Funding Opportunities.” <http://arminorityhealth.com/resources/funding-opportunities/>.