City of Wichita / Sedgwick County Food System Master Plan

CITY OF WICHITA

SEDGWICK COUNTY KANSAS

Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita
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The Wichita-Sedgwick County Master Food Plan was created from the energy, hard work, and input of our community. Particular thanks are extended to thousands of Wichita and Sedgwick County residents who took surveys, invited us to come speak at their community meetings, and attended roundtable policy discussions. In particular, we are grateful for the work of the Food System Master Plan Steering Committee, who shaped the plan from the outset, and provided valuable input along the way.

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Acknowledgements

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What Is the Food System, and Why Does It Need a Plan?

The "food system" is the process food follows as it moves from the farm to your table. This process includes farmers, manufacturers and processors, distributors, and all residents as consumers. It also includes the inputs and outputs of each step — right down to the food waste we generate. The journey our food takes through the food system is influenced by ecosystems, research, education, funding, our culture, and our policies.

In the past, our local food system was mostly self-sufficient: food was grown, processed, sold, consumed, and disposed of in one place, and food choices were restricted to what could be grown in the local climate and ecosystem.

Today, our food system is global. In Sedgwick County, we export significant quantities of food, and import what we can't grow locally. This gives our residents access to a variety of foods from around the globe. Developing our local food system is not a choice between 100% locally-produced food or 100% imported food. It will always be a balance as we strive to provide balanced, healthy food for our population.

Steps we take to build a strong local food system here in Wichita and Sedgwick County can:

- Foster profitable agriculture and food business,
- Support entrepreneurs in agriculture and food,
- Create new jobs and opportunities,
- Increase access to healthy, nutritious foods for all,
- Support skills in gardening and food preparation,
- Protect soil, water, and air quality,
- Reduce food waste,
- Celebrate diversity of food and agriculture in our community, and
- Empower all to participate in the food system.

Food Systems Planning

A master plan is a long-range planning document that lays out a community's vision for its growth. Communities use master plans to guide land use, economic development, transportation, health, and other dimensions of civic life.

A healthy, sustainable local food system can bring economic, environmental, and social benefits to a community — but these benefits don't happen automatically. Food systems need planning, too! Planning brings structure and strategy to local food systems growth, and helps align policies, such as ordinances, zoning, and incentives, to support the local food system.

Past Food System Initiatives

Past initiatives in the community have helped build a strong interest in the local food system in Wichita and Sedgwick County. Previous studies conducted by K-State Research & Extension and the Health & Wellness Coalition of Wichita* point to some exciting opportunities, and a Wichita-Sedgwick Food System Master Plan could serve as a launch pad for those opportunities. Investing in our food system can:

- **Build a strong local economy.** Sedgwick County residents spent just over $1.6 billion on food in 2018. If just 5% of those were purchases of locally-grown food, an estimated $80 million would circulate through the county each year, supporting many other local businesses, ranging from farm implement dealers to restaurants.
- **Support entrepreneurs in food and agriculture businesses to grow and prepare more food closer to home.** Sedgwick County farmers produce more grains and beef than we consume locally, and they are important agricultural exports for the region. Many of the other foods we eat, though, are only produced in very small quantities in our region. For example, we produce:
  - 0.0008% of the chicken we consume.
  - 0.4% of the eggs.
  - 0.7% of the vegetables.
  - 0.2% of the fruit.

  Growing more of the food we consume here can support farmers wanting to diversify their operations, as well as entrepreneurs who want to start businesses to meet the growing demand for local food.
- **Build a healthier community where all residents have access to nutritious, fresh food.** Approximately 25% of Wichitans do not have access to healthy food. In fact, 44 square miles of the city is considered a food desert, an area in which residents don't have the financial or transportation resources to get to supermarkets or grocery stores. Access to healthy food is a key ingredient to building a healthy community.

* These studies can be found at **wichita.gov/FoodPlan**

How Can the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County Support Our Local Food System?

Local government policy can influence all parts of a food system. The graphic above is a map of how city and county governments might advance policies that support and build a healthy local food system for all. It is not a reflection of the proposals in this plan, rather, it's an example of what these interactions might look like.

How Was This Plan Created?

Nearly a year's worth of community effort led to the creation of this plan. The Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita served as the lead planning organization, collaborating closely with the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County.

A 14-member Steering Committee (SC) of key food system stakeholders was formed to guide the process with support from the City and County staff members. Food System Master Plan Steering Committee members represented key sectors such as agricultural production, emergency food assistance, and food retail. New Venture Advisors consultants were hired to assist with process facilitation and provide technical assistance throughout.

The Steering Committee began by conducting a secondary data review of our food system — from agricultural production, to health, to economic impact — and by researching food systems planning examples in other communities.

Then, the Steering Committee came to consensus around eight potential goals for the Food System Master Plan. These included:

1. Increase local food production
2. Protect natural resources
3. Increase access to healthy food
4. Reduce food waste
5. Foster social equity
6. Grow our regional economy
7. Build upon our community's food culture
8. Support community health and wellness

Next, the Food System Master Plan Steering Committee launched and oversaw a robust community engagement process to ensure as many voices and perspectives were included as possible. From January to September of 2020, a wide range of community members helped identify needs, barriers, and priorities to address with this plan.

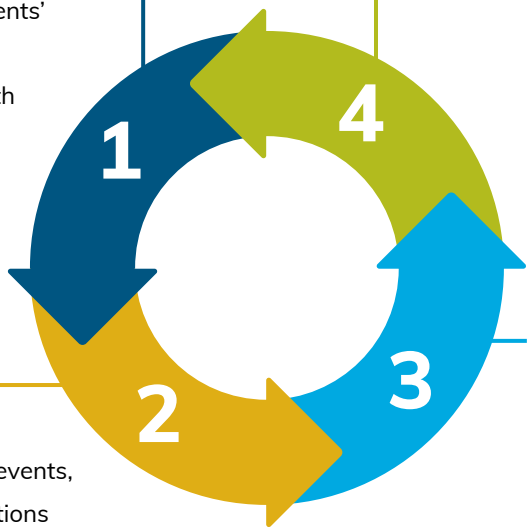
The community engagement efforts included four key components:

- **A community-wide survey,** which was open January through September of 2020, that gathered perceptions of the local food system from over 2,200 residents and engaged them in prioritizing the Plan's goals. This survey process was critical to help narrow down the list of potential Food Plan goals from eight to the final three.
- Twenty-five **"pop-up"** events where Steering Committee (SC) members attended community organization meetings (e.g. community coalitions, City of Wichita District Advisory Board (DAB) meetings, and local food producer workshops, etc.) to engage them in the food planning process.
- Six **roundtable events** in which over 187 stakeholders from the food system provided insights on key policy barriers and opportunities for each of the proposed goal areas.
- A final **plan prioritization** step in which 60 key stakeholders assisted with the prioritization of the objectives in the final plan. The final order of objectives in the plan reflects the input of this group, and reflects a priority order that city and county officials should consider.

Wichita-Sedgwick County Food System Master Plan Community Engagement Strategy

Community Wide Survey

- Open Jan.-Sept. 2020
- Ongoing data collection
- **Objective:** Assess residents' perceptions of food environments, assist with ranking Plan Goals
- 2,000+ participants



Pop-Up Events

- Jan.-Sept. 2020
- Audiences: Community events, DABs, partner organizations
- **Objective:** Steering Committee attend and inform about Food Plan, invite participation in survey, meetings

Food Plan Specific Roundtables

- Jan.-Sept. 2020
- **Six** total events, one for each major goal category, 187 stakeholder participants
- Co-hosted by Steering Committee and partner organizations
- Roundatble discussion format
- **Objective:** Get specific feedback from content-area experts and key stakeholders

Plan Objective/Action Step Prioritization

- Oct. 2020
- Survey distributed to:
  - SC Members
  - Past roundtable participants/invitees
- **Objective:** Prioritize the Objectives/ Actions in each Plan Goal area and re-engage key stakeholders

The onset of COVID-19 in March of 2020 greatly impacted the community engagement process, cancelling previously scheduled events and coalition meetings where community presentations would have taken place. Additionally, some of the roundtable discussion events transitioned to a virtual format due to in-person meeting limitations during the pandemic.

However, despite the challenges caused by the pandemic, community members and stakeholders responded to the requests for information, and provided rich insights that shaped the final plan that follows.

How To Read This Plan

This plan lays out an array of potential actions to guide and foster the development of the local food system in Wichita and Sedgwick County. These actions are recommended with a view to the future: **this plan is meant to be accomplished over ten years, with adaptations and updates built in at five-year intervals.**

The plan is organized from broad goals to specific recommendations.

Goals are general statements of desired outcomes for our community. These represent a future vision for the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County.

Objectives are more specific, measurable strategies to guide local work to reach each goal. Each goal has multiple objectives that support it. The objectives in the plan were prioritized during the community engagement process.

Actions are specific policies, programs, and initiatives prioritized to meet goals and objectives.

Goal: Foster Food System Coordination and Education

Support coordination between food system partners and educational opportunities for producers and consumers.

A common theme throughout the community engagement process was a **lack of coordination among food system partners,** and the **need for greater community education** about the food system.

In each of the policy roundtables, **stakeholders spoke to the need for an advisory body to coordinate and connect food system activities.** Many mentioned the progress seen across the 42 counties in the state with Food Policy Councils, especially those convened by local governments and with the participation of city and county officials.

Also, survey-takers and roundtable attendees spoke to the need for education — both for agricultural producers and consumers. Producers voiced a need for education about city and county regulations related to agriculture. Producers also wanted support connecting with new market outlets, and training support for beginning growers.

Why Foster Food Coordination and Education?

- Coordinating efforts among food system stakeholders in our community will help ensure that limited resources are used efficiently, and that partnerships can be established to better serve the community.
- Education programs for consumers highlight the benefits of local food, how to prepare it, and how to budget for it.
- Education programs for producers help them build strong agriculture businesses, and support beginning farmers and entrepreneurs as they launch new businesses.
- A strong local food system is possible, and collaboration is how we get there.

Many cited the need for consumer education about the economic, environmental, and health benefits of eating locally-grown foods. 65% of survey respondents agreed with the statement, "I would like to learn more about how to cook healthy food." Despite their interest as individuals, only 28% of survey respondents agreed with the statement, "Compared with other communities I know of, Wichita/Sedgwick County is a community that values healthy eating." Also, there was high interest amongst roundtable attendees to create a culture of awareness about food waste in the community.

As it is throughout the rest of the plan, the **audience is the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County,** so chosen objectives/action steps reflect areas where local government partners can have the greatest impact.

Objective 1

Support coordination between food system partners.

- Appoint a Wichita-Sedgwick County Food and Farm Council to serve as an advisory body to the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County.
- Utilize the Food and Farm Council to provide a forum for food system collaboration by convening stakeholders from all sectors of the food system.
- Utilize the Food and Farm Council to compile feedback from these food system stakeholders and offer policy solutions and recommendations to the governing bodies.
- Utilize the Food and Farm Council to support awareness of funding opportunities amongst food system partners.

Objective 2

Develop and leverage relationships with organizations and businesses working with underserved and marginalized residents to ensure these residents have the opportunity to provide meaningful input on policies and programs.

- Convene a stakeholder group of low-income residents to advise on emergency food assistance programs and policies.
- Create spots on the Food and Farm Council for traditionally marginalized communities to ensure representation.
- Encourage programming that empowers underserved and underrepresented residents.

Objective 3

Support consumer education and awareness about the benefits of a resilient local food system.

- Provide staff support through existing community outreach and education entities in the City and County to focus on food system education.
- Advertise the availability of local food in the community — sharing existing local producer directories, advertising the locations of farmers markets, etc.
- Partner to promote the environmental, economic, and social benefits of a vibrant local food and agriculture system.
- Fully fund K-State Research and Extension's consumer education programs.
- Promote and attract events that celebrate and enhance area agriculture and local food activities.

Objective 4

Support producer education to grow the supply of local food in the county.

- Fully fund K-State Research and Extension's producer education programs (i.e. Growing Growers, a beginning farmer training program).
- Create or assign a staff liaison to help local food producers navigate city and county policies and permits related to food production.
- Support programming to help agricultural producers and landowners adopt practices and technologies to enhance resilience (i.e. pollinator habitat, high tunnels for season extension, cover cropping).
- Strengthen financial and in-kind support for implementation of practices that improve soil health, water quality, and biodiversity.
- Partner with agriculture education entities to assess the feasibility of a community training farm.

Objective 5

Build community awareness of food waste.

- Coordinate with partners to launch an educational campaign about food waste reduction in the community.
- Expand public outreach programs that teach residents about backyard composting.
- Research the feasibility of greater city involvement in trash hauling services to steer service towards food waste collection and composting.

Why Improve Access to Healthy Food?

Improving access to healthy food invests in the health and well-being of our community members. When community members have access to healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate foods they are more likely to thrive. Supporting transportation infrastructure to make it easier for families to get to healthy food locations and investing in programs that make food more affordable help all of us, especially the most vulnerable in our community.

Goal: Improve Access to Healthy Food

Making it easier for community members to find and afford healthy food they want to eat.

This goal rose to the top in the community survey, with 69% of survey respondents choosing it as one of their top 3 food plan goals for the community, and 63% identifying it as a top food plan goal for themselves and their families.

The objectives and action steps that follow are recommendations to **improve access to healthy food** by addressing key barriers identified throughout the process. **Lack of financial access** (high cost of healthy food) and **lack of geographic access** (food deserts and transportation options) are key barriers identified by previous studies, and borne out by community feedback in this process. Also, we learned that time and convenience are major barriers that prevent families from buying and eating the healthy food they want.

In this section and throughout the rest of the plan, the **audience is the City of Wichita and Government of Sedgwick County,** so chosen objectives/action steps reflect areas where local government partners can have the greatest impact.

Objective 1

Address the 44 sq. miles of the city of Wichita that are considered "food deserts" and lack access to healthy food options.

- Work with existing small grocers and convenience stores to incentivize and enable them to stock fresh, healthy food options.
- Expand farmers markets into food deserts by partnering with businesses, schools, and nonprofits with available space.
- Support the expansion of existing mobile market efforts in low-access neighborhoods.
- Align economic development incentives to attract grocery stores to neighborhoods that lack access to fresh food.
- Consider adding requirements for new retailers wanting to open in a neighborhood — i.e. a 10% sq. footage requirement for fresh food.

Objective 2

Address affordability of food.

- Support access to public food assistance programs like SNAP and WIC through marketing and promotion.
- Promote the use of SNAP, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and Double Up Food Bucks at area farmers markets.
- Encourage the state to offer the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons, which WIC participants can redeem at area farmers markets for fresh produce.
- Expand the Double Up Food Bucks program to additional farmers markets, mobile markets, and potentially grocery stores. Identify sustainable sources of funding for the program, including local government support.
- Encourage the state to reduce or eliminate the sales tax on groceries.

Objective 3

Reduce barriers to emergency food assistance programs.

- Support coordination by the Kansas Food Bank and its partner pantries to ensure efficient delivery of services.
- Expand partnership with school districts and nonprofits to promote the Summer Meals Program, and offer additional city and county sites for the program.
- Consider city/county funding for food banks, pantries, and hot meal programs.
- Support infrastructure at food pantries and food banks to increase fresh food availability, especially refrigeration and freezer units.
- Encourage food pantries to eliminate restrictive policies that may turn away residents (i.e. requiring a drivers' license).

Objective 4

Reduce transportation and built environment barriers that limit access to healthy food.

- Assess the current bus system and identify changes to routes and stops via the lens of supporting access, including additional stops at grocery stores or food outlets.
- Consider offering free rides for grocery shoppers with proof of receipt.
- Better embed healthy food access into transportation planning, i.e. consider adding healthy food vendors to the new transit center.
- Embed safe pedestrian and bicycle access in the planning process for siting new grocery stores.

Objective 5

Encourage food recovery practices and policies to supply safe, nourishing food to families in need.

- Develop an outreach strategy to encourage food donations by grocers, restaurants, caterers, etc.
- Educate food retailers on the Good Samaritan Act protections to reduce fear of legal repercussions of food donations.
- Promote connections between home and community gardens and food pantries to increase fresh produce donations (i.e. Plant A Row program).
- Support existing connections (i.e. ICT Food Rescue app) and expand capacity to recover additional food.
- Build support for a local food gleaning program in the region. Gleaning programs harvest "seconds" from farmers' fields that are unprofitable for the farmers to harvest, but can still provide healthy food to community members.

Objective 6

Make healthy food choices more convenient at work and school.

- Work with employers to promote healthy food access at worksites through workplace CSA programs, local food procurement policies in corporate cafeterias, on-site farmers markets, etc.
- Partner with area school districts to encourage Farm to School efforts that engage students in eating healthy, locally-grown food.

Goal: Increase Local Food Production

More fruits, vegetables, meats, etc. produced by local farmers or in gardens.

This goal rose to the top in the community survey, with 47% of survey respondents choosing it as one of their top 3 goals for the community, and 56% identifying it as a top food plan goal important for themselves and their families.

The objectives and action steps that follow are recommendations to **increase the supply of local food through increased production,** but also to support **consumer demand** and ensure that **markets are available** for local producers to sell to.

This goal addresses both **farmers and gardeners in our community,** recognizing that local food is grown at multiple scales in our community.

As it is throughout the rest of the plan, the **audience is the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County,** so chosen objectives/action steps reflect areas where local government partners can have the greatest impact.

Why Increase Local Food Production?

Increasing local food production in our community can positively impact the regional economy and improve community resilience. When consumers and institutions buy directly from local producers, their dollars stay in the local economy, providing income for farmers and vendors throughout the agriculture supply chain. When residents grow their own food, it increases community food security and resilience as families learn to feed themselves.

Objective 1

Support local farm and food businesses.

- Assist farmers, especially urban and peri-urban growers, with land access.
- Consider creating an inventory of vacant city or county-owned properties that could be leased to urban farmers. Explore ways to incentivize stewardship of sites with environmental benefits (i.e. stormwater retention or brownfield cleanup).
- Tailor economic development programs to support small food and farm businesses (i.e. a low-interest revolving loan fund for local food businesses).
- Ensure small business local food economic development programs are accessible to, and benefit low-income residents and peoples of color.
- Expand education for producers and value-added product manufacturers, especially around food safety (i.e. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HAACP) practices), to support them scaling up to sell to wholesale customers requiring these certifications.
- Strengthen communication between produce growers and chemical applicators to prevent crop damage/loss (i.e. Kansas Dept. of Agriculture Sensitive Crops & DriftWatch Program).
- Collect data on the local economic impacts from chemical drift.

Objective 2

Facilitate markets for local producers and food businesses.

- Assess the feasibility of a local food purchasing policy in the City of Wichita and Sedgwick County that seeks to purchase a target percent of food from local and regional suppliers.
- Partner with school districts and universities in the county to adopt their own local food purchasing policies.
- Map the current availability of shared-use facilities for food businesses (i.e incubator kitchens, local food aggregation “hubs”) and determine opportunities to support this food system infrastructure.
- Explore and support new sales outlets and markets for local food producers, including potential expansion of Wichita’s existing farmers markets (new days, extended hours) and/or identify additional locations for farmers markets.

Objective 3

Provide regulatory clarity and adopt policies supportive of urban agriculture.

- Revise current city and county agriculture policies to clarify what's allowed (i.e. signage, on-farm sales, chickens, etc).
- Consider creating an Urban Agriculture use that is allowed in multiple zoning districts.
- Educate community members about allowed urban agriculture practices.

Objective 4

Support gardening — at home, in neighborhoods, and schools.

- Facilitate and leverage access to resources to assist community gardening efforts, especially in low-income communities.
- Promote resident awareness of existing community garden opportunities.
- Collaborate with community partners providing food production education and resources to build residents' skills.
- Work with Homeowners Associations and neighborhood associations to support home and/or community gardening in neighborhoods.

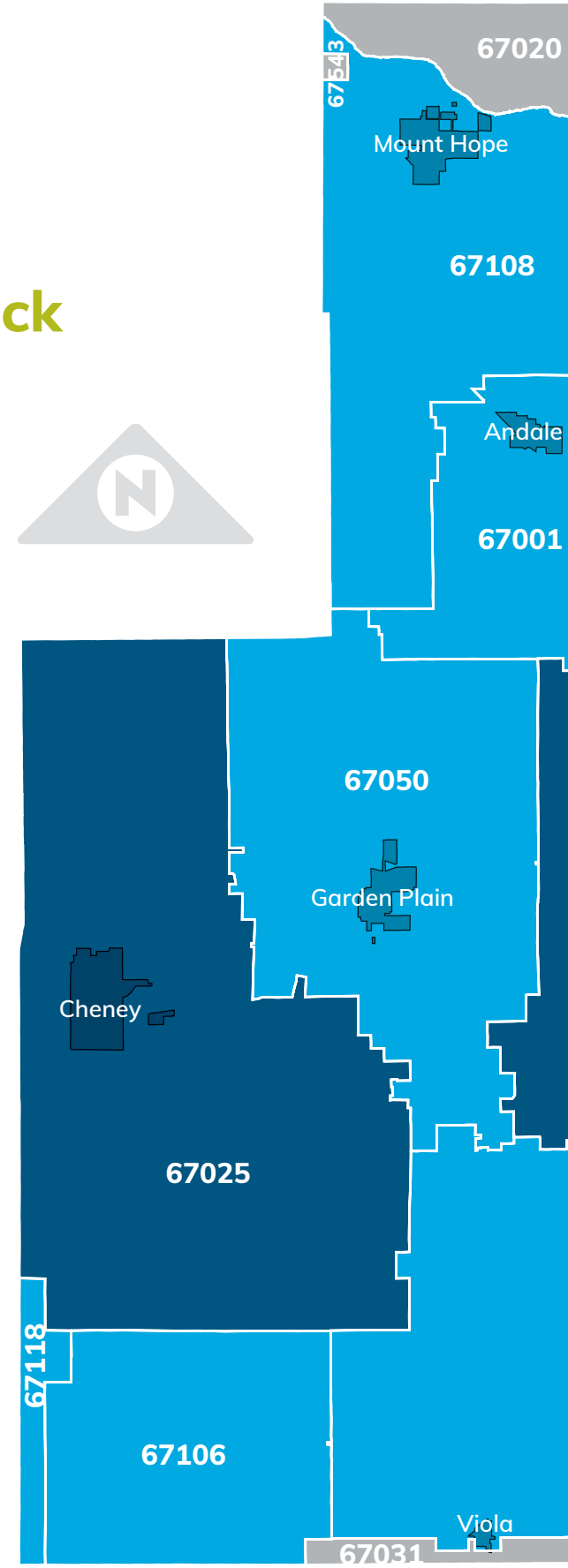
Food Policy Survey Responses in Sedgwick County by ZIP Code

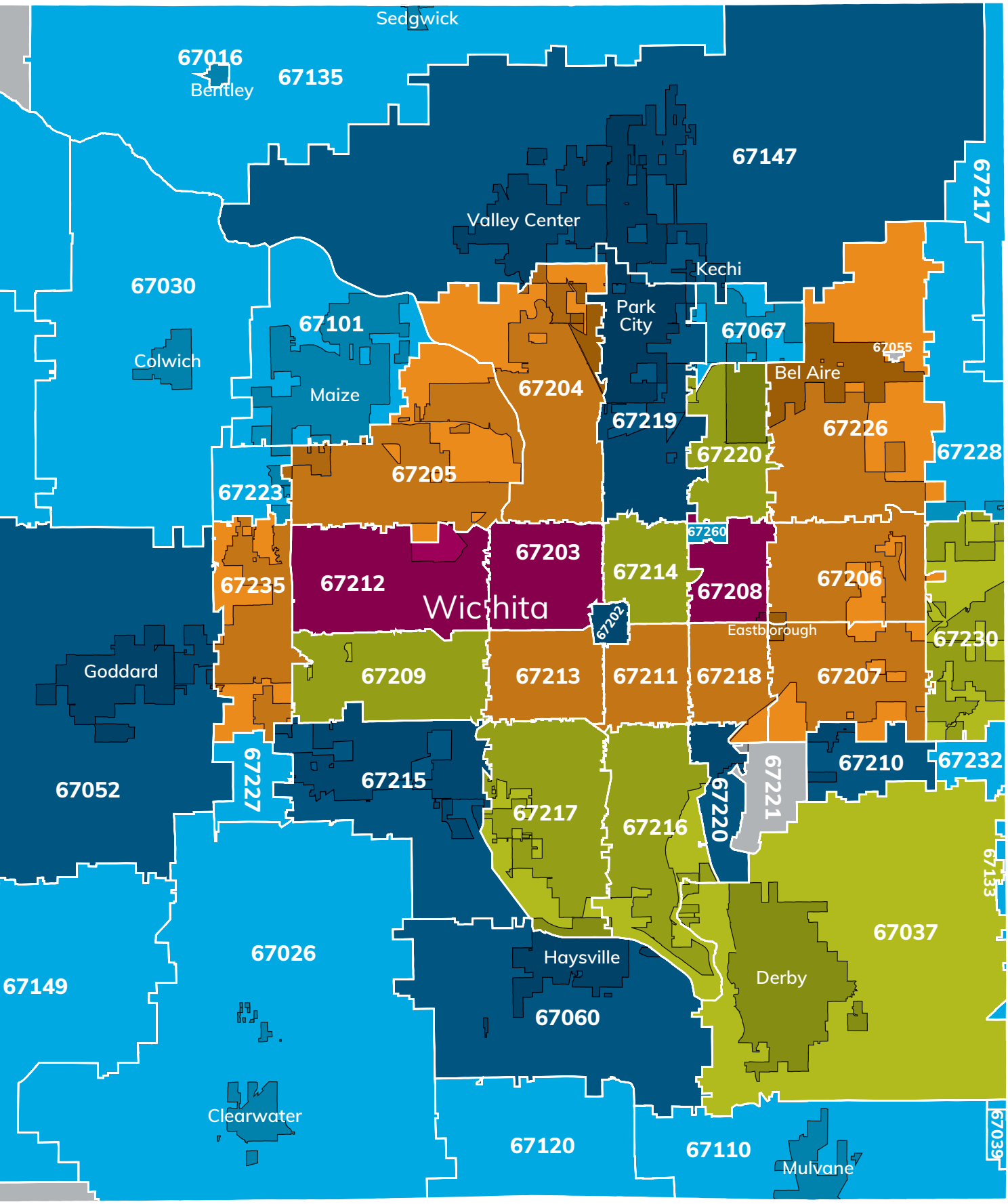
Respondent Count

- No Responses
- 1 – 10
- 11 – 30
- 31 – 60
- 61 – 100
- 101 – 221

Total Responses: 2,209
Including 259 No ZIP Code
or out of region ZIP Codes

Date: 12/7/2020

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Clearwater
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Mulvane

Learn more about the City of Wichita/
Sedgwick County Food System Master Plan at:

→ **wichita.gov/FoodPlan**

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