


# FOOD WASTE:

*Closing Down the  
Road from*

GROWN





**"Americans discard more  
food than any other  
country, nearly 60 million  
tons- or 40% of the entire  
US food Supply"**

...



# AGENDA

- **National and State Food Waste statistics and implications**
- **Why and where does food waste occur?**
- **Strategies to Mitigate Food Waste**

# National Food Waste

**40% of the US's  
food supply**

**\$408 Billion is thrown out in  
food waste each year**

**Food waste makes up 22% of  
US Municipal Solid Waste**

**Food waste per person per  
month has risen 7 lbs since 2012**

**That's the same as...**

**325lb per person, per  
year (27 lb per  
person per month)**



**Throwing out 1 bag for every 3**



# Washington Food Waste

IN 2021,  
WASHINGTON STATE  
DISCARDED OVER 5.2  
MILLION TONS OF  
GARBAGE



732,781 TONS  
OF FOOD  
WASTE



61% WAS  
EDIBLE FOOD



# Whatcom County Food Waste

DESPITE A  
COMMUNITY COMPOST  
FACILITY, WHATCOM  
COUNTY IS NO  
DIFFERENT IN TERMS  
OF WASTE

30% OF WHATCOM  
WASTE IS ORGANIC  
MATERIAL THAT  
COULD BE  
COMPOSTED



# IMPACTS OF FOOD WASTE

## Societal

- Food Prices rose **6.7%** between May 2022 and May 2023
- **24.6%** of US Adults reported food insecurity in 2022
- **10 million** US children are food insecure
  - In Whatcom county, about **1 in 5 (20%)** of residents are food insecure

**To continue to ignore this issue is to condemn not only those experiencing food insecurity, but our entire planet, our health and our future.**

## Environmental

- U.S. food waste embodies **170 million metric tons** of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the emissions of 37 million cars.
- **To Grow and Distribute US uses**
  - **10%** of the total US energy budget
  - **50%** of US land
  - **80%** of freshwater
- If global food waste were a country, it would be **third in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.**

# Food Bank Dependency

SNAP benefits ended March 1, 2023, causing an extreme flux in the demand for food banks

20% of Whatcom residents visit a foodbank weekly. Monthly visits have to Whatcom food banks have increased from 40,000 in January 2022 to 90,000.

Bellingham Food Bank is serving 4,000 households per week, double the amount they have served in the past

Last Summer, Agape Food Bank served 150 households per week. This summer, they are serving over 650


The demand for food assistance is...  
increasing at an  
unprecedented rate.  
What will the city do to  
meet these needs?








30%  
RETAIL



43%  
CONSUMER



10%  
MANUFACTURING



30-40%  
FARMING

Where are we wasting  
food?



# Farming and Manufacturing Losses



An Average of 7% of crops go unharvested each year, but this amount can reach 50%

New product development creates food waste because manufacturers must coordinate correct volumes and product quality.

30-40% of produce is culled due to cosmetic appearance and retail demand

Modern Technology mitigates most of these losses, however large losses can be due to human error such as allergen contamination

Between 21 and 33% of water used in US agriculture is wasted

In less advanced countries, waste is higher due to outdated tech, but farming and consumer waste is lower as food is more valued.



# Retail and Consumer Losses



Overstocked displays and "ready to eat" food. Huge portion sizes at restaurants are wasted or require plastic to save

Food wasted at this level creates 8 times more energy waste than food waste at the farming level.

Expectation of cosmetic perfection from consumers and competition with other retailers

Misleading or confusing expiration dates lead to consumers throwing away food that is still safe

Outdated promotional products or unpopular items. (19000 new food items make the shelves each year, many of which fail and are wasted)

Relatively cheap pricing makes it more convenient to throw away good food than to process, preserve or donate.

# **Solutions Working in Other Communities**



# UK: Regulation on Expiration Dates



In the UK, **20% of home food waste is due to confusion surrounding food date labels.** Combined efforts from local and national government have **reduced food waste in the UK by 11% in the past 3 years.**

## None of the following labels are a measure of safety:

(Infant formula is the only product with an FDA regulated expiration date.)

**"Sell By":** informs retailer how long to display the product for.

Most retailers throw away products 3 days before it reaches this date

**"Best By":** Tells when a product will be of best *flavor and quality*

**"Use by":** the last date recommended for use of the product *while at peak quality.*

**"Freeze By":** the last date recommended for when a product should be frozen to *maintain peak quality.*

# Local Food Recovery Programs

Food Recovery is the practice of preventing surplus food from being thrown away through repurposing or donating. Supporting local programs and volunteer organizations is crucial



## Miracle Food Network

- In 2022 rescued 871,111 pounds of food and goods.
  - Prevented 400 million gallons of water from being wasted
- Donated to 14 hubs in Whatcom, 5 food banks, and several pantries on Whatcom college campuses and school districts.
- Serve 1180 families per week, donating 13,575 meals and produce boxes.

## Squatch Food Biz Waste

- Operated by Sustainable Connections
- Collect surplus food from commercial establishments that have reached out.
- Transport and donate surplus food to recipient agencies in Whatcom County



# Potential Solutions for our Community



# Community Education

## Food Recovery for Rhode Island (FRFRI)

University of Rhode Island launched a food waste community education class that integrates community partnerships, community education and peer education.

90 minutes per week of online education about food waste and home food preparation and preservation.

90 minutes per week of volunteering with food recovery partners.

Stipend offered to participants who bring the education back into the community and teach others.

120 participants will rescue over 60,000 lbs of food to redistribute while learning address waste.

# Food Waste for Rhode Island 6-week Plan

Week	Lesson Plan	Idea for Bellingham
1	""Bummer News"" lesson, where the totality of food waste is covered, and participants visit a landfill to see how much food is wasted.	Tour Recycling and Disposal Services Inc.
2	Education on where food is wasted in farms, schools and communities. Tour community garden which is designed to reduce as much waste as possible.	School Waste Audits, Farm Waste Audits
3	Inclusive community engagement training where participants are trained to work ""WITH"" communities, and not ""FOR"" or ""AT"" them. Practice engaging in respectful dialogue and handling possible conflict	Rhode Island Webinar
4	Nutrition and food preservation class where participants are educated on how to safely preserve food through canning, freezing/thawing or pickling.	WSU Extension Program
5	Large scale composting education where participants are taught about the process of composting, how to start a compost system and then tour a composting facility	Green Earth Technology
6	Volunteerism, gleaning and food recovery. Volunteers participate in gleaning trip to local farms and follow the process of recovery from gleaning to donation.	Miracle Food Network
Internship	40-hour internship to pursue volunteer hours, build or enlarge a community project or bring education back into the community.	

# Bring FRFRI to Bellingham!

This program is intended to be applicable and moldable to any community. How can we support this program to serve our city?

Bellingham City should issue an FRQ to bring build this program locally

Provides opportunity for community outreach and education that is community led

RFQ should include funds for a **livable wage** for the operator, with a goal of fully or partially fund the fees for participants to take the classes

RFQ should also include funds dedicated towards supporting capacity of community partners to host volunteers



# Local Displays of Community Capacity

The Birchwood Food Desert Fighters (BFDF) formed in 2016 in response to the Albertson's closure which left a food desert in it's wake due to a non-compete clause, in effect until 2038. BFDF shows that **our community has the tenacity and connections to create change**, and are looking for **support from local government**.



## Limitations of BFDF

Without a commercial kitchen to process and store food and an indoor location to serve food, BFDF are unable to expand the amount of people they can serve, and are having to serve people outdoors year-round.

## Village Inn & Pub

This abandoned pub near the Birchwood neighborhood would serve as a perfect location for the BFDF headquarters, as well as a location for a community center.

# Call to Action

- Combating food waste is low hanging fruit that the City can address. Food waste is not merely extra pounds in the landfill. It is the act of **ignoring starving people, contribution to green house gas emissions,** and a **waste of energy and natural resources** such as land and water.
- Supporting the URI project by creating an RFQ to run the program is a crucial step towards building a **better connected and educated community,** which is the greatest resource that we can provide to support community-led projects to reduce hunger and food waste.
- Government assistance of volunteer entities addressing food insecurity, such as the Birchwood Food Desert Fighters, is crucial to the health of our community. Local government should assist in any avenues to support such incredible work.





Thank You

