



Food and Nutrition Policy

Purpose and Guidelines

South Park is a community in Southwest Seattle rich with cultural identity and strong connections to food and agriculture spanning the globe—Latinx, Southeast Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, African American and more. Despite these robust ties, South Park disproportionately lacks healthy food and other basics like clean air, clean water, and financial opportunity when compared to other areas of Seattle. The neighborhood of South Park, which is surrounded by industrial land and cut in half by a freight highway, is considered a “food desert,” a term used to describe low-income communities—often communities of color—where access to healthy and affordable food is limited or where there are no grocery stores within a one-mile radius. South Park is also included in the Lower Duwamish Waterway Superfund site designated by the EPA in 2001.

Cultivate South Park’s Urban Fresh Food Collective was conceptualized in late 2019 as a direct response to South Park residents’ desire to nourish neighborhood families with culturally meaningful food. What started as a small market stand serving 35 families and a six-week urban agriculture youth internship has grown to consist of four large-scale program offerings benefitting over 400 households per month.

At Cultivate South Park, we recognize the important role that food and nutrition play in our neighbors’ health and wellbeing. We are committed to addressing the health inequities that are prevalent in the neighborhood. We place high value on the cultural needs and dietary preferences prevalent in the neighborhood. We acknowledge the generational impacts of intentional marginalization, oppressive practices, policies and structures that perpetuate food access challenges in South Park. It is Cultivate South Park’s goal to champion community-driven change that transforms the health of our neighbors through sharing knowledge, power, resources and vital health information. We believe that when you recognize your community, your community will heal.

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>

Our Food and Nutrition policy will demonstrate our commitment to the quality of food we offer our participants and serve as our guiding principles. We will utilize the [Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines](#) as a tool to guide our nutritional priorities. While what is outlined below are our general commitments to the consumption of healthy balanced meals, we do encourage flexibility and the communal celebration of culturally significant holidays which may include the occasional distribution of sweet food items.

Food Purchases

When funding is available, we commit to purchasing items that are aligned with our commitment to nutrition and reflect the cultural diversity of the community of South Park. We will prioritize fresh vegetables and fruit, cooking staples, and items on the “choose often” list of the HER guidelines such as whole grains, lean proteins, low-sodium options and non-dairy alternatives.

Cultivate South Park chooses not to purchase sugar-sweetened beverages, foods high in saturated fats/hydrogenated oils, or other processed items. We instead choose to focus our purchasing practices on increasing the availability of foods that help our clients create balanced, nourishing meals.

Our food programs continue to be a vital resource as we expand offerings to support a growing number of local families. We recognize that the rising cost of healthy foods makes it difficult to purchase high quality, nutritionally-dense items when a larger quantity is needed. We continue to advocate for funding that will allow us to purchase items that align with our commitment to health and our goal to provide an abundance of options that meet cultural and dietary needs.

Food Donations

Rather than turn away donations we aim to guide donors toward our community’s needs. To that end, we have created a set of food donation guidelines that can be sent to donors. These guidelines highlight popular items that we use in our food access program or that participants request and prioritize low-sodium and low-sugar options. When donations use a self-selection model, we have trained staff who choose food items of the highest quality and with the highest nutritional value based on the standards of HER.

Special Programs

As we expand the prongs of our food access program, we are committed to meeting the specific dietary needs of different cultural groups within the neighborhood by providing relevant fresh produce, nutrient-dense items, and cooking staples.

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>

- In our farmers market El Mercadito, we are committed to sourcing locally grown produce from Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other POC farmers.
- For our food box delivery program, where recipients cannot select their own items, we will make intentional choices/prioritize items of the best quality to convey our care for their health and ensure a dignifying experience.
- For culturally significant observances and holidays, such as Día de Muertos, we aim to provide culturally traditional food and drink items while seeking healthier recipes and alternatives as funds allow.
- Meals and snacks served during our youth program offerings are typically vegan using locally grown produce.

Broader Commitments

We aim to engage South Park residents in activities that meet the needs of our neighborhood as a whole which will include hands-on learning and knowledge sharing, recipe provision, meal planning, physical activity cohorts and cooking demonstrations. We also commit to providing food access resources to our bilingual community in both English and Spanish.

We elevate our commitment to providing foods that meet health and cultural needs while supporting other community-led efforts by sourcing fresh, culturally relevant produce from local Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other POC farms. By developing gleaning relationships within Washington state, we will reduce our environmental impact by decreasing air and traffic pollution. We also strive to source items for all food programs that utilize sustainable farming and production practices.

Administration and Implementation

This policy, approved by our Board on 02/01/2023 will take effect on 02/06/2023 at which time it will become part of the organizational policies and procedures. Our Director of Community Initiatives is responsible for an annual review of the policy with food bank staff in order to keep it up to date with community needs. All new staff and volunteers will be provided an orientation to the policy.

Supporting resources:

- <https://oldwayspt.org/>

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>