**ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE FOOD POLICY COUNCIL AMONG 100+ LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL OF NC DELEGATES**

**At Inaugural Statewide Conference in Early December**

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**Asheville, NC:** Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council sent 8 delegates to a convening of food councils from across North Carolina hosted by the Local Food Council of North Carolina (LFCNC). More than 100 delegates from 36 local food councils attended the convening held December 4-5 in Winston-Salem. The event, *Connecting for the Future: A Gathering of NC Food Councils,* provided participants with the chance to connect with other communities doing similar work and share best practices.

Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council is a group working on food system issues in Buncombe County and the city of Asheville. We encourage individuals, agencies and organizations to share information, explore avenues to increase access to healthy food, and to advocate for policy change. As more food councils develop around the state, Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council has been sought out as a strong and well-established council that others are looking to for advice, according to Laura Cheatham.

“Since 2011, the ABFPC has been working very hard to work towards building food system equity through social, economic, and environmental justice in the Asheville-Buncombe area. Some of our recent tasks as an organization have included strengthening our organizational capacity and finding funding to help us do this has been a challenge. The convening helped connect us with new and old communities around the state doing similar work, with state organizations and agencies that can help us, and gave us a huge boost of energy and inspiration to keep moving forward,” says Cheatham.

Mary Lou Kemph, the current facilitator of the ABFPC, “found [that] the conference gave me a bigger picture of food issues across our state of NC . It opened up the potential for future collaboration among Food Councils in NC.”

Event sponsors included Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, Conservation Trust for NC, the Food Bank of Central & Eastern North Carolina, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, NC Department of Commerce, and NC Sea Grant.

*The Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council* *is a county-level organization founded in 2011. It is currently a growing network in Buncombe County with members representing county agencies, non -profits, entrepreneurs, and concerned citizens. Asheville-Buncombe Food Policy Council supports vibrant farms, healthy people, strong communities, thriving local economies and resilient ecosystems in Buncombe County.*