February 9, 2012

MOTION

WE MOVE that the City Administration study ways to establish financing mechanisms similar to the Healthy Food Financing Initiative established in Pennsylvania by the Food Trust in order to incentivize new retail food establishments that will offer healthy and nutritious food to residents of Cincinnati’s food deserts.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the City Administration, in conjunction with the expanded City Food Access Task Force that was initially established in 2009, establish criteria that define the areas of Cincinnati that are food deserts. This would expand the Task Force work to include an implementation strategy for a retail model with a financing mechanism through the additional leadership from The Ohio Grocer’s Association, Brandt Realty Group, Local CDFI, and additional members from the Supermarket Initiative that has been convened by the Center for Closing the Health Gap and the Food Trust.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the City Administration work with the City’s Food Access Task Force and report back within 90 days with a recommendation on how to implement a retail model and financing incentives to address Food Deserts in the City of Cincinnati.

Councilman Wendell Young

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STATEMENT

Access to healthy and nutritious food is a fundamental need for healthy people and healthy communities. Recent scholarship has highlighted the existence of “food deserts”—geographic areas with low access to affordable, healthy food—within the City of Cincinnati. People who live within food deserts suffer from premature death and increased rates of chronic health conditions.

The City has the tools to reduce or eliminate food deserts while at the same time creating jobs and economic opportunities. There are viable avenues to provide healthy food aside from large, traditional supermarkets, but smaller grocers face significant financial risk. Loans, forgivable after a period of a few years, can help make the economic decision easier for entrepreneurs including urban farmers. Many other cities, such as Louisville, Kentucky, Mobile, Alabama and Memphis, Tennessee have successfully used forgivable loan programs to foster development in targeted areas.

Communities need permanent everyday access to healthy, affordable food. A program that urges business to fill this void is not only good for the health of the people of Cincinnati, but also the health of our economy.