



Understanding and Improving Pittsburgh's Farmers' Markets

Introduction

The City of Pittsburgh would like to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the farmers' market system that serves our residents: the seven markets that Citiparks operates, as well as the 18+ markets operated by other organizations. The goal of this study is to understand the effectiveness of current markets throughout the city and develop a plan for growth that improves equitable access to fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate food, supports our regional food producers and promotes healthy eating choices for all residents. This study will create recommendations for new market opportunities and policy changes that will allow us to reach our goals.

In the early 20th century farmers' markets were viewed as essential to communities, especially urban areas. According to Conway et al.¹, "Farmers' Markets in Pittsburgh have historically functioned not only as important commercial outlets for food but also as public spaces where people from all walks of life have interacted". Farmers' markets were important economic establishments for the city, and money was invested in structures that would house them. However, in the 1940s, when supermarkets became more prevalent, local governments lost interest in farmers' markets, allowing the free market to fulfill the job of providing food for residents. The system has developed with gaps in service leaving many residents without access to fresh and healthy food options. It is in the best interest of our residents for the city to find a way to fill these gaps.

More recently, increased interest in local food has led to an increase in farmers' markets and other unconventional food distribution strategies: CSA shares, buying clubs, healthy corner store initiatives, mobile food stores, and more. These businesses strengthen our economy, increase local jobs, create a social atmosphere, help residents access fresh foods, reduce diet-related chronic illness, and promote sustainability. It's important that the city support these businesses and address equitable food access.

In our preliminary research we evaluated cities similar in history (rust belt cities) and population density, to Pittsburgh including Baltimore, Cleveland, and Milwaukee, as well as larger rust belt cities: Chicago and Philadelphia for best practices and recommendations.

I. Scope of Work

The Farmers' Market study should cover the following tasks:

1. Develop Understanding:
 - a. Work with staff to generate a list of relevant materials for review including studies, best practices, and survey results. Including, but not limited to:
 - Penn State meetings and focus group (2013 report *Produce Change*.²)

¹ Conway, C., Hackney, D.C., Howard, D. A., James Bailey, D. D., Merino, A.M. and Shunakenberg, J.H. (2001). *Fresh and Local: Rethinking the Role of Farmers' Markets in Pittsburgh*. (Unpublished report from The History and Policy Project Course). Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA.

² Lindsey, Olivia, and Gretchen Sneeegas. *"Produce Change" Marketing and Food Access Program for City of Pittsburgh Farmers' Markets 2013 Report*. Pittsburgh: Penn State Extension—Allegheny County, 2013. Print.

- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission published *Local Food Supply Chain initiative in Southwestern Pennsylvania*.³
 - b. In our preliminary research we evaluated cities similar in history (rust belt cities) and population density, to Pittsburgh including Baltimore, Cleveland, and Milwaukee, as well as larger rust belt cities: Chicago and Philadelphia for best practices and recommendations including:
 - Public-Private partnership vs. fully private operations and promotion of markets
 - Permitting processes
 - SNAP accessibility
 - Methods of improving fresh food access in “food deserts”
2. Stakeholder Input
- a. Meet with or survey the following:
 - Vendors to get feedback on what markets work best and why
 - Penn State to discuss their studies and data from market surveys from 2013- 2016
 - Citiparks to understand their needs and limitations
 - Just Harvest to understand the healthy access program and explore means of expanding it
 - Pittsburgh Food Policy Council to understand what would they like to see in a farmers' market network
 - Other Farmers' Market managers (not Citiparks) to understand their needs and how the city can help them
 - Market customers to understand how and why they use the markets
3. Analysis
- a. Evaluate gaps in food access for our residents by mapping points including, but not limited to:
 - Grocery stores
 - Healthy corner stores carrying fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Farmers markets (mini-markets, municipal markets, public markets)
 - Fresh food outlets
 - Community gardens (with and without publicly accessible food)
 - Community kitchens
 - Wholesale food businesses
 - Mobile food vendors
 - Food pantries
 - CSA drop-off locations
 - Food co-ops
 - Soup kitchens
 - Meal delivery programs
 - b. Analyze and assess topographic data to determine both where food is scarce or difficult to access, and also where new markets can and should be located, including, but not limited to:
 - Needs index - identify areas of Pittsburgh where there is acute lack of basic needs (fresh food access, health care, transportation etc.)
 - Slope

³ Mundell, Laura. "Planning & Development: Local Food Value Chain Initiative (Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission)." *Planning & Development: Local Food Value Chain Initiative (Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission)*. Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, 1 Jan. 2015. Web. 14 Sept. 2016.



- Residential density
 - Traffic flow and intensity
 - Distance from a farmers' market to neighborhood retail cores
 - Distance to community landmark
 - Transit accessibility
 - Bike lanes
4. Goal Setting
 - a. Propose recommendations for improvements to our current market system, and new market opportunities, policy changes, and potential alternatives to farmers' markets as a way of improving equitable access to fresh, affordable, culturally appropriate food for all residents.
 5. Final Plan
 - a. Finalize proposals and produce a document outlining the next steps in attaining our goal of creating a market system that more equitably distributes access to fresh food and supports our regional food producers.