

What is Civic Agriculture?¹

NOPI Cornell Neighborhood Ecology Team Primer #4

Local Food Provision, 9th Ward: Alternative Grocery Stores and Farmer's Market

As the 9th Ward is being rebuilt and residents return to the area, consideration must be given to issues of food security, which ensures access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life (USDA). The community has several options for food security which capitalize on locally produced goods and local control of markets: farmers' markets and supermarkets, where we will consider three different models.



Supermarkets

Locally owned supermarkets strengthen the local economy by providing jobs and tax dollars while connecting more intimately with the community. New Deal Supermarket, located in Jackson, Mississippi, is a locally owned business that has developed a successful minority-owned and operated supermarket chain.

Supermarkets associated with a retailers' cooperatives, like IGA are also locally-owned and independent. Associated Grocers is an example of a retailer-owned company located in Louisiana. This type of business is able to collectively obtain discounts from manufacturers and pools its marketing resources to reduce costs.



Co-ops

Consumer-owned cooperatives are member-based organizations in which the members and staff both share ownership in the store for mutual benefit. All profits are returned to the cooperative, rather than to individuals. These stores offer wholesome food at the lowest practical price, which might mean higher prices due to specialty goods and small distribution network. A typical cooperative makes a commitment to serving the following goals: promoting environmental sustainability, offering healthful food and diet, active member involvement, supporting economic and social justice, serving the community.

Farmers Markets

Farmers' markets are another local option for food production and retailing. A typical market sells locally-grown food directly from farmers to the consumer. Home manufactured goods and local musicians are also featured, which adds a feel for the local culture. This public space can also provide the community a place to gather and

¹ Seward, Elizabeth & K.G. Tidball, Cornell University, Dept. of City and Regional Planning New Orleans Planning Initiative Workshop CRP 679; *A Product of "Mobilizing the Community to Integrate Ecology, Open Space Resources, and Disaster Resistance in a Post-Katrina 9th Ward."*

communicate issues of concern for residents. Farmers' markets have been successful in smaller towns and have also been recently introduced in urban areas.



Anacostia, an inner city Washington, DC neighborhood, has many similarities with the 9th Ward: elevated poverty levels, high unemployment and lack of supermarkets. The Anacostia Farmers' Market was established in 2000 and continues to operate. Some goods that are sold at this market include: local fruit and vegetables, jams and jellies, fresh and dried herbs and a fish fry.

A recent report called *Hot Peppers & Parking Lot Peaches: Evaluating Farmers' Markets in Low Income Communities* and issued by the Community Food Security Coalition identified barriers facing low income consumers and how to make farmers' markets work for in their communities. Low income people face many barriers in obtaining a healthy and nutritious diet. Many of these, such as lack of time

available for cooking are similar to those faced by middle income individuals. Other barriers, such as price considerations, lack of transportation and food access are unique to low income communities. Please see the appendix for information about considerations for farmers' markets to operate successfully in low-income areas.

Soils Concerns

The EPA issued a report detailing the condition of soils in New Orleans after the flooding from Hurricane Katrina, which stated that contamination levels in the city pose no "unacceptable" health risks. The NRDC conducted additional testing in November 2005 and issued a warning that contaminant readings found high levels of arsenic, lead, and petroleum compounds across the city at levels that should have triggered a mandatory cleanup or additional investigation. While environmental cleanup from the disaster are still underway, residents can take extra precautions to protect themselves and their families from health risks. Local Cooperative Extension Service provides brochures that explain how to collect samples for soil testing and can help locate the nearest public university offering soil fertility testing at a low cost. In addition, basic measures like immediately washing after contact with soil, cleaning clothes that picked up dust and soil, and cleaning the feet and coat of pets will reduce any risk associated with contaminated soil until the proper restoration measures have been completed.



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