

**Conference on Access to Food  
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The Conference on Access to Food, held in Washington, D.C., on September 18 and 19, 1995, was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Consumer Service (FCS). The conference was held to bring together food access experts to share their knowledge and help USDA build an agenda to increase access to food for low-income Americans.

The Honorable Dan Glickman, Secretary, USDA, opened the conference and stated that restricted or limited [food] access undermines [USDA's] ability to promote health through nutrition because if prices are too high, there is not enough bang for the buck for Food Stamps and WIC benefits, or if choices are limited . . . [Americans] can't make the choices that nutrition education efforts encourage them to make. Ellen Haas, Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, said that access to food is a key component of USDA's comprehensive food policy. The three components are as follows:

- Nutrition Assistance Programs-Child Nutrition Programs, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Food Stamp Program, and others form a network of food and nutrition assistance to ensure access to nutritious diets.
- Nutrition Education-The policy provides knowledge and skills allowing Americans to make healthy food choices.
- Access to Food-The policy ensures individuals the opportunity to purchase foods for a healthy diet through access to full-line food stores.

Although access to food has been the least visible component of USDA's comprehensive food policy, it is an important one. Under Secretary Haas said that without access to high quality, affordable food the effectiveness of our nutrition assistance programs and nutrition education initiatives are lessened.

USDA is focusing its efforts on the problem of food access through several initiatives. Current efforts include a study of authorized food stamp retailers. This nearly completed study gathered information in a number of areas, including access to food. A second study, a national survey of food stamp households, is in its initial stages and asks recipients about their access to food. USDA is conducting another study that will identify strategies that communities have implemented to improve access to food. This study will provide technical assistance to communities that want to improve access but do not have the experience or resources.

The conference addressed issues of access to food in urban and rural underserved areas and provided a forum for discussing successful strategies for increasing access to food through the development of full-line, affordable food stores and alternative means such as farmers' markets and transportation options. It also provided a discussion forum for experts in supermarket and food store development, economic development, and food policy. Mr. Paul Pryde of the Capital Access Group, LLC discussed the link between food and economic development. Supermarkets, or other food distribution businesses, can affect inner city development in four ways: by serving as an anchor for commercial property investments; by providing jobs to community residents; by improving residential property values; and by "providing life" to nearby businesses. Several

efforts to link improved food access to local economic development were also identified during the conference.

Ms. Sheryll Cashin, Staff Director of the Community Empowerment Board at the White House, further underscored the importance of the connection between food access and economic development, especially with regard to the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community (EZ/EC) Program. She said that this program provides a context that can help reduce the timeframe required to get food access initiatives--like supermarket development--implemented. EZs and ECs are working within a comprehensive strategic plan with input from residents, state and local governments, and business leaders. These are the same groups needed to implement food access initiatives.

The 2-day conference included three plenary sessions covering issues such as food access and community and economic development. A series of concurrent workshops allowed for presentations and open discussion among conference attendees on a variety of topics. Presenters included retailers representing small and moderate food stores as well as supermarkets; wholesalers; community and economic development specialists; food access advocates; representatives from financial institutions; academicians; community residents; and others. The conference attracted more than 150 participants representing Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities; nonprofits; private industry; financial institutions; advocacy groups; academia; foundations; and Federal, State, and local governments.

Several food access alternatives were discussed during the conference, ranging from supermarket development to improved transportation options. When addressing improved access to food, supermarket development is often the first option considered. However, in some communities, supermarket development may not be possible in the immediate future. In these instances, other options may be considered. For example, improved transportation may allow residents to reach a full-line supermarket a few miles away. Farmers' markets or public markets can provide quality produce and other foods at reasonable costs with little overhead investment while keeping profits in the community. In densely populated urban areas, space is often at a premium; a smaller independent store could provide quality, nutritious food in a much smaller space. In addition, several presenters discussed the issue of food security.

The three key themes that emerged from the conference were:

- Supermarket development
- Alternatives to supermarkets
- Food security

Each of these topics is discussed in detail below.

## Supermarket Development

The supermarket industry is the primary source of food for the majority of Americans. However, according to Mr. Andy Fisher of the Community Food and Security Coalition, between the 1970s and the 1990s supermarkets abandoned the inner city and many other distressed communities. Inadequate access to proper foods is frequently due to lack of access to supermarkets or to supermarkets with good quality produce and other foods at a reasonable price. Consequently, an important component of community development is the revitalization of inner-city neighborhoods and other distressed communities through the establishment of supermarkets. Many communities are focusing revitalization efforts on the establishment of much-needed supermarkets. There are different types of supermarkets that can be brought into a community, ranging from large regional chains, local chains, and franchises, to voluntary operators who are financed and serviced by a wholesaler, who typically provides independent stores with inventory and assistance in a variety of areas such as layout and marketing.

To successfully develop a supermarket, panel presenters recommended the following:

- Invest in credible, unbiased marketing research that demonstrates a need for a supermarket in that area. In addition, research should show that local residents will shop at a supermarket in this location.
- Develop a well-researched, well-written business plan that incorporates potential problems and solutions.
- Develop a solid partnership between the private sector, local government, and the community. This should include financial commitments from a variety of sources.
- Develop a good relationship with a wholesaler-one that provides guidance in the areas of marketing, construction, legal issues, and accounting, among others.
- Foster community support, or a sense of ownership, on the part of local residents.
- Secure adequate working capital, or cash, on sensible terms. Adequate cash is necessary to attract the kind of management needed to implement and operate a full-scale food store. In addition, capital is needed for marketing and advertising once the store is in operation.
- Access quality management and technical assistance.

Several presenters stressed that access to adequate funding is a central issue when developing a supermarket in an economically distressed area. According to Ms. Pamela Fairclough of the Community Food Resource Center, there are multiple costs associated with supermarket development. Soft costs are those that are needed to cover preliminary market analysis, feasibility studies, environmental reviews, zoning changes, and draft architectural and engineering plans. For the most part, these activities are not financeable up front so the supermarket developer has to cover these costs. Alternatively, if the supermarket is being

developed by a Community Development Corporation (CDC), these startup costs will have to be financed by CDC or other development corporations. Construction and renovation costs may come from conventional banks, wholesalers, or out of pocket. Finally, permanent financing for operating the supermarket must be secured from similar sources.

There are numerous sources of capital for financing supermarket development. Among these are conventional banks, CDCs, private funders, wholesalers, foundations, community groups, and government entities. The collateral for these loans is often the store inventory and the property lease. Often, developers need to be aggressive and creative when securing capital; perhaps looking at a mixture of funding sources in order to secure adequate funds.

Conventional banks are often a source of financing for commercial ventures. Many banks have community development subsidiaries or components and finance commercial development in targeted inner-city developments and other distressed areas. The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) is a Federal law that governs the banking community's responsibility to invest capital in low-income neighborhoods. This law requires banks to lend where they do business, thus banks are often looking for CRA-eligible projects. However, according to Ms. Pamela Fairclough, the stringent documentation required to receive a bank loan often prohibits supermarket operators from applying for a loan. In addition, operators in economically distressed communities may not qualify for a bank loan because of their level of equity investment and the high risk associated with the project. It is important to remember that banks are looking to make money so they will carefully study the project team and history.

Mr. Lamont Blackstone of The Retail Initiative, Inc. (TRI) discussed the way in which his organization invests in inner city retail development. TRI invests equity capital on behalf of ten institutional investors including the City of Philadelphia's public pension fund. There is a large pool of investment capital in the form of both public and private pension funds that needs to be tapped and channeled into inner city development. The challenge, according to Mr. Blackstone, is to ". . . develop a strategy that will allow these institutional investors to invest their capital profitably and at market rates of return, or close to market rates of return, at the same time investing that capital at levels of risk that [investors] deem acceptable."

Ms. Ann Rosewater, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and External Affairs, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), discussed several programs offered by her Department which can fund food access initiatives. First, DHHS monies finance the EZ/EC program. Second, this Department strengthens community development corporations through their Urban and Rural Economic Development Program. In addition, they fund business development, microenterprise, business incubation, and building renovation.

Speakers from several other Federal agencies described programs that may assist the financing of a grocery store in an economically distressed area or provide economic incentives for development. In addition to the designated Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities that provide tax incentives, block grants, private sector investment, and other financial assistance, the Federal Government sponsors several programs that assist in development activities, either through financial or technical assistance. Among these programs are the following:

- Urban Development Action Grant Program, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-A financial resource made available to eligible communities to support the development of physical infrastructure that leads to the creation of shopping and other neighborhood centers often housing supermarkets
- Economic Development Administration (EDA), Department of Commerce-Technical assistance, grants, and assistance with infrastructure development through a network of over 300 economic development districts
- The Small Business Administration (SBA)-Loans and small business startup assistance, including special programs for minority business owners. A microloan program incorporates a wide array of technical assistance
- One-Stop Capital Shops, SBA-Private loans and equity investments in underserved markets
- Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service, USDA-Farm loans, operating loans, intermediary lending, and loan guarantees to single family businesses, among others
- Community Food and Nutrition Program, Department of Health and Human Services-As part of the Community Services Block Grant funds for food access programs

Funds can be secured through private groups such as wholesalers and supermarket chains willing to move into the area. Foundations and community development organizations are also good sources of funding for supermarkets as part of a community revitalization effort. For example, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation wanted a supermarket to come in to the Bed-Stuy community. Numerous supermarkets were approached with no success until Pathmark Stores, Incorporated agreed to come in on the condition that the Restoration Corporation be willing to invest in the project. Mr. Roderick Mitchell of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation and Mr. Stan Sorkin of Pathmark Stores, Incorporated discussed this partnership between a supermarket corporation and a CDC-one in which the community development corporation became a part owner (67 percent) in a supermarket.

Another option for securing funding is through community organizations such as churches and other groups that create funding pools for initiatives to benefit the local community. These pools are often made available to entrepreneurs who cannot get money from a conventional banking establishment.

Community acceptance is integral to the success of a supermarket. Not only is the supermarket providing a product to the community, it is also providing jobs to local residents and keeping money in the community. Securing the support of the local governing body is fundamental. The mayor or city council can be highly influential in working with the mortgage holders, banks, and lending institutions. In addition, according to Mr. James O'Connor of O'Connor & Abell, Inc. and other presenters, having the support or assistance of a prominent city official can help in dealing with zoning, tax, and other issues that may affect an organization's decision to come into

a community. Often it is a joint effort between the real estate developer, supermarket manager, and the community that can get a project up and running.

Selecting the type of supermarket is significant in determining the success of a food store. In Liberty City, Florida, negotiating a lease with a Triple A chain supermarket was the key to making the whole effort work. According to Ms. Sandra Rosenblith of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), bringing in a high-quality, well-recognized store became the focus of their development efforts. In trying to locate a large tenant, one group found they had to entice the tenant with lower-than-market rents. They were able to do this because they were a quasi-public entity and had money from LISC, the Ford Foundation, and other places that they pooled together, allowing them to deliver the store on the terms that the chain demanded-below-market rate rent with renewable short-term leases rather than the traditional 10- to 15-year lease.

Location is another factor to consider in supermarket development. Large chains will conduct their own market study to justify entering a location. Convenience is a major factor for consumers when selecting their store. Consideration should be given to the large amount of land that it takes to develop supermarkets at the scale that consumers are accustomed to. Supermarkets need to have enough land for the store and adequate parking, calculated by the store's square footage. Additionally, land in urban areas is very expensive.

As part of an economic development effort, small businesses can sometimes be encouraged to locate in the same complex as the supermarket so that they can take advantage of the traffic generated by the supermarket and create a whole commercial revitalization program up and down the corridor. The new shopping center, anchored by a supermarket, can become the catalyst for revitalizing the rest of the community. Mr. Arnold Montgomery of Aurora and Mr. Henry Edwards of Finast Supermarkets discussed their efforts in the development of a supermarket in Liberty City, Florida. Among other undertakings, the developing group had to negotiate the lease with smaller tenants, some of whom needed technical assistance in putting together their businesses and securing loans from local institutions.

Rural communities have issues specific to them when it comes to financing a supermarket. Mr. Dayton Watkins, Acting Administrator of the Rural Business and Cooperative Development Service (RBCDS), USDA, said that these communities do not receive all of the benefits of the market place that more urban areas get. Therefore, they need Federal, State, and local governments, as well as community development corporations and nonprofit organizations to fill the void. The RBCDS guaranteed loan program does just that.

Mr. Don Clark of Covington Foods, Inc. mentioned that small-town banks usually have inadequate loan limits and cannot finance a project as large as a supermarket. Rural developers can qualify for a RBCDS Business and Industry Loan. RBCDS will guarantee up to 90 percent of a conventional bank loan. However, rural bankers may not be familiar with this option. RBCDS/USDA has field staff that are community development specialists who will help rural communities solve their problems. Assistance includes a variety of financial programs as well as technical assistance specifically designed for rural communities.

Another option is to affiliate with a wholesaler who provides the developer with services such as site analysis, market research, retail accounting, development engineering, and legal counsel, in addition to a large part of the goods to be sold. The wholesaler can become a very important part of the support team for a small-town supermarket.

### **Alternatives to Supermarkets**

To meet the needs of an ever-growing population, we need to look at a number of different strategies to achieve food security for individuals. There are several alternatives to traditional supermarkets as a means of ensuring access to food. These alternatives, according to several presenters, including Ms. Leta Mach of the National Cooperative Business Association and Ms. Linda Thompson of L.L. Thompson and Associates, often provide better, more nutritious foods at a lower price than do local food stores. Additionally, many of them encourage community self-sufficiency through the improvement of a community's ability to function independently and provide food for itself. These alternatives include the following:

- Food Cooperatives
- Urban Agriculture
- Farmers' Markets
- Public Markets
- Small and Moderate Independent Stores
- Transportation Options

Each of these options is described in the sections that follow.

### **Food Cooperatives**

Food cooperatives are customer-owned entities that are often formed to meet a need not being fulfilled by a traditional store, such as a supermarket. For example, in a rural town where the supermarket has been closed down, residents must drive great distances to purchase food. In response, they may get together and form their own food-buying club. Food cooperatives can range from an entity for ordering, purchasing, and distributing food (a food-buying club) to a store front where people can come to purchase food. According to Ms. Mach, there are approximately 4,000 cooperative food-buying clubs across the country. In addition, there are approximately 400 store front cooperatives, that is, co-ops that have a store that people can walk into to purchase their food. Nearly 1 million families currently rely on food cooperatives for affordable, quality food.



There are a number of characteristics that define a cooperative:

- Democratic Control-The consumers own the business and thus control it. Members have a greater say in what types of foods will be available to them. Larger co-ops often elect a board of directors that hires a manager to carry out the day-to-day operations of the co-op.
- Quality-Consumers trust co-ops to stock quality products and to provide high-quality service.
- Prices-Significant savings can be found at co-ops. Prices can be kept low because they have been formed to meet the needs of the member/owners and not to meet the needs of shareholders who have invested in the venture for profit.

The cooperative model, whether a food-buying club or a store front, works well in both urban and rural areas, according to Ms. Mach. Co-ops work well wherever there is a demand, or need, and a group of individuals willing to work to build their own business to meet that need. Getting a co-op off the ground requires two things: a need that must be met and a leader-someone from the community who will drive or guide the process and get people together.

Based on Mr. Mark Winne's experience in Hartford, Connecticut, another important factor in establishing a food co-operative is obtaining enough working capital to secure the type of management needed to successfully operate a food store. Mr. Winne believes that one of the major mistakes the Hartford Food System made when establishing a supermarket co-operative was undercapitalizing the operation. They spent considerably less on management than other supermarkets in the area and thus were not able to secure the type of management that could operate the store in a way that satisfied the customers.

The relatively low success rates of food co-ops in very-low-income areas may be attributable to a lack of community support. According to Ms. Mach, to have success there must be some support from a community group, such as a church or community development organization, that gives the individuals the backing they need to build the leadership skills that enable the co-op or buying club to be a success.

### **Urban Agriculture**

Urban agriculture is the growth of food within the inner-city community in which it will be consumed. It can take place on large plots of land, producing fruits and vegetables for retail, or on the roofs of buildings, producing fresh vegetables for personal consumption. According to Dr. Michael Hamm of Rutgers University, urban agriculture has two important functions: one is to serve as a more localized food supply, the other is more global in nature-demographic projections predict large global population increases over the next half century, leading to potentially greater instability in our food supply. At the same time, we are expanding the globalization of our food supply and [decreasing] our use of more locally grown foods. We are becoming more and more dependent on a far-flung food supply as population growth continues and as food instability appears to be increasing.

The increasing instability of our food supply forces us to think about the growing potential of the areas in which we live. There is a need to work at maintaining our ability to produce food on farms that are close to our homes. Additionally, we must develop our urban agriculture potential. Urban agriculture can make a dent in local food supplies. It also has strong nutritional implications. USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services are promoting an increase in fresh fruit and vegetable intake. So urban gardening, or on a larger scale, urban agriculture, can help inner-city individuals to meet the recommended allowance of five servings of fresh fruits and vegetables every day.

Urban agriculture does more than just grow food. It maintains a rapidly disappearing culture, especially for former rural farmers who now live in urban areas. Urban agriculture allows such people to pass on the cultural and practical knowledge that they have surrounding the growing of food. It also allows for individuals in a community to develop an interest in maintaining the local ecosystem. Children can learn about the environment in which they live through learning about nature and growing.

There are different types of strategies for developing large-scale, small-plot gardening and agriculture within cities. Each project will take shape differently, depending upon the urban area. It is best not to impose too much structure on the agricultural effort. It should be something that community members develop so that they develop a sense of ownership and others respect and treat it as something that belongs to the community.

Urban agriculture can go beyond community gardens and producing food. Many urban agriculture programs are created for youth. The effort can be designed to relate to other community issues such as providing alternatives for community youth so that they do not get involved with drugs out of a lack of something to do. Safe havens for local children can be created by using sunflower houses where children can relax and feel safe. The sunflower houses are areas of the gardens with fully grown sunflowers which form a sheltered area where children can play. Dr. Hamm commented that:

In developing children's gardens it is clear that a single input, the garden, can create multiple outputs. The youth grow food and learn gardening, science, and ecology. By the incorporation of keeping a journal and recording their experiences they practice their writing skills. The measurement of the plants as they grow yields the development of math skills. Children planting flowers around the community promotes pride and a sense of ownership.

Numerous other strategies have been incorporated around the country. For example, interactions among local farmers and urban youth can be fostered by having local high school students work with the local farmers. The students work with the farmers to get the produce from them. They then set up a farm stand in the community and sell the produce. Although not directly urban agriculture, it can strengthen the local agriculture in the communities surrounding the urban center through the creation of a strong linkage between farmers and the urban area.

Food from the Hood, an urban agriculture Project in Los Angeles, California, was started by a biology teacher, Ms. Tammy Bird. This is a student-owned company, prompted in part by the

Los Angeles riots. Students raise produce and take it to farmers' markets and sell the produce themselves. Currently, their main product is a salad dressing that they distribute through a manufacturer and a broker. Food from the Hood now sells its products in over 2,000 stores across the country. Forty percent of the company profits go back into the business while the remaining 60 percent is used for college scholarships. The students have established their own rules and guidelines that include a system of student owner levels that incorporates an internship in the program. Although the students are learning a great deal about agriculture, the teacher's primary goal is to empower the students and teach them leadership skills.

## **Farmers' Markets**

Ms. Linda Thompson of L.L. Thompson and Associates described a farmer's market as a group that brings together producers with consumers at the same time and place, usually once or twice a week, to market such items as fresh vegetables, produce, cheese, and meats. This system of direct marketing saves consumers money through the elimination of the middle man because food goes directly from the growers to the consumers. Farmers' markets can range from a small, community-based market to a large market run by an organization of farmers serving several thousand shoppers.

Benefits to low-income communities are numerous and include improved access to fresh farm-grown products, often at lower prices than at local supermarkets, and improved diets through increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Many farmers' markets accept food stamps as well as WIC farmers' market coupons. Farmers' markets also provide a place for community members to gather and meet and are thus a good place for community events because of the social atmosphere. For example, political candidates campaign at farmers' markets, health information is disseminated, and blood screenings and numerous educational events are conducted.

According to Ms. Thompson, farmers' markets have a potential for economic opportunity; this is especially important in light of the changes occurring in the welfare system. As governmental food programs are cut, current recipients need to become more self-sufficient and move from governmental dependency to food self-sufficiency. Communities need to provide education that incorporates nutrition education as well as plan programs for food access.

Community gardening, that is a community growing its own produce and setting up a small market, can be used to provide a means for communities to make some money and provide a source of affordable, quality food for residents. It also provides an economic opportunity for the community, keeping the dollars within that community. This is especially important for inner-city communities where dollars often go out and don't come back in. Food security is increased and the community is brought together.

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) provides coupons to WIC participants to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at authorized farmers' markets. Coupons are distributed to participants through a staggered process that corresponds with the growing period. The program provides special buying power to community residents that helps sustain and support the market

and has been a catalyst for establishing farmers' markets' in low-income areas. Eleven States and approximately half-a-million people participated in this program in 1994.

## **Public Markets**

A public market, according to Mr. Aaron Zaretsky of the Grove Arcade Public Market Foundation, is a carefully crafted intentional and diverse medley of owner operated shops, stalls, and/or day tables. [Public markets] exist to fill a public purpose and [reflect] what is distinctive about a community while meeting its everyday shopping needs. Public markets are important for community economic development because they provide jobs for low-income communities, putting money in their pockets, enabling them to spend the money in the community. Many local governments, economic development groups, and nonprofits see public markets as one of the most effective ways to revitalize center cities while providing jobs and economic opportunity for residents. The U.S. Economic Development Administration performed an audit on Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington, and found that the one-time, \$7-million grant invested in the redevelopment of the market was the most successful economic development project in history, turning a one-time capital investment into long-term, well-paying jobs.

Public markets require initial capital support but do not require operating support. They have been found to return more than 10 times the amount of taxes to the community than the initial public investment. Public markets make use of existing infrastructure, typically located in downtown areas, to provide goods and services that encourage and support neighboring residential communities. They keep profits circulating in the community while generating millions of dollars in tax revenue. Additionally, public markets are labor intensive, providing numerous jobs, with low overhead for vendors.

Benefits of public markets include:

- Encouragement of entrepreneurship, including cottage industries such as small farmers and artisans
- Provision of nutritious and affordable food
- Incubation of new business, including minority and women-owned businesses
- Creation of a sense of community ownership, and participation
- Creation of a safe and vital environment for the community
- Small and Moderate Independent Stores

The development of many independently owned, small-scale, full-service grocery stores has often been in response to the flight of supermarkets from the inner city, according to Mr. Sigmund Balka of Krasdale foods, Inc. and other presenters. These smaller stores are better able to match the ethnicity of the neighborhoods and stock foods and other products that meet the demands of the consumers. Currently there is a need to convince investors that there's a huge

market area not being adequately tapped in urban areas. For example, in Los Angeles, Rebuild LA identified two major needs: economic development and the revitalization of vacant properties. According to Ms. Linda Wong of Rebuild LA, many of these neighborhoods had tremendous economic vitality, such as an industry, but needed support systems for the community. Their efforts have involved developing a half-dozen properties at once. A community needs assessment showed demand for a full-service grocery store that provides fresh produce and meat as well as canned goods and staple foods.

Small and moderate independent stores face many problems due to their size and lack of affiliation with a large, capital-rich organization. For example, because they do not purchase large quantities as do larger supermarkets, independent stores often have trouble capturing economies of scale. That is, because these stores do not purchase in bulk quantities, they must pay higher prices for their inventories. Consequently, they must charge consumers more for their goods. In addition, they often lack the resources to expand and upgrade their stores or market effectively. One solution is to join a voluntary. A voluntary, according to Mr. Balka, is a concept whereby food wholesalers provide independent stores with financial, management, and technical assistance on a continuing basis. The independent stores that are members of the voluntary trade under a common name and engage in joint purchasing and joint advertising. This allows them to compete with major stores. Smaller stores may also benefit from assistance offered through various Federal programs, including those highlighted under the Supermarket Development section.

### **Transportation Options**

According to Mr. Michael Freedberg of The Center for Neighborhood Technology, the issue of access to supermarkets in the inner city is magnified by the low percentage of people who have access to cars. The dislocation of supermarkets and grocery stores from the inner city has left few acceptable food stores for residents. The Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago is addressing this issue by putting together an alternative transportation strategy that examines the critical needs of a community and how transportation systems can meet that goal. They have formed a commission to look at compact land development around transit hubs. Suggestions to improve access include placing markets, day care centers, and other community amenities around the public transit stops in the inner city. Through promoting microdevelopment around the individual transit stops, transit stops can become the center of activity in the community and begin to have a regional impact along the transportation corridor. By demonstrating the impact of having retail services at this transit station on ridership, the commission has been able to forecast reduced automobile traffic and show how that will help the region meet its air quality goals under the Clean Air Act. This has enabled them to leverage millions of dollars in transportation funds that would otherwise have gone to suburban highway construction.

### **Food Security**

Food security advocates believe that the concept of food security has replaced the concept of hunger among social welfare and antihunger advocates in the United States, creating a change in the way that we think about hunger as a problem in this country. It moves the concept of hunger from being an individual's problem to that of a community need. Food security is a prevention-

oriented concept that looks at the access to food resources within a given community. The Community Food Security Coalition defines food security as "all persons obtaining at all times a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local non-emergency sources (1)." The concept of food security incorporates and addresses the ability of individuals to prepare foods and their level of economic resources to purchase food; a community's access to land for growing food and enhancing community food supplies; the ownership of food-related businesses; the connections of farmers and food processors to communities and markets; and the ability of community organizations to ensure access and availability of food. According to Dr. Kate Clancy of Syracuse University, a food secure community is one where all of its members have access through normal, non-charitable means to adequate, culturally appropriate, nutritious food supplies whenever they need them.

Using Biddle's definition of community development: a social process by which human beings can become more competent to live with and gain some control over local aspects of a frustrating and changing world, food security is an integral aspect of community development. That is, a community is not fully developed until it is food secure and community development cannot take place without attention to food security. However, there has not been a great deal of interaction between food security and community organizing/community development work in this country. This may be due, in part, to the fact that many community development projects, while useful, are driven by economics rather than by human growth. In addition, food has become such a commodity, and so taken for granted, that people assume it is available only through commercial transactions.

Food security advocates believe that there are many ways to attain food security and all of these options should be explored simultaneously. Among these options are cooperatives, food exchanges, community service, public markets, enhanced transportation, urban agriculture, and farmers' markets. Community development projects should be strongly encouraged to incorporate food centered thinking into their working planning activities'.

The Community Food Security Act of 1995 was initially introduced to Congress on July 11, 1995, as a means of promoting food security. These provisions were enacted as part of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-127). The legislation provides for \$1 million in fiscal year 1996 and up to \$2.5 million per year from fiscal year 1997 through 2002 for assistance to community food projects. These projects should be "designed to meet the food needs of low-income people, increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs, and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. The Act is intended to yield a variety of food projects such as urban agriculture, community gardens, farmers' markets, inner city food store development, and microenterprises creating linkages between sectors of the food system.

"Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security in the Inner-city," a study conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), identified numerous solutions to the problem of lack of access to nutritionally adequate diets (2). These solutions include working with smaller stores to enable them to sell nutritional items at lower prices, urban agriculture, farmers' markets, joint ventures between CDCs and supermarkets, microenterprises, buying clubs, and food policy

councils. Food security advocates believe that there is no single answer to the dilemma of food access; rather, a mixture of approaches must be developed and implemented.

## **Summary**

The conference closed with a discussion of what should be done next to increase and ensure access to food in inner city and rural communities. Mr. Michael Fishman, Acting Director, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, FCS, USDA commented that "there is room for everybody under the tent of food access, that there is enough need out there that the challenge is. . . to try to help people get the access to food that they need." Presenters discussed ways in which private, non-profit, local, and Federal entities need to get involved in the promotion of access to food. Mr. Roy Priest, Director of the Office of Economic Development, HUD, said ". . . we've got to look at integrated strategies. . . . you've got to bring together a collaborative framework that allows you to address [issues] holistically. And if you don't do that, then I think you're going to have a very difficult time being able to create any kind of long-term, sustained change in these communities.

Mr. Zy Weinberg of Public Voice for Food and Health Policy said that ". . . successful supermarket development and operation must be a community-wide effort, with the collaboration of [a] whole range of non-profits. . . , for-profit companies, including banks, the grocery industry and its suppliers, unions, and government at all levels, Federal, state, and local. . ."

Ms. Karen Brown of the Food Marketing Institute supported this by saying ". . . revitalization will come only through public-private partnerships involving coalitions of business, community, and government leaders at the local level."

The creation of food security must include a variety of efforts within a community-projects such as farmers' markets and public markets, urban agriculture, food groups collaborating with community development corporations and food retailers, and food policy councils, among others. As Mr. Andy Fisher said, there is no magic solution to food insecurity . . . it is really a kind of basket of solutions that needs to be addressed and needs to be developed.

## End Notes

"The Community Food Security Empowerment Act. January 1995."  
The Community food Security Coalition, Hartford CT.

"Seeds if Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City."  
The Southern California Interfaith Hunger Coalition, Los Angeles, California. 1993.