

Land Use, Healthy Eating and Health Disparities Case Studies

Grocery Store Development: Market Creek Plaza – San Diego, California www.marketcreek.com

An Innovative Public-Private Partnership Returns Grocery Store Services to SE San Diego after a Twenty-Year Absence

Market Creek Plaza is an innovative public-private partnership that generated a \$20-million, 10 acre commercial center in Southeast San Diego built on the site of an abandoned aerospace factory and community eyesore.¹ Initiated with the purchase of the site in 1998 by the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI), a nonprofit organization that operates on the premise that residents must own and drive the change in their communities for it to be meaningful, Market Creek Plaza is now fully leased and completely open. When the Plaza's 57,000 square foot Food 4 Less Supermarket opened, it ended a twenty year absence of grocery services in the community.²

PolicyLink has documented the key successes and innovations of this project:

- Sixty-nine percent of construction contracts were awarded to local minority-owned enterprises.
- Ninety-one percent of the initial Food 4 Less employees were hired from the community to fill unionized jobs with living wages, health care insurance, and pension plans.
- Extensive civic participation in all phases of the project.
- Resident design of a Neighborhood Corporation that will provide a conduit for returning profits from the Plaza back to the community.³

The development of Market Creek Plaza was financed through a \$15 million below-market-rate loan from the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program. NMTC is a federal program created in 2000 to stimulate \$15 billion dollars in private equity investment in low-income communities. The loan was made possible through a partnership involving JCNI, Clearinghouse CDFI (a community development financial institution), Wells Fargo Community Development Corporation, and California Southern Small Business Development Corp.⁴

Market Creek Plaza demonstrates what can be accomplished with creative development, community participation, and full utilization of existing economic development financial tools.

**Community Garden:
Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School Edible Schoolyard
www.edibleschoolyard.org**

In 1995, Alice Waters, noted chef and owner of Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, conceived an idea that transformed an asphalt lot into a nationally recognized tool for ecological and nutrition learning at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School in Berkeley. With the support of the Center for Ecoliteracy (CEL) and Ms. Waters' own Panisse Foundation, The Edible Schoolyard (ESY) became a focus of the curriculum and school culture at MLK, Jr.⁵

In his evaluation of ESY for CEL, J. Michael Murphy, Ed.D., associate professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, describes the mission of ESY as "to create and sustain an organic garden and landscape that is wholly integrated into the school's curriculum and lunch program."⁶ His two year study used students at a nearby school as a control group and found that, in addition to increased knowledge related to ecology, agriculture, and the life cycle of plants:

- Student academic achievement increased with GPA gains in science and math.
- Student psychosocial adjustment improved.
- Teachers rated their school as more conducive to learning than did control school teachers.

A 2002 study conducted by the Agricultural Research Institute at Cal Poly Pomona surveyed 9,805 school principals. Of those, 2,391 respondents indicated that their school has a school garden.⁷ Findings included that:

- Most principals believed their gardens to be moderately to very effective at enhancing science, social skills, academic performance, and physical activity.
- Principals strongly agreed that the garden program would benefit from curriculum materials that linked the garden to academic instruction, related teacher training, and lessons on teaching nutrition.
- Barriers to the garden program were time, lack of curricular materials linked to the garden, and lack of teachers' interest, knowledge, experience, and training related to gardening.
- Space did not seem to be a barrier in most schools.
- Additional barriers included funding, time constraints, and a lack of gardening supplies.

The MLK, Jr., ESY has also demonstrated how a successful program can lead to system-wide innovation by providing a springboard for the Berkeley School Lunch Initiative, passed by the School Board in 2004. This initiative, in collaboration with the Chez Panisse Foundation, Children's Hospital of Oakland, and the Center for Ecoliteracy, will develop programs based on ESY throughout the entire Berkeley school system.⁸

**State-Private Partnership:
Philadelphia Food Trust
www.thefoodtrust.org**

Over a four year period, the Philadelphia Food Trust used research and advocacy to generate one of the most far reaching food access programs in the United States. In 2001, the Food Trust issued the first in its series of three *Food for Every Child* reports.⁹ This report used geographic information systems displays to document the uneven distribution of food in Philadelphia and correlate that mal-distribution with diet related health effects. The Food Trust's second report, *Stimulating Supermarket Development: A New Day for Philadelphia*¹⁰ presented a series of recommendations to the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and local and state economic development and transportation agencies to stimulate supermarket development. The third report, *Philadelphia's New Markets: Ripe for Opportunity for Retailers*¹¹ documented the economic buying power of low-income communities and potential for commercial success of supermarket development in those areas. A companion report, *Food Geography: How Food Access Affects Diet and Health*¹², describes disparities in food access among Philadelphia communities.

These reports, and the advocacy of the staff of The Food Trust, provided the groundwork for the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), a far-reaching set of strategies to increase access to healthy foods in low income communities.

The FFFI is a public-private partnership that addresses the financial needs of grocery store operators who plan to locate in under-served communities. The partnership brings together the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Food Trust, the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (GPUAC), and The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) to establish an \$80 million financing pool to support infrastructure costs and financing for grocery store development. Supermarket developers are also able to take advantage of Pennsylvania's First Industries program, a \$100,000,000 grant and loan program aimed at strengthening Pennsylvania's farming and tourist industries.¹³

Smaller neighborhood food retailers in Philadelphia can apply for FFFI funding through The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative which makes funds available to purchase or upgrade refrigeration systems for fruits and vegetables. This access to funding and related technical assistance, generates economic benefits for communities by providing opportunities for small business owners and creating jobs for local residents. The program will also increase community access to fresh, nutritious, low-cost food items that are cost-prohibitive for smaller stores to stock due to their limited purchasing power.¹⁴

References

-
- ¹ San Diego Metropolitan Uptown Examiner and Daily Business Report, Daily Business Report, June 28, 2004. Accessed at <http://metro.sandiegometro.com/dbr/index.php?dbrID=618> on April 4, 2006.
- ² La Prensa. "Market Creek Plaza Food 4 Less Reaches Milestone With Over One Million Shoppers," October 25, 2002. Accessed at <http://www.laprensa-sandiego.org/archieve/october25-02/food.htm> on April 4, 2006.
- ³ PolicyLink. Market Creek Plaza Overview. Accessed at <http://www.preventioninstitute.org> on April 4, 2006.
- ⁴ San Diego Metropolitan Uptown Examiner and Daily Business Report, Daily Business Report, June 28, 2004. Accessed at <http://metro.sandiegometro.com/dbr/index.php?dbrID=618> on April 4, 2006.
- ⁵ Ciabattari J. "The Incredible Edible Schoolyard," NRTA Live & Learn, Spring 2005. Accessed at http://www.aarp.org/about_aarp/nrta/livelearn/edibleschoolyard.html on April 4, 2006.
- ⁶ Murphy J. Education for Sustainability: Findings from the Evaluation Study of The Edible Schoolyard, Center for Ecoliteracy, April 2003.
<http://www.ecoliteracy.org/publications/pdf/ESYFindings-DrMurphy.pdf>
- ⁷ Perry P. Gardens and Farm-to-School Programs in California Public Schools Project: Final Report. Cal Poly Pomona Agricultural Research Institute, February 12, 2003.
<http://ari.calstate.edu/research/pdf/02-4-052/FinalReport-02-4-052.pdf>.
- ⁸ (Ciabattari J, 2005)
- ⁹ Perry D. *The Need for More Supermarkets in Philadelphia*. The Food Trust. Accessed at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/supermarket.html> on December 12, 2003.
- ¹⁰ Burton H & Perry D. *Stimulating Supermarket Development: A New Day for Philadelphia*, The Food Trust, 2004. Accessed at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/catalog> on April 4, 2006.
- ¹¹ Johnson-Piett J, Perry D, Burton H, & Adler D. *Philadelphia's New Markets: Ripe for Opportunity for Retailers*, The Food Trust. 2006. Accessed at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/catalog> on April 4, 2006.
- ¹² The Food Trust and The Philadelphia Health Management Organization. *Food Geography: How Food Access Affects Diet and Health*, The Food Trust. 2006 Accessed at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/catalog> on April 4, 2006.
- ¹³ Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
- ¹⁴ The Food Trust. *Supermarket Campaign*. Accessed at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/super.market.campaign.php#4> on April 4, 2006.