

# NHPZ

## FOOD SYSTEM INVESTMENT AREAS





## BACKGROUND, METHODOLOGY, RATIONALE

In February 2017, Community Solutions, Inc. engaged Wholesome Wave, a Connecticut-based, national non-profit experienced in programs, policy and research focused on food access, affordability, and government food assistance, and Hartford Food System, a Hartford-based nonprofit with expertise in culturally responsive urban food access programming and convening, to develop a tactical implementation plan to address the challenges of food access and affordability in the North End of Hartford. Support for this project was provided by Well Being 360, a national effort of Trinity Health, and Rx Foundation.

The North End of Hartford, which includes the Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany neighborhoods, has been designated a federal Promise Zone (NHPZ), a high poverty community where the federal government partners with local leaders to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health and address other priorities identified by the community. The NHPZ was selected through three rounds of national competition, in which they demonstrated a consensus vision for their community and its residents, the capacity to carry it out, and a shared commitment to specific, measurable results.

All Promise Zones receive priority access to federal investments that further their strategic plans, federal staff on the ground to help them navigate federal resources, and five full-time AmeriCorps VISTA members to recruit and manage volunteers and strengthen the capacity of the Promise Zone initiatives. As a result, much attention, study and consideration has been made by local and state stakeholders to improve the wellness of the North End community. This food access project was designed to dovetail with overall NHPZ work, by

consolidating past efforts and identifying the most promising strategies and projects for investment.

The vision is for residents of the North End of Hartford to have increased access to fresh, healthy food, and to be able to afford that healthy food with their employment compensation and/or government assistance dollars. A key measure of success would be the number of healthy food access points, as well as the percentage of food budget and food assistance dollars spent on healthy food purchases. The longer-term goal would be to realize improvements in the overall health of North End residents, such as decreases in diet-related disease, better management of chronic, diet-related conditions, and increased preventative health measures that avoid or delay the need for high-cost treatment.

Wholesome Wave began the project with a baseline assessment of the food landscape using previously developed resources, data, and research about the food system, federal food assistance, incentive program usage and healthy food access points in North Hartford. Wholesome Wave then developed a strategy framework with potential Food System Investment Areas. This framework and potential Investment Areas were vetted with key stakeholders and organizations, including operating partners, funders and supporters that would need to buy in and be involved to actualize the proposed projects. Identifying “shovel-ready” partners and projects was key in these interviews as some interventions and programs can be activated within a year.

**This report is the culmination of the process, including opportunities that, when coupled with the correct partnerships, funding, and leveraged resources, could significantly help residents optimize government food assistance and incentive programs, increase**

**food security, and decrease food related diseases in Hartford's North End. These opportunities are also in great part scalable to the rest of the city of Hartford and beyond.**

The production of an action-orientated framework was core to this project. As such, the six **Investment Areas** identified include:

1. **Job Training/Workforce Development**
2. **Swift Food Business Incubator**
3. **A Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx<sup>®</sup>)**
4. **Physical Grocery Store Improvements**
5. **Food Assistance Strategies**
6. **Food Waste Strategies**

Combining the results of the interviews, aggregated research into the NHPZ, and models found locally and beyond, we have built a framework to propel deeper partner and funder discussion of potential interventions, and programs in the Investment Areas.

This document provides a hierarchy of Investment Areas based on:

- The extent to which partners are “shovel-ready”, funding/investment is in place or could likely be secured within a year,
- The models, programs and innovations that can support the infrastructure of that Area, and
- The connections to the other identified Investment Areas through which deeper partnerships can evolve, strengthening their durability in the North Hartford Promise Zone and beyond

The Investment Areas represent opportunities to invest in the health, wellness and economic opportunity of the North Hartford Promise Zone for years to come. Each includes:

- **Current Situation and Potential Partners**
- **Models to Consider**
- **Recommendations**
- **Project Size**
- **Investment Type**
- **Expected Impacts**
- **Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact**



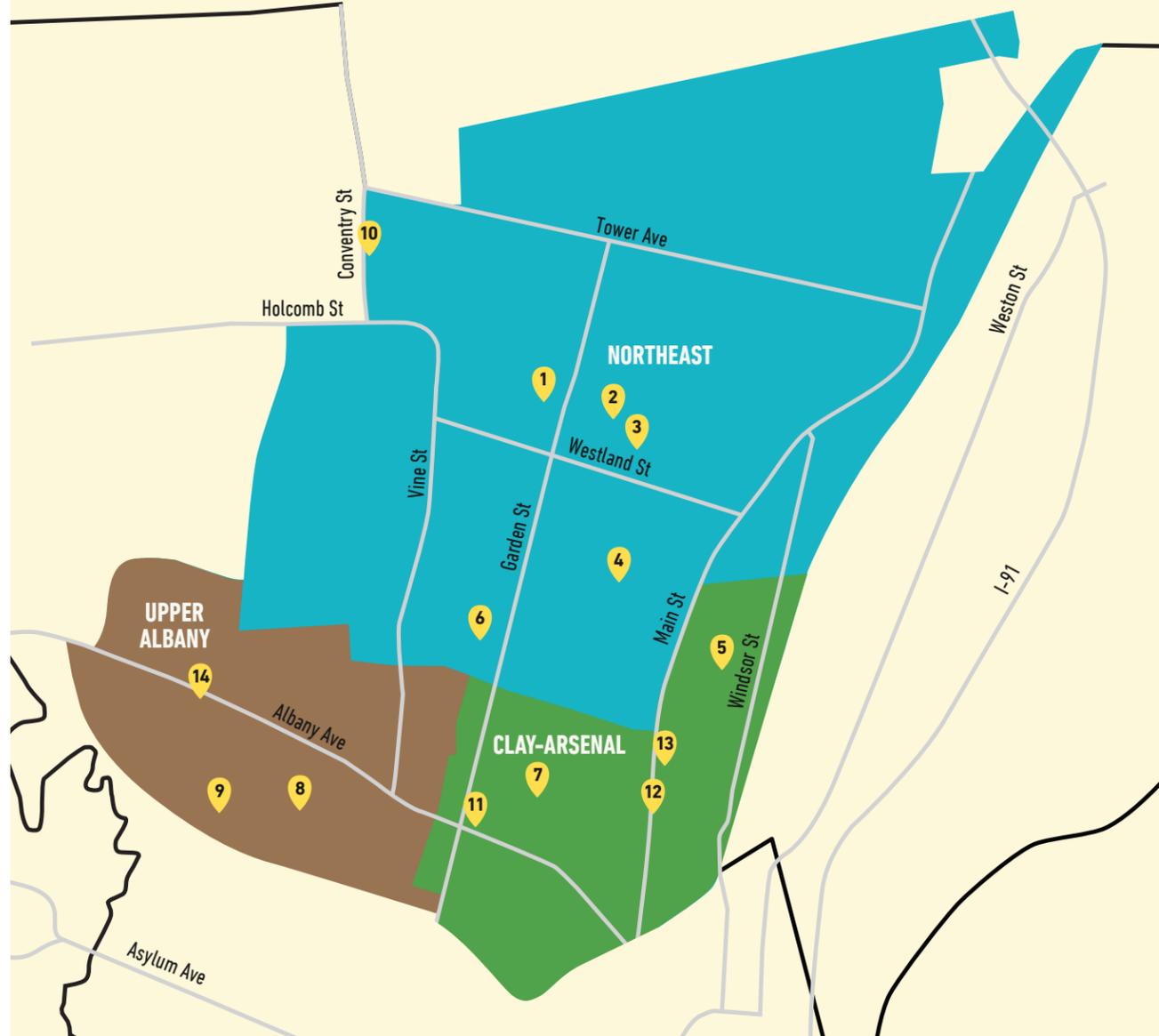
## Readiness Snapshot

INVESTMENT AREA	INVESTMENT TYPE			PROJECT REACH	READINESS WITHIN 1 YEAR
	Programmatic	Advocacy	Physical		
FOOD SECTOR JOB TRAINING/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		Large	Y
SWIFT FOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	Large	Y (set-up and convening)
FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM (FVRx)	<b>X</b>			Medium–Large	Y
PHYSICAL GROCERY IMPROVEMENTS			<b>X</b>	Large–Medium	Y (façade and stock improvements)
FOOD ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES	<b>X</b>			Small–Medium	Y
FOOD WASTE STRATEGIES	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	Small–Medium	N (can set stage with a feasibility study)

The following organizations, groups and policymakers, all referenced in this report, can provide broad context around both current and historical efforts. It is recommended that they should be engaged in shaping any future initiatives.

- **City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy**
- **Community Solutions**
- **End Hunger Connecticut!**
- **Hartford Food System**
- **North Hartford Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (Clay-Arsenal, Northeast, Upper Albany)**
- **North Hartford Promise Zone (City of Hartford Office of the Mayor)**
- **Well Being 360, a Project of The Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity at Saint Francis**

## Existing food system resources in the NHPZ



- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Swift Factory                      | 8. Cabot Street Community Garden               |
| 2. Compare Supermarket                | 9. Homestead Farmers Market                    |
| 3. Mt. Moriah Community Garden        | 10. North End Farmers Market                   |
| 4. J.C. Clark School Garden (dormant) | 11. Mobile Market at Community Health Services |
| 5. Battles Street Community Garden    | 12. Mobile Market at SANDS                     |
| 6. Enfield Street Community Garden    | 13. Save-A-Lot                                 |
| 7. Winter/Green Community Garden      | 14. Bravo Supermarket                          |

# 1 INVESTMENT AREA FOOD SECTOR JOB TRAINING/ WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### KEY FINDINGS:

Connecticut's food sector is a significant economic driver for the development of food-based businesses. Coupled with shovel-ready partners in both the food and workforce development sectors, this investment area is primed to make an immediate difference in the overall economic impact for the community.

### Current Situation and Potential Partners

Opportunities for training and development in the food sector are concentrated in three main areas: culinary training, food manufacturing, and agriculture technology. Job training and workforce development activities in the food sector are currently offered at the Chrysalis Center, Billings Forge Community Works, and at Capital Community College. Business training for entrepreneurs is occurring at reSET Social Enterprise Trust, a non-profit organization whose mission is to advance the social enterprise sector. Recently, they have focused much of their attention and energy on the food arena. They have expressed plans to build out a mentorship program, along with trainings and business development workshops to support food entrepreneurs. This runs parallel to the opportunities for growth in the ag-tech area as evidenced in their connection to Trifecta Ecosystems, an aquaponics business for which they provided accelerator business training and education. reSET has also expressed interest in potentially leasing space at the Swift Factory. They could utilize this space for training, education, demonstration, and as an incubator for beginning entrepreneurs and businesses.

Both reSET and Chrysalis Center, which provides social services and job training, are shovel-ready with programs in operation and available for expansion, depending on population size and investment funds needed for growth. Billings Forge is also interested in expanding their programming, and sees an opportunity to do so with their advocacy efforts in promoting culinary training as a workforce development priority for funding. Capital Workforce Partners has expressed interest in both improving access to workforce funding for culinary training with evidence-based research, as well as looking at traditional workforce development funding for potential connections and opportunities within the culinary field.

Culinary training is a major opportunity for residents in the Promise Zone, and according to our interviews, highly needed for the area restaurants that are seeking trained individuals for their kitchens.

Restaurants currently employ 9% (nearly 155,000) of Connecticut workers, and the number of restaurants in and surrounding Hartford are increasing, as part of the \$7.5 billion in projected sales in Connecticut's restaurants in 2017. Food manufacturing has been identified as an emerging strength for the state with employment of more people in the region (+34%) while declining nationally (-2%), even during the recent recession, according to reSET. This trend has caught the attention of many potential food entrepreneurs/manufacturers.

Capital Community College (CCC) has significant interest and participation in their Culinary Arts and Food Service Management program. It is one of the most popular certificate classes in the CCC's Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program Education and Training (SNAP-ET) program. SNAP-ET funds support workforce training for low-income working families and individuals participating in SNAP. Dan Gregory of CCC explained that participants in the program could benefit from greater access to additional workforce and business skill sets, potentially like those for food entrepreneurs, offered by reSET. He also expressed interest in comprehensively building out the Urban Farming certificate program (in partnership with Knox, which operates educational programming and administration of community gardens), which could include agriculture technology as a field of interest. He also cited that potential use of Swift's space for off-site education could lead to a greater retention of class participants since many students reside in the North End of Hartford. Utilizing nearby community gardens, as well as Swift's food and agricultural production space, for demonstrations, would help expand and enhance their program offerings.

Cary Wheaton of Billings Forge Community Works cited that the most challenging aspect for culinary job training has been the lack of major public funding from traditional federal and local workforce development funding entities, all while area restaurants are having difficulty hiring skilled kitchen staff. She also cited the current dearth of opportunities for individuals in training and workforce programs to be able to access the "front of the house" positions that are public facing and which add more value to a participant's work skills and resume. Inequality in the food system also often includes unequal access to positions as hosts/hostesses and other business representatives.

Capital Workforce Partners works with federal and state funding for workforce development, and their three areas

of focus do not currently include culinary job training. Being an area of focus requires an evidence-base in the Occupational Insights database for a self-sufficient income ladder, meaning there are opportunities for meaningful economic advancement in the career. Rather, much of the funding for culinary job training to places like Billings Forge have come from foundational and private funds, which are highly competitive and can be inconsistent from year to year. Federal, state or local funding for workforce development has been identified by local job training organizations as critical to sustaining these types of culinary workforce preparatory programs.

Jim Boucher of Capital Workforce Partners explained that it is completely possible that some existing monies could be distributed or used differently to fund the training and workforce development needed for culinary and/or agricultural technology training. Two specific funding streams are the SNAP-ET monies (funded to states by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service) and the Workforce Opportunity Tax Credits (federal tax credits from the Department of Labor available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment). Currently, SNAP-ET is distributed among community colleges in CT. One community college, Asnuntuck Community College in CT, stated that their high retention and placement rates in SNAP-ET programs with nearly three quarters of the students obtaining a job afterward, could still benefit from targeted case management and job placement and retention services, among others. Partnering with non-profits, such as Chrysalis Center, which provides case management, could provide a connection that would mitigate retention issues and ensure better job placement in the culinary and/or ag-tech field.

## Models to Consider

The District of Columbia's **DC Central Kitchen** is perhaps one of the best models to look at in terms of culinary job training with 90% of their graduates finding jobs after an intensive 14-week session. Their class cohort includes individuals who were formerly incarcerated, had addictions, were homeless, and experienced trauma, among other major challenges; the goal is to prepare these individuals to be able to enter the workforce trained and ready. DC Central Kitchen also develops soft skills such as resume writing, budgeting, and interviewing skills for participants.

In Brooklyn, NY, **Job Corps**, a national program funded in part by the Department of Labor, has a Culinary Arts

Career Training program where students receive training for all the back- and front-of-house skills needed in the restaurant industry. This program aligns with industry standards and students who complete a program in this hospitality training area can earn nationally recognized credentials from organizations such as: the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI), the National Restaurant Association, and ServSafe, the national standard in hospitality and culinary arts training and credentialing.

For ag-tech, the new space recently opened in Brooklyn, New York, **AgTech X Co-Lab** is a model to consider. This lab provides hands-on training, the use of hydroponic equipment, educational events, and access to resources for both newcomers and entrepreneurs. It aims to empower individuals to become part of the growing movement of change-makers working to build a more transparent, sustainable, and healthier food system. They host an "AgTech Week" with panels and demonstrations on everything from aquaponics to rooftop gardens and innovative rain catchment systems.

In Cleveland, Ohio, a for-profit cooperative urban agriculture business called **Green City Growers Cooperative** includes a five-acre farm using ag-tech in the form of a hydroponic greenhouse growing leafy greens and herbs which are then sold to grocery stores and wholesale produce businesses. Green City Growers expects to provide 35 to 40 long-term, living-wage jobs for low-income residents living in the surrounding area and the expectation is that worker-owners will build about \$65,000 in savings in eight years.

SHAR in Michigan, which is similar to the Chrysalis Center in that they work with a challenged workforce population (individuals in substance abuse recovery), has created a collaborative effort involving over 50 organizations and seven universities to help launch one of Detroit's largest urban farms, **RecoveryPark**. They coordinate three years of supportive services for program participants, ensuring that they have access to comprehensive health care, adequate housing, transportation, rehabilitation support, family reunification, educational opportunities, and other wraparound services. The SHAR program plans to encompass approximately 30 acres of vacant land and will use an efficient, three-tier system over three growing seasons. The farms will also have a packaging company on site.

Other models of SNAP-ET Community College certificate and even associate programs could help with the

existing and future job training opportunities as part of a collaboration with Capital Community College. For instance, **Johnson County Community College** in Kansas has a comprehensive program for sustainable agriculture, and includes food safety compliance among other requirements. While not directly connected to a community college, both **City Slicker** and **Urban Adamah** farms in the Bay Area of California provide education programs that includes vermiculture, beekeeping, aquaponics, and composting in a city.

## Recommendations

Connecticut's food sector is a significant economic driver for the positive development of food-based businesses. There is a projected \$7.5 billion dollars in restaurant sales for 2017 in the state with 154,100 jobs. By 2027, that employment number is projected to grow by 7.1% for a total of 165,100 jobs<sup>1</sup>. As noted above, restaurants in CT are having a difficult time staffing their kitchens. In nearby Massachusetts, staffing shortages are characterized as a "crisis" with kitchens struggling to staff almost all positions<sup>2</sup>.

With an easier entry point for many individuals, including low-income and re-entry populations, the food sector is often characterized by high turnover and low pay. Further, there are significant racial disparities between front of the house and back of the house operations in the restaurant industry. Advocacy is needed to break down these barriers and create greater workforce parity. Again, a workforce that is well versed in not only knife skills, but also knowledge about food, how it is grown, customer service and other soft skills will be at a greater advantage for front of the house positions. Connecting and engaging with institutional food service entities will also be critical for many individuals as they often provide positions that have more regular hours for people with families and have less turnover than restaurants. Sodexo, the vendor for Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and Chartwells, who serves Trinity College and some nearby K-12 schools, may provide key opportunities.

An exceptional aspect of the Johnson County Community College program is the breadth of the courses in their certificate offering. They help prepare individuals within a variety of areas within the food sector; a school garden program, food policy councils, and produce management, just to name a few. A culinary/ag-tech/jobs training program should include exposure to all of the varied existing food system organizations, businesses, and initiatives within Hartford to provide

exposure and opportunity to relay their training to other areas of work within the food system. Further, urban agriculture training, even if it does not lead to full time farm employment, does provide individuals with skills to produce their own food at a fraction of the cost, thereby providing the skills that could result in greater food access and nutrition. Working to find and/or further develop SNAP-ET eligible job training programs in the food sector is economically advantageous for both the provider and the participant. It helps individuals maximize what is available to them through their food assistance benefits and the community college is reimbursed for each participant.

With Swift acting as a hub space for food, ag-tech, and growing knowledge along with such partners as Knox, Trifecta, Chrysalis, and others, there is a clear opportunity to connect knowledge of growing food with how to cook it for farm to table cuisine establishments, as well as for the food service companies and institutions that feature “local” in their offerings. Participants in any job training program held at Swift, or anywhere else, could receive specialized education on what grows local to Connecticut and how to cook with it, giving them a “leg up” in the growing restaurant industry and in the specialized area of local food, a trend that has exhibited growth and staying power.

While there are many great models of training, it is not clear that there are any significant gaps in the resources and knowledge already present in Hartford with Chrysalis, Capital Community College, reSET and Billings Forge, among others like Hartford Food System, Knox and the Keney Park Sustainability Project. Finding connections, synergies, gaps in offerings, and the like through meetings with all of these partners, and the ones not currently at the table, like Job Corps in Hartford — who like their counterpart in Brooklyn, could help fill a gap in the need to find funded culinary training for North End residents and beyond — will be critical to the success of building out the varied training programs for the food sector.

Job Training and Workforce Development in the food sector will need to be strategic in order to avoid overlap in roles and responsibilities of the actors. For example, specializing programs for the promising sectors by each partner to avoid everyone training within the culinary sector. Outlining roles, responsibilities and capabilities by each partner, as suggested by reSET’s Ojala Naeem, will require consistent communication among partners.

**Project Size:** Large

**Investment Type:** Programmatic & Advocacy

### Expected Impacts

- Job & training opportunities
- Increased skill sets of growing food
- Economic; including enabling participants to afford food for their households
- Increase in access to local vegetables and fruits, better health outcomes
- Greater partnerships between organizations
- Increase in public money for culinary job training programs

### Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

While estimates on cost greatly depend on the number of potential classes, trainings, and cohort sizes, costs for job development and training programs could be mitigated greatly, or be cost neutral as the state of Connecticut reimburses community colleges for half the cost of each SNAP-ET course per participant. Focusing on expanding existing culinary programs that are SNAP-ET eligible and working with others, like Job Corps that have public funding already, could expand programming and could help maximize private and public dollars to fund the parts that are unsubsidized. Capital Workforce Partners would have specific advice on how to potentially access WOTC funds for culinary job training as well. Discussions with Chrysalis Center on cost per participant for both their culinary program and hydroponic training program would shed more light on specific costs needed to develop an itemized budget for future programming.

### Next Steps

Determine likelihood, capacity, and potential timeline for expansion of SNAP-ET and Workforce Investment Act monies for culinary job training through high-level meetings at Capital Community College and at Job Corps in Hartford. Concurrently, determine with Capital Workforce Partners the availability of Workforce Opportunity Tax Credits for businesses that would hire those trained individuals. Based on that information, potentially hold discussions with entities such as Chartwells and identify other food based employers to gauge interest in hiring trained individuals and utilizing tax credits in doing so.

# 2 INVESTMENT AREA SWIFT FOOD BUSINESS INCUBATOR

### KEY FINDINGS:

Investing in the historic Swift Factory as an epicenter of food business incubation will lead to greater economic viability for start-up businesses and general growth for Hartford’s food business sector. Models of food business incubation provide this investment area with best practices and models of management that will help this incubator succeed.

### Current Situation and Potential Partners

Community Solutions, the entity that owns and operates the leasing at Swift, has secured funding for food business incubation infrastructure including shared and individual kitchen spaces, shared office space, conference and meeting areas, and a future parking lot and loading dock, among other value-added features. At least two parties are interested in either leasing space or providing programmatic services. Bears Smokehouse BBQ expressed interest early in the project as they are looking for space to manufacture their line of popular sauces and condiments. Food manufacturing like this, from a homegrown Connecticut business that provides a living wage to employees and is interested in hiring from within Hartford’s re-entry populations, is an auspicious indicator of the types of businesses which Swift will attract.

Three potential partners, Knox, Keney Park Sustainability Project, and Trifecta Ecosystems, were interviewed, and Knox and Keney Park Sustainability Project expressed willingness to engage with the Food Business Incubator, workforce development training and initiatives, and increasing healthy food access in Hartford’s North End. Trifecta Ecosystems, a graduate of reSET’s business programming, is still reviewing whether that location is right for their indoor farm. However, the space as imagined for hydroponic growing, is still a viable pursuit and the number of start-ups interested in hydroponics grows every day.

Knox expressed their readiness to engage in a variety of ways reflective of the multi-faceted asset that Swift, as an epicenter of food, could be in Hartford’s North End. Knox is interested in positioning themselves as leaders in the education of farmers and gardeners. Swift is located within close proximity to vacant or underutilized land that could be repurposed for growing food, as well as near existing community gardens, many of which Knox currently manages. The Swift Factory includes space on-site that could be used for the indoor farming, as well as meeting room and education space potentially allowing Knox to expand their Beginning Urban

Farmer program operated in partnership with Capital Community College. Knox, Keney Park Sustainability Project, and the Hartford Food System have considerable knowledge of urban gardening and farming, as well as some ag-tech areas, such as composting, hydroponic growing, bee-keeping and more, which have potential synergies with other activities and partners on site.

Investment in the Swift Factory as an education and innovation center for ag-tech, and manufacturing of value-added products, not only increases job opportunities for residents in the NHPZ, but also training opportunities for community gardeners and others to potentially increase production and/or value of their community gardens. Many food incubators double as education and community resource hubs for all things food related. While the Connecticut landscape is not without food incubators, in the Hartford area there are currently no large-scale food incubators. The one closest to Hartford is in Willimantic, approximately 40 miles away, and not easily accessible to most Hartford food entrepreneurs.

Plans for Swift include a large-scale commercial kitchen that has, among many other possibilities and businesses, potential use as a collection point for the processing or packaging of “seconds” fruits and vegetables from local farmers that would not otherwise be sold. These seconds, whether whole or lightly processed, could be targeted to existing corner stores and very small grocers

to help them move closer to being a healthy food access point without cost being such a factor for them or their customers. Fostering the development of a business like this, a type of food hub, could activate the other two investment areas, Job Training/Workforce Development and Food Recovery and Waste as well.

### Models to Consider

The number of Food Incubator models, especially in urban areas, abound. **CLiCK**, in nearby Willimantic, offers shared use commercial kitchens to both farmers and culinary entrepreneurs seeking to create food-based businesses and aims to improve the health of their community by teaching gardening, culinary arts, nutrition, and other food-related classes. **Hope and Main** in Rhode Island, with a comprehensive food business curriculum, meeting spaces and cold and regular storage areas, has the critical components that the Food Incubator at Swift is considering and planning. **Kitchen Cru** in Oregon has a very similar footprint to Swift Factory with 4,800 sq. feet available for incubation, and as anticipated with Swift, has both an hourly and monthly rate available for participants.

**Western Massachusetts Processing Center** has both incubation and food processing space and offers many of the resources that reSET offers its clients in their incubation and growth programs for businesses. An example of a multi-use Incubator and Hub space in one common building is the **Republic Food Enterprise Center**

in Pennsylvania, which also has a CSA model to close the gap between people and access to healthy, fresh produce and provide a higher value revenue stream. Appalachian Sustainable Development has a food hub called **Appalachian Harvest** in West Virginia that aggregates fruit and vegetable seconds, marketed and branded as “Practically Perfect”, and sells within a supply chain in the Appalachian corridor.

### Recommendations

Prioritizing participation from North Hartford residents in both entrepreneurship and incubation at Swift as well as in targeted food-centric programming will significantly help individuals gain economic growth, training, education, and other opportunities for upward mobility.

The Swift Food Business Incubator should also consider prioritizing a type of food hub to take residence in the space. If access to nutritious food in the Promise Zone is limited, the Swift Factory space could help by looking closely at feasibility studies done for the city of Hartford for food hub creation, targeted populations, and sustainability, and consider doing a study of their own to determine if a food hub in the North End would mitigate food insecurity in the area.

With the many different existing and potential partners involved in the Swift Food Business Incubator, it is critical that it convene partners regularly with consistent and timely communication on plans, changes, successes, and general progress in goals and efforts. Convening an Advisory Panel with quarterly meetings with all the confirmed and/or potential partners would be an excellent way of keeping forward movement.

**Project Size:** Large

**Investment Type:** Programmatic & Physical

### Expected Impacts

Direct

- Job, training, and educational opportunities
- Entrepreneurial skill set growth
- Economic impact

Indirect

- Increased skill sets of growing food
- Additional local food at grocery stores
- Increase in access to local vegetables and fruits, better health outcomes

### Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

Assuming the investment in Swift Food Business Incubator reaches even an eighth of the NHPZ’s population (approx. 3,000 people with family members of participants included) with business incubation startup funds, an investment of just \$100,000 would cost approximately \$33 per person to deliver. These startup funds could help procure basic and sophisticated food preparation tools and appliances, event and programming supplies, as well as services such as ongoing food safety training, security, specialized consultations, and the like. Many small and mid-sized Food Incubators (without an attached or associated food hub that sorts, processes, and or distributes food) operate at or below a \$100,000 operating budget with rent/mortgage, salaries and benefits for staffing and management, utilities, maintenance, insurance, and other incidentals as line items within that budget.

For any future potential food hub programming, financing and granting entities such as RSF Social Finance and the USDA have been able to provide startup capital and other operating funds to help hubs get started and organized. However, the long-term success and durability of Food Hubs in general is still being observed in their nascent states. It is vital that no matter the size of the hub, the strategic goals and infrastructure must be set in place before engaging in activities. A comprehensive set of revenue streams must be in place to help offset costs of operation since the value of unprocessed wholesale food is low compared to the costs of handling, aggregating, storing, and distributing it.

### Next Steps

Gauging the specific levels of readiness and timeline of existing interested businesses to start light processing, manufacturing, and/or pursuits such as catering at Swift and measuring that against Swift’s capacity and infrastructure is a natural first step. Following this would be determining how much usage and space is available to other food business incubation pursuits. reSET, Knox, Trifecta Ecosystems, Keney Park Sustainability Project, Community Solutions, and other interested parties could be convened now as an Advisory Panel to determine potential opportunities within their own programs and beyond that could help build out available food business incubation space at Swift. Visiting other models of food incubation spaces is a step that can be made now so as to help determine who or what entity should be managing the overall food incubation space at Swift.





# 3 INVESTMENT AREA FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM (FVRx®)

## KEY FINDINGS:

The existing infrastructure of partnerships between hospital and food access organizations in Hartford is a critical foundation in making a prescription program succeed. The success already experienced by incentive-based nutrition programs in the Hartford area is an indication that a FVRx program would not only succeed, but also complement and potentially bolster the usage of existing incentive programs at farmers markets and retail locations.

## Current Situation and Potential Partners

The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) brings nutrition incentives to the healthcare sector, enabling doctors and health-care staff to prescribe subsidized produce to those who need it most, often mitigating food insecurity and diet-related diseases. Wholesome Wave launched the FVRx program in 2010, and has since expanded it in major cities across the country. The program model is designed to engage both health care providers and healthy food access sites (farmers markets and grocery stores) in addressing the social determinants of health. As part of the program, participants at risk for diet-related disease or who are identified as food insecure, are enrolled by providers and equipped with monetary incentives that can be spent on fruits and vegetables. These funds are often accompanied by nutrition education and building healthy food literacy to provide a multi-prong preventative health intervention.

Currently, Trinity/Saint Francis Hospital is considering a role as both funder and participant. Their existing partnership with the Cooking Matters program would likely be the starting point for such a prescription program. With an enrollment of about 35 people, retention has been made successful through utilizing community assets such as churches to recruit and retain participants. Patient health is their primary concern. Likewise, Community Health Services, as a potential location to give out prescriptions, explained that was their main concern as well; and was interested in engaging in a prescription program.

Both entities spoke about the challenge of accessing fresh fruits and vegetables for the prescription program. Without grocery stores in the NHPZ that stock quality fruits and vegetables, and with farmers markets and Mobile Markets being available at limited times, their concern is that participants would be greatly restricted as to where and when they could access food. Wholesome Wave, has a depth of experience in designing and timing the FVRx program (in food deserts like Dayton, OH and the Navajo Nation) to optimize the

resources within a community. Further, this could be a future synergy with a potential food hub placed at Swift or elsewhere in Hartford and its ability in building out a higher quality produce supply for the North End stores.

FVRx could trigger a significant new consumption of fresh vegetables and fruit in the NHPZ with SNAP participants. Using the existing health clinic and resources within the community, specifically at Saint Francis Hospital and at Community Health Services, impacts on health would be measured using both qualitative and quantitative methods. While the two traditional farmers markets and mobile market stops in these neighborhoods would benefit, there is a potential for engaging the existing grocery stores and encouraging improvement in their offerings, and/or creating robust CSA type of programs for health food prescriptions as well. Existing community garden spaces could also be utilized under the umbrella of prescriptions from FVRx.

## Models to Consider

Locally in Connecticut, we have two programs, Food as Medicine, a partnership between Hartford Hospital, Hartford Food System, and the Hispanic Health Council, and New Haven Farms' Farm-Based Wellness Program. **The Hartford Mobile Market** is operated year-round by Hartford Food System as a fruit and vegetable market in several Hartford neighborhoods. Hartford Hospital and Hispanic Health Council have partnered on a project with the Hartford Mobile Market to establish a vegetable and fruit prescription program, called Food as Medicine, for low-income patients with diabetes. A pilot program was conducted that provided the "prescriptions" along with \$5 vouchers for the Mobile Market, with separate vouchers for fruits and for vegetables. The pilot results indicated patient interest, but relatively low voucher redemption rates. A pilot assessment is underway, with another round of prescriptions anticipated that will include the Mobile market, but may also be extended to Farmers markets and even grocery stores.

New Haven Farms' signature program, the **Farm-Based Wellness Program**, is a partnership with three New Haven institutions that care for the city's most medically underserved community members: Fair Haven Community Health Center, Cornell Scott-Hill Health Center, and Yale Primary Care. Healthcare providers refer low-income adult patients with diet-related chronic disease risk factors to the farm-based program. During the 16–20 weeks of the growing season, these referred patients and their families attend weekly 2-hour, bilingual Spanish/English cooking demonstrations,

nutrition classes, and gardening lessons. Each week, participants take home shares of fresh vegetables and fruits grown by New Haven Farms, along with culturally relevant recipes. Youth who attend the Farm-Based Wellness Program receive simultaneous age-appropriate gardening, cooking, and nutrition education.

Ohio's FVRx program utilizes both farmers markets and grocery stores as healthy food access points. Wholesome Wave was hired by the Ohio Department of Health to pilot and design an innovative FVRx program that integrates with the CDC Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP). Pre-diabetic patients are enrolled in the year-long DPP and receive coupons at each class that can be spent at local farmers markets and grocery stores on fruits and vegetables. The DPP runs in over 50 sites across the state as well as nationally; with outcomes from the pilot in Ohio, forthcoming in September of 2018, the potential for expansion and replicability is significant.

The Appalachian Foodshed from Virginia is one of the most interesting models to consider, because its usage of community gardens is the primary resource of produce for program recipients. The Promise Zone's existing community gardens are locations for food security, and could be utilized in an FVRx program. Community gardens can be areas of congregation and pick up of food, CSA's or like the Appalachian Foodshed, plots in the community garden can be given out as prescriptions.

The most exciting factor about an FVRx program is that it is customizable for each community and population. Wholesome Wave has existing models to draw from in designing a prescription program and can innovate with input from partners and community.

## Recommendations

Saint Francis Hospital's desire to start a prescription program with their participation in the Cooking Matters cohort will likely lead to better retention and responsiveness to the program since they have already cultivated a relationship with participants around healthy food. In fact, each program will be affecting the other positively.

Apart from the Cooking Matters cohort, selecting a cohort from Community Health Services that also shares something in common, such as a Diabetes Prevention Group or similar program, will likely yield better results than with a randomly selected group that might not have a common meeting time or procedure already in place.

**Project Size:** Medium–Large

**Investment Type:** Programmatic

## Expected Impacts

- Increase in access to local vegetables and fruits
- Increase in consumption of healthy produce
- Increase in better health outcomes
- Increase skill sets in preparing and cooking food
- Increased skill sets of growing food

## Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

In reaching 50 families between both Saint Francis and Community Health Services, prescription costs alone would be approximately \$28,000 depending on how much the prescription voucher is for each week per participant. Incentive costs are dependent on the number of participants. Using \$7 per person in a family of 5, the following equation shows the prescription cost: FVRx Costs: (\$7/week) x (50 families) x (average family size of 5) x (16 weeks). Other costs such as for staff and personnel to both provide medical data collection and review, as well as for any programmatic component chosen for the program would be in addition to the base prescription costs.

In 2015–2016, Wholesome Wave reported that 54% of individuals participating in FVRx increased their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables while 47% decreased their body mass index (BMI). Most importantly, 45% of patient households reported an increase in food security during the project period as well<sup>3</sup>.

In terms of local economic development impact, as much as \$0.68 of each \$1 spent on food stays within the local economy, so \$19,040 would be spent and banked locally, in addition to the base prescription costs going direct to local farmers.

## Next Steps

Determine availability of present and future funds, and partners available for a larger scale prescription program for the North End of Hartford. Work with Wholesome Wave to explore exactly what kind of prescription models would work best with that funding and the particular food landscape and existing programming in the area.



# 4 INVESTMENT AREA PHYSICAL GROCERY IMPROVEMENTS

## KEY FINDINGS:

With recent movement to identify developers within the scope of a new market study, Hartford is poised to identify the needs and possibilities for a new grocery store in the NHPZ. Existing grocers can maintain competitiveness in the marketplace while improving their customer's experience and selection within the stores with a funded matching program for facade improvements.

## Current Situation and Potential Partners

Historically, it has been a struggle to keep a mid-sized or large grocery store in the NHPZ, or even to have existing grocery stores stock high quality produce and products. Population fluctuations, poverty and mismatched grocery management, as well as the often poor internal and external condition of the physical stores, have left the NHPZ without a successful mid-large scale grocery store with quality food. There is a spectrum of options to improve the grocery environment, including facade improvements, cleaner and brighter interiors, better quality and better-displayed produce, and product changes/additions. The addition of a full service supermarket would also significantly help individuals optimize government food assistance and incentive programs in the North End.

In 2014, The Reinvestment Fund issued a report ranking Connecticut worst among 48 states with limited supermarket access for low-income residents<sup>4</sup>. A market study by the same entity found that over \$40 million dollars was being utilized at surrounding suburban grocery stores by Hartford residents. In 2015, the Reinvestment Fund provided funding for facade improvements to the North End's Bravo Supermarket, yet the community still does not fully patronize the store, likely because of its quality of offerings and what they stock.

Invest Health in Hartford is a grant-funded 18-month project exploring ways to improve health and access for low-income residents, and grocery store improvements is a primary area of focus. Partners in Invest Health include Community Solutions, Hartford Food System, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, the City of Hartford Department of Health and Human Services, and UConn's Office of Service Learning. These partners are critical in pulling together expertise, resources, community knowledge, and innovative practices.

Interviews with Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) chairs Darlene Robertson-Childs and Denise Best provided a view of the

historical frustration with both the existing grocery options in the Promise Zone as well as with the city and various developers' inability to court and build out a higher quality store for the North End of Hartford. They both confirmed that the leakage of grocery dollars, whether from SNAP benefits or not, to nearby towns such as West Hartford, Bloomfield, and Windsor, was directly due to the belief that the produce and products in North End grocery stores and corner stores was insufficient, of poor quality, and often in environments that were in disarray on the inside and hardly inviting on the outside.

Pastor Paul Everett agreed with most of what is described above, with one exception. As the head of the Phillips Metropolitan CME Church and the North Star Fund, Inc., he has advocated for a development such as a Wal-Mart, rather than a stand-alone grocery store. He also noted that he is interested in trying to improve the existing Bravo grocery store on Albany Avenue.

Under the direction of the Hartford Community Loan Fund, a market study is underway, conducted by Uplift Solutions, to provide insight into the best approach for a new grocery store/supermarket in the North End.

The City's Development Services team is interested in healthy food as an economic development opportunity and there has been preliminary interest shown by two developers to explore a full-service market in the North End. In addition, there has been community discussion about the potential for a co-op in the north end.

## Models to Consider:

While grocery models continue to change at a rapid pace, a few stand out as being viable options for low-income communities while not compromising on quality of produce and store design and feel. Specifically, **Daily Table** in the Boston area, and **Whole Food's 365 Store** are potential model grocery stores for the North End community. Whole Foods and **Wegmans** stores have plans to build in lower-income communities, with Whole Foods working with Chicago's South Side Englewood community members to determine economically accessible grocery staples required by that population.

The **Green Grocer Project**, which Urbane Development designed and implemented in Detroit, is a great example of working with both existing and new grocers in a city to roll out improvements to the physical infrastructure of grocery stores as well as their offerings. Concurrently, Green Grocer Project Façade Improvement Program is a redevelopment tool for Detroit grocery stores. Façade

Improvement Program participants can receive 50% matching grants for making eligible improvements up to a maximum of \$50,000. Awards are made based on project feasibility, community impact, and opportunity to leverage other investments.

In terms of improving stock quality, the C-Town on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford saw a major boost to their healthy food inventory with their participation in the retail SNAP/Food Stamp incentive program overseen by Hartford Food System, through a USDA FINI grant awarded to Wholesome Wave. Results indicate that more customers purchased more fresh produce, increasing the amount and turnover of store inventory.

## Recommendations:

Most prevalent in the interview with NRZ chairs Best and Robertson-Childs, was the concept of "disrespect." The existing stores with their haphazard selection of expiring foodstuffs and poor condition of both the interior and exterior of the buildings, exhibit a disrespect to a community that has been lacking in resources and equity for well over a century. Any process for bringing a new grocery store to the North End, must be rooted in respect, transparency, and openness to community input.

Likewise, any improvements must also be rooted in respect for the community and not only be on the façade and surroundings of the grocery, but on the inside as well. Organization, shelving, lighting, cleanliness, produce, product quality and selection in the existing stores needs to be overhauled and greatly improved to indicate respect for the people that need and want to shop there and spend their dollars more locally rather than traveling to an outside community.

**Project Size:** Large-Medium

**Investment Type:** Physical

## Expected Impacts

- Increase in access to local vegetables and fruits
- Increase in consumption of healthy produce
- Greater economic impact

## Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

Outdoor facade improvements in Detroit's Green Grocer Program were a 50/50 match up to \$50,000 per store for only exterior street level improvements. Interior improvements in a mid-size grocery store can range

from approximately \$1,000 for a deep clean of the entire store, all new light bulbs and a new shelving units to highlight a few areas, to \$10,000 for a more robust shelving system, changing out flooring in key areas and changing signage, to \$25,000 for a complete lighting fixture revamp, purchasing new freezer cases, or restructuring entrances and exits for the store. A return on investment for retail upgrades also greatly depends on the actual offerings the store has, and not just how it looks.

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative<sup>5</sup>, along with the New Market Tax Credit<sup>6</sup> funding, can help fund the building out of a new store in the Promise Zone for a larger investment (anywhere between \$3–5 million dollars in loans) or be utilized for improving and revamping existing stores. Improved employment opportunities are another benefit when new stores are built or existing stores improved in a manner that leads to increased purchase and consumption of healthy produce.

### Next Steps

Gauge the level of interest from developers for a full service grocery store in the NHPZ, as well as their anticipated timeline. In the meantime, discuss façade and internal improvements with each existing grocery store owner in Hartford to determine what, if any, interest and capacity they have for purchasing improvements to their stores. A follow-up to that would be to determine how local funding sources through the Hartford Community Loan Fund and any available state funding could be used to help fund these store owner's façade improvements.



# 5 INVESTMENT AREA FOOD ASSISTANCE STRATEGIES

### Current Situation and Potential Partners:

Nutrition incentives are one of the most common tools currently in use. These are funds specifically limited to healthy food, often for fruits and vegetables, given to low-income communities, seniors on fixed incomes, SNAP recipients, and many more at-risk for food insecurity. In some programs, the funds are directly linked to a participant first using a food assistance benefit such as SNAP or WIC, or simply provided to a recipient such as in the FVRx program. Nearly every nutrition incentive program in Connecticut began with Wholesome Wave's financial support, toolkits, and guidance. Today, almost all of these programs have sought and secured additional funds through federal, state, and local funders, as well as using innovative fundraising events and mechanisms to support their incentive programs.

Currently there are nutrition incentives being utilized in Hartford at farmers markets in the North End operated by Hartford Food System and Chrysalis, at Billings Forge, the West End of Hartford, as well as at Hartford Food System's Mobile Market, which reaches multiple locations throughout the city. Each market has seen growth every season in customers using SNAP and the incentive benefits tied to them. Moreover, they are working together in a Connecticut Incentive Network of market operators and state partners.

Hartford Food System and Wholesome Wave have been working on the supermarket side of food access and assistance strategies with retailers like C-Town in Hartford's south end. The participating store commits to stocking a diverse selection of locally grown items during the growing season, training staff, providing regular reporting, and participating in marketing and branding efforts, as well as program evaluation. This program has led to more customers using SNAP benefits at the store, and more produce being bought. It has also engaged the storeowners in purchasing more local produce in season, and new signage and marketing has bolstered their branding and self-image.

### KEY FINDINGS:

Existing nutrition incentives at Hartford's farmers markets, mobile markets, and more recently at grocery stores, have been successful and created best practices. There are opportunities to re-direct some of the most successful incentive programs specifically to the NHPZ and continue to build out a more comprehensive retail incentive program for greater nutrition access.

Beyond nutrition incentives tied specifically to the redemption of food assistance benefits currently being utilized and accepted by both some grocery stores and farmers markets, small incentive programs are offered without even needing to use SNAP benefits, such as with the Community Health Services and Hispanic Health Council's coupons to better access and try the foods available on the Hartford Mobile Market.

Current organizations involved and already mentioned are the Hartford Food System, Billings Forge Community Works, Community Health Services, Hispanic Health Council, and Wholesome Wave. Near future significant partners include the CT Incentive Network, which has identified and started to use a statewide branding and marketing strategy to increase customer recognition and usage of the incentive programs. They will also be able to share best practices and using their statewide network to be able to garner larger and more sustainable funding. End Hunger CT! is the statewide anti-hunger advocacy organization that is currently playing a fiscal administrator role for grant funds to the CT Incentive Network and can significantly help raise the profile of incentives in future advocacy at the state level.

## Models to Consider

Locally, a model to consider and expand is the existing incentive program at C-Town on Wethersfield Avenue, run in partnership with the Hartford Food System. Grocery stores are where the majority of SNAP customers utilize their benefits. In addition, grocery stores are significantly more accessible in hours and days of the week for customers than farmers markets or farm stands.

The success which the grocer in Hartford has seen, in terms of increased SNAP redemption, incentives redeemed, and produce sold, is representative of the positive impacts experienced by other retailers in the nation. For example, the **Double Up Grocery Project** from Fair Food Network was one of the first in the country to pilot SNAP incentives at grocers. After launching Double Up, produce sales at a regional grocery store in Santa Fe, New Mexico were up 25%, and in Arkansas, store produce sales increased by 50% during a one-month pilot, while Michigan produce sales jumped 34% between 2015 and 2016 at a sample of 12 participating independent stores<sup>7</sup>.

Likewise, neighboring Massachusetts has a consolidated statewide program of nutrition incentives, funded through the next three years with federal money and public/private dollars, for usage at farmers markets,

mobile markets, farm stands and CSAs. This is run similarly to nearby programs in Maine and Vermont (which also has a grocery retail program).

Marketing is key to getting the word out about SNAP incentive programs in general. Wholesome Wave created a national campaign with a customizable suite of marketing tools under the "**You SNAP, We Match**" moniker. The campaign includes print, digital, web, and physical channels for marketing incentives to SNAP customers.

Supporting programming for incentives are again found locally as well as in other models across the country. In Connecticut and beyond, **Cooking Matters** often plays a supporting role in offering cooking classes that can be utilized as program scaffolding for organizations wanting to not only offer incentives, but also cooking and nutrition education to participants. Similarly, nutrition education entities at Extension agencies, local health care clinics, WIC offices, and the like can often be utilized at retail spaces or in other locations to provide cooking demonstrations, hands on education, consultation, and printed education materials. **SNAP 4 CT** is a local online resource with recipes, wellness tips, farmers' market listings, and ideas on how to stretch food dollars each month. This resource is often utilized for printed, digital, and social media efforts undertaken by farmers' market managers.

Other creative approaches are being developed or are being used to help engage SNAP participants with optimizing their nutrition benefits. The **Spend Smart. Eat Smart. app** for smart phones, developed by Iowa State University, helps shoppers compare unit prices for easier, smarter and more economical shopping. It also provides recipe ideas to help choose ingredients to purchase. Amazon and other grocers are piloting online grocery sales for SNAP customers, which will likely be more prevalent in future years, once permitted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## Recommendations:

In order for the North End of Hartford to significantly change food access and health outcomes, expansion of incentives at retail locations should include all SNAP eligible grocery stores, all farmers markets in the Promise Zone, as well as any CSAs or stand-alone farm stands that serve neighborhood residents. A consistent and ubiquitous step like this would significantly help residents of the Promise Zone to be able to redeem their SNAP benefits for healthy food.

A robust and active statewide incentive network will be critical to garnering the financial and partner support that will allow incentive expansion into more retail areas in the North Hartford Promise Zone. It is recommended that a network work on the following activities to ramp up incentive programming in general: unified marketing and incentive match amount, strategic advocacy efforts with the state's legislative body, requiring retail outlets (markets, grocers, CSAs and the like) to commit to a sustainable plan for self-funding their incentive programs, and inclusion of key statewide and local partners (such as Cooking Matters, UConn Extension, food banks, policy and advocacy experts).

Engaging with community gardens, the Regional Market, and farmers that don't often appear at markets during late spring/early summer, could be an opportunity to help people utilize SNAP benefits for seedlings. Individuals wanting to grow their own food should be able to have the same incentive access to seedlings as they do for whole fruits and vegetables.

Participating retailers, whether grocers or farmers markets, should also be encouraged to highlight fresh fruits and vegetables during the first two weeks of the month with the unified marketing materials (mentioned above). This is the time when many people spend their SNAP benefits, which are distributed electronically via the ConneCT Card in the first half of the month. Hosting SNAP-Ed, Cooking Matters, and nonprofits that provide cooking demonstrations, tours and more are great ways for grocers and markets to connect with the community and add value to their store or market while encouraging sales of healthy food.

**Project Size:** Small–Medium

**Investment Type:** Programmatic

## Expected Impacts

- Increase in access to local fruits and vegetables
- Increase in consumption of healthy produce
- Improved value for SNAP purchasers, enabling access to fresh produce

## Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

Currently in the Promise Zone there are 4,842 households that receive SNAP, which is an estimated \$1,262,681 dollars available monthly for purchasing food. Even if just 10% of the \$1,262,681 dollars in SNAP was doubled for fruits and vegetables each month,

that \$126,000 would significantly help 20,000 people (conservatively) per month achieve better nutrition and access to fruits and vegetables.' Further, that is over \$1.5 million annually going into Promise Zone grocery businesses and farmers markets, resulting in positive economic impact. Redirecting grant-based incentive dollars to the North End while improving the capacity of other market operators to fundraise and support their current grant-based incentive programs could defray some of the incentive cost. With North Hartford Promise Zone's special designation and priority for federal aid, federal funds from incentive focused FINI and other USDA grants are a very strong potential funding source.

## Next Steps

Opportunities exist within the upcoming FINI grant cycle. Farm Fresh Rhode Island will be applying to the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant in December 2017 on behalf of partner organizations in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island and Maine. The USDA has made available \$21 million for this grant cycle. The New England application will seek to fund nutrition incentives and implement program innovations at a variety of venues including farmers markets, CSAs, mobile markets and small retail outlets committed to local food systems. This application is in the early planning stages; project themes and parameters are still to be determined. End Hunger CT! (EHC) intends to represent all participating venues in Connecticut and is actively engaged with Wholesome Wave in identifying growth opportunities throughout Connecticut including the North End Promise Zone.

# 6 INVESTMENT AREA FOOD WASTE STRATEGIES

## KEY FINDINGS:

Food waste strategies provide a synergy between multiple investment areas. Existing composting businesses and facilities would need a significant ramp up to accommodate growth in comprehensively serving an entire city. As such, it is recommended that a specific feasibility study be conducted to explore this area.

### Current Situation and Potential Partners

Experts say that Americans waste about 40% of the food we grow every year<sup>8</sup>. Food waste strategies can be identified in two major categories, the prevention level (stopping produce from entering the waste stream), and the processing level (composting). Currently there are small and medium sized food waste strategies being implemented in Hartford with a Trinity Dining Hall and Knox partnership to compost food scraps where food waste is processed at KNOX in the Promise Zone's Keney Park. More food waste and food refuse are hauled out of Hartford and processed at the Quantum Biopower facility in Southington, CT. Small-scale community composting in some neighborhood gardens is another outlet for individuals. Currently there are no notable food waste prevention strategies being widely used, such as a consumer campaign to educate about expiration dates and best practices for storage and preservation of food. The recently adopted Climate Action Plan provides recommendations for Hartford to increase the focus on food waste reduction and management.

Blue Earth, a composting business in CT, is working with a small group of businesses to compost their food waste. Most notably, Billings Forge in Hartford has a goal to divert as many food scraps as possible from incineration and instead ensure that they are delivered back to the soil which residents and restaurants can use for their gardens. A grant through the State of Connecticut funds this for a year and is part of an effort to help the State reach its goal of 60% diversion of recyclable material by 2024. According to the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 50% of municipal solid waste is compostable<sup>9</sup>.

### Models to Consider

As previously mentioned in the Swift Food Business Incubator Investment Area, there is an opportunity on the prevention level to encourage a food hub business to take up residence and begin receiving seconds and crop surpluses from local farms that might

otherwise be plowed under or composted. Processing or selling them for a percentage of the cost at which farms sell first-grade fruits and vegetables could significantly cut costs for consumers, while providing additional revenue for participating farms.

Similarly, the **Appalachian Harvest Food Hub** is a business model previously mentioned that has successfully branded seconds aggregated at their hub, preventing the produce from entering the compost process. On a much smaller and more specific scale, **Ugly Fruit** is a model of a small startup food based business in Connecticut that relies on seconds for its inaugural marketed product, applesauce.

Locally, in New London, Norwich Public Schools worked with two local soup kitchens, the PTO, and a local Girl Scouts troop to organize a food recovery drive inspired by the excess food inventory at schools just before summer break or school holidays. It has grown into making regular deliveries of excess food that might otherwise be thrown away. Another school, Middlebury College in Vermont saved \$100,000 on landfill fees by composting 90% of food waste generated. The 370 tons of food Middlebury composted translated into a savings of \$270 per ton of waste<sup>10</sup>.

**Blue Earth** is a great existing Connecticut model of being able to handle small-scale compost collection from the top of the state in Enfield down to New Haven. An example in nearby metropolitan New York, **Hello Compost** allows low-income residents to trade in their food scraps for fresh food without the use of outdoor composters that could be prohibitive for a population that mostly rents in apartment buildings.

### Recommendations

Prevention is the first step for eliminating food waste as well as saving money for consumers. De-mystifying expiration dates on items for all consumers, but especially for SNAP consumers, can not only eliminate unnecessary waste, but also help reduce loss of food in an already stretched budget. Printed, bilingual tools and face-to-face outreach available at markets, grocers, schools, libraries and nonprofits could help spread this education and mitigate a lot of food waste. Canning, preserving, and cooking in bulk can also help prevent food waste. Cooking Matters, SNAP-Ed, UConn Extension, at the very least, could be critical partners in the education of eliminating waste and helping consumers save money.

The consideration of using space at Swift Food Business Incubator to eliminate waste from farms with their seconds or surplus should be researched for feasibility. The selling of this produce at a fraction of the cost or processed as a value-added product could be a viable business to be incubated. Further, this recommendation complements the Grocery Store Investment Area to improve quality and quantity of produce items in North Hartford Promise Zone stores.

Finally, a critical mass of institutions (including schools, colleges, hospitals, and state/municipal government buildings) composting their organic waste could be the impetus needed to assess the feasibility of establishing a high capacity composting facility in Hartford, reducing the overall burden of waste management for the City and creating jobs for residents. The high-quality compost generated from this facility will also be able to serve the burgeoning school garden, urban farm, and community garden operations existing in the City and encourage further growth in this area. Often, what kick starts larger composting projects are pilots and smaller contained initiatives that prove a concept for municipal leaders and investors.

There is a clear synergy between the Investment Areas of: Job Training/Workforce Development, Swift Food Business Incubator, and Food Waste Strategies, and their shared overlapping physical infrastructure resources and needs, along with the shared operational partners of Knox, Keney Park Sustainability Project and Community Solutions. Not only would it make sense to incorporate composting as part of the learning options for any job-training program, but composting on a medium to large scale would be considered ag-tech and should warrant consideration for a job training designation.

**Project Size:** Small–Medium

**Investment Type:** Programmatic & Physical

### Expected Impacts

- Increase in saving food from landfills
- Increase in consumption of healthy produce
- Decrease in SNAP money being wasted on products normally thrown out due to expiration date

### Estimated Reach, Cost & Impact

While items like brochures and posters about food waste prevention are low-cost items, more comprehensive aggregation and processing of produce seconds in a

lean food hub model would be closer to \$600,000 for a start up cost, assuming that the anticipated cooler, and docking space that Swift intends on implementing are already in place.

Collection, aggregation and processing of food waste for compost are capital investments. A composting program for the City of Hartford would be approximately \$200,000 for the first two years of operation, with an eventual return on investment when the finished compost can be sold.

## Next Steps

Meet with Hartford city officials and entities such as Hartford Community Loan Fund to discuss a feasibility study for food waste prevention tactics and their potential subsequent savings in landfill fees as well as estimated costs and return on investment with a composting program and a potential facility based in Hartford.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is recommended that for any and all of these Investment Areas to be successful there must be a type of “air traffic controller” to connect organizations and individuals, keep duplication and collisions at bay, and ensure the work moves forward. Using an entity that has intimate knowledge of food systems, such as the Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, to collect qualitative and quantitative data and measure progress towards specific and agreed upon goals will not only help efforts in the Promise Zone succeed, but also allow these efforts to be easily used as models for other neighborhoods in Hartford as well. The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy also plays a critical role in identifying and recommending policies related to the issues covered in this report. See appendix A for the Commission’s 2017 Annual Report Executive Summary. At the very least, there needs to be a consistent convening capacity to promote greater partner/ community collaboration and communication on food system strategies for the North Hartford Promise Zone.

It is also recommended that any entity or convener build out an “Awareness Campaign” for community residents, which could be both printed and digital, with street level marketing materials announcing any of the aforementioned Investment Areas that feature revitalized or new food access points, programs, and/or activities in NHPZ neighborhoods. Building community recognition of such efforts helps visibility, community support,

and ultimately usage of the program, initiative and/or offering. For example, if the NHPZ significantly increased nutrition incentives at their grocery stores and farmers markets, a comprehensive street level marketing campaign would greatly increase the chances of it being used and be recognizable to residents. Currently, Swift Factory has a few different outward facing materials and signage that indicate their work in the community, which could be used as a model for such campaigns.

While the hierarchy of Investment Areas has Job Training/Workforce Development as the first priority, an investment can be made to any of the areas and still encourage the growth and funding of others. While timelines for each Investment Area vary greatly depending on general funding, prioritization, and organizational partner capacity and ability, there are a few things worth mentioning in this regard. It is vital however, that the most should be made of the Promise Zone designation as it concerns these Investment Areas of the food system. With both the Swift Food Business Incubator Space as well as Food Assistance Investment Areas already in progress, there is a greater likelihood of one area being catalyzed and ignited by the other. The overall impact of supporting each Investment Area as a comprehensive suite of strategies could significantly change diet, income, and upward mobility for thousands of residents.

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- 1 [http://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/State-Statistics/2016/CT\\_Restaurants2016](http://www.restaurant.org/Downloads/PDFs/State-Statistics/2016/CT_Restaurants2016)
  - 2 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2016/11/28/free-nonprofit-culinary-training-programs-help-fill-restaurant-staffingshortage/1ybJCw3jS9YLSvoDD9Y2d0/story.html>
  - 3 [http://legacy.wholesomewave.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2013-FVRxReport\\_-Final-1.pdf](http://legacy.wholesomewave.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2013-FVRxReport_-Final-1.pdf)
  - 4 <https://www.reinvestment.com/research-publications/2014-analysis-of-limited-supermarket-access/>
  - 5 <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/programs/community-economic-development/healthy-food-financing>
  - 6 <http://campaigntoendobesity.org/documents/EYCEONMTC-OpportunitiesforInvestmentinHealthFinal.pdf>
  - 7 [https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/FFN\\_DUFB\\_GroceryOverview\\_071817.pdf](https://fairfoodnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/FFN_DUFB_GroceryOverview_071817.pdf)
  - 8 <https://www.usda.gov/oce/foodwaste/faqs.htm>
  - 9 <https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/state-of-composting-in-us.pdf>
  - 10 <http://www.middlebury.edu/offices/business/recycle/compost>



## APPENDIX

All annual reports and policy recommendations from the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy can be found here: <http://www.hartfordfood.org/food-policy-and-advocacy/>.

The Executive Summary of the City of Hartford's Advisory Commission on Food Policy is on the following pages.



# CITY OF HARTFORD ADVISORY COMMISSION ON FOOD POLICY 2017 Annual Report\* Executive Summary

\*To get a free PDF copy of the full report, email [Meg@hartfordfood.org](mailto:Meg@hartfordfood.org)

The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy was established in 1991 to:

1. Eliminate hunger as an obstacle to a happy, healthy, and productive life in the City;
2. Ensure that a wide variety of safe and nutritious food is available for City residents;
3. Ensure that access to food is not limited by economic status, location, or other factors beyond a resident's control; and
4. Ensure that the price of food in the City remains at a level approximating the level for the State.

This year, the Commission puts forth five recommendations to achieve the goals above. The recommendations require collaboration from all sectors of the City: businesses, community organizations, government, and residents.

## 1 POLICY PRIORITY: PRIORITIZE HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL IN CITY DEVELOPMENT

**WHAT?** Loss of large food retailers in Hartford has resulted in sales "leakage" from Hartford to suburban supermarkets, with associated losses of economic and health benefits to the City.

**WHY?** Strategies to develop more high quality food retail would retain residents' food purchasing dollars in Hartford and reap many health and economic benefits for the City.

**HOW?** The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy advises the City to publicly identify healthy food retail as an economic priority. Healthy food retailers, specifically midsize grocery stores, must be recognized as community assets.



Image Credit: C-Town Supermarket, Wethersfield Ave.

## 2 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: INCREASE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CONSUMPTION USING NUTRITION PROGRAMS

**WHAT?** Hartford has several valuable sources of fresh produce, such as farmers' markets and the Hartford Mobile Market (HMM), which are not being used to the fullest by nutrition program recipients.

**WHY?** Increasing access to fresh produce improves the health and wellbeing of Hartford residents, but many recipients of nutrition programs are unaware of the City's assets around fresh produce.

**HOW?** The City should share the Commission's video and promotional materials for farmers' markets and the HMM. Community organizations should educate staff and volunteers at food pantries about these resources for their clients.



Image Credit: Hartford Food System

## 3 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DIVERT WASTED FOOD FROM THE CITY'S WASTE STREAM

**WHAT?** It is estimated that 40 million pounds of food is wasted in Hartford every year.

**WHY?** Reducing and re-directing wasted food can save the City of Hartford money that would otherwise be spent on trucking waste to a landfill. Recovering safe surplus food can alleviate hunger, and composting food waste can provide rich soil that can be used in urban gardens.

**HOW?** The Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy will host educational events to raise awareness of food waste, facilitate conversations for a food recovery program, and convene an informational meeting for restaurants to compost. Community organizations can share data about food waste.



Image source: National Restaurant Association

## 4 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF GARDENS AT HARTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**WHAT?** Less than half of public schools in Hartford have active gardens. The Hartford School Garden Council (HSGC) supports schools in the installation and maintenance of gardens.

**WHY?** School gardens are an important hands-on learning tool for students as it increases interest and achievement in science and supports nutrition education.

**HOW?** The City should encourage Hartford Public Schools (HPS) to hire a district-wide school garden manager through grant funding and support the district's development of garden-related curriculum. Community organizations can partner with HPS to host teacher professional development days.



Image Credit: Val Bryan

## 5 POLICY RECOMMENDATION: PROMOTE THE GROWTH OF NUTRITIOUS FOOD ON MORE CITY-OWNED LAND

**WHAT?** Hartford has over 20 community gardens and a few urban farming sites. Food grown in Hartford helps meet the critical need for nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables.

**WHY?** Urban agriculture in Hartford, including small scale gardening, enables Hartford's low-income households to stretch their food budgets while increasing their nutrition.

**HOW?** The City can make lands available through long-term lease agreements to various nonprofits in order to create more community gardens and urban farms for Hartford residents to grow healthy food.

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