

# Site Development Plan and Recommendations

FOR THE FIRST WARD, CITY OF PATERSON, NJ

BRS, INC.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction .....	4
Summary of findings: Market Analysis and Site Evaluation .....	4
Feasibility of food retail options at the target site .....	7
Farmers market.....	7
Mobile grocer.....	16
Other types of food retailers for the First Ward.....	24
Development and recommendations: Farmers market .....	25
Site requirements .....	26
Costs.....	27
Benefit and incentive program compatibility .....	29
Schedule/frequency.....	32
Partnership with vendors and producers .....	32
Farmers Market Recommendations .....	33
Development and recommendations: Mobile grocery .....	34
Site requirements .....	35
Costs.....	35
Benefit and incentive program compatibility .....	36
Schedule/frequency.....	37
Sourcing the food.....	37
Recommendations.....	38
Operation and management.....	39
Funding sources .....	43
Environmental considerations.....	44
Conclusions .....	44
Acknowledgements.....	46
Appendix 1: Products commonly sold at US farmers markets .....	47
Appendix 2: Full-size maps.....	50
Appendix 3: Funding sources .....	59

## Executive Summary

---

This study's initial analysis explored the potential development of a new grocery store, supermarket, or farmers market at the target site in Paterson's First Ward. The study's first two components – a *Market Analysis* and a *Physical Site Evaluation* – explored additional, less traditional food retailers and analyzed the target site's advantages, constraints, and challenges. This final component of the study makes specific recommendations for addressing food access challenges in this low- to moderate-income urban community. The study recommends the development of one (or both) of the following food retailers at the target site:

### **Farmers Market**

---

The size, layout, and current availability of the site is appropriate for development of a farmers market that would bring fresh produce and other nutritious foods to the community on a regular schedule of market days. The initial planning process for a new market must include extensive community engagement in the area surrounding the target site, establishment of a market mission, and formulation of a business plan. The management structure most likely to be successful is a coalition of non-profit organizations, with representation from respected partners working both in the First Ward and in the wider area of Paterson and Passaic County. At least one paid staff person (a market manager) is needed to provide leadership and direction, and development of a community-based volunteer program is highly recommended to improve market functioning and service. It is essential that SNAP/EBT and other benefits be accepted at the market.

In addition to “placemaking” efforts such as events, demonstrations, and activities, the study suggests that offering services such as health and/or nutrition education and benefit enrollment would help a new market establish itself as an important community resource – and one that draws enough customers to support its vendors. While farmers markets by design pass some costs on to vendors, operational costs include a site lease, market staff salaries, security, marketing, insurance, and site maintenance. Vendor stall fees contribute a modest amount to a market's income, but it will be necessary to identify sources of funding to support the market at least in the initial few seasons, and perhaps longer. Partnerships with local organizations, government entities, and the private sector will help to ensure sustainability.

This study acknowledges that while a farmers market could be a valuable new resource and potential driver of economic revitalization in the neighborhood, certain challenges remain – namely, transportation to the market in this low-vehicle-access area, parking arrangements, and identification of long-term funding sources.

### **Mobile Grocer**

---

A mobile grocer is another type of food retailer that could improve residents' access to fresh, nutritious food without requiring physical alterations to the target site. It also has the advantage of all but eliminating transportation challenges for residents without access to vehicles. Selection of a mobile unit is a key first step, and considerations include cost, desired shelf space, refrigeration, customer accessibility, and suitability for Paterson streets. A solid business plan should include realistic budgeting that accounts for the purchase and outfitting of a mobile unit (as well as frequent repairs), food supply, fuel, insurance, and staff salaries. Two staff are required for efficient functioning, and a volunteer program to assist customers is recommended.

The ability to accept SNAP/EBT and other benefits – as well as credit and debit cards – is essential.

Extensive community engagement will be necessary to identify a service area and individual stops along a regular route. Local outreach will also help management decide what foods to stock in order to meet customer demand, and continued engagement with the community surrounding the stops will help the grocer establish itself as a responsive and reliable local service provider.

One key recommendation for reducing a mobile grocer's high operating costs is ensuring access to bulk food purchasing at wholesale prices. This could be accomplished through a partnership with a local supermarket chain or through a partnership with an organization that can offer refrigerated warehouse space.

Identification of long-term funding sources is a major challenge in the development of a mobile grocer, because this type of retailer will not be able to sell enough volume in low- or moderate-income communities to meet high operational costs. For this reason, grants and fundraising are essential to program sustainability. Sustainability depends not only on identifying long-term funding sources but also on developing strategic partnerships.

In addition to detailing specific recommendations for development of a farmers market or mobile grocer, this study suggests potential partners by listing local organizations, government entities, and private-sector companies that make food access an important part of their mission. It then provides a brief summary of funding sources.

Both of the recommended food retailers presented in this final part of the study are feasible for the site and fit community needs, but neither one is presented as a complete or perfect solution to food access challenges in the First Ward. Both are operationally complex and require significant community engagement and funding efforts, and both require management by a qualified coalition of local organizations and development of strategic partnerships to ensure their success.

## Introduction

The County of Passaic received this New Jersey Economic Development Authority-funded Food Security Planning Grant to complete a market analysis and development plan that will enable the City of Paterson to optimize use of a target site, improve food access, and promote economic development in the First Ward.

There are four components to this project:

- Market analysis
- Physical site evaluation
- Community engagement
- Site development plan and recommendations



The target site – owned by Grace Chapel Baptist Church – is on Haledon Avenue between N. Main Street and N. 1st Street and includes vacant lots located between 144 and 158 N. Main Street. This project analyzes the potential for a food retailer on the site. Initial analysis explored the possibility of a grocery store, supermarket, or farmers market, and was broadened to include other, non-traditional food retail options.

This *Site Development Plan and Recommendations* outlines the types of food retailers that would be the best fit – and most feasible – for the target site and the stated goal of improving food access in the First Ward. After a brief review of findings from the Market Analysis and Physical Site Evaluation, this document details site development for feasible retailers and makes recommendations on how the target site can be optimized. It then discusses operation and management structures and explores funding sources to support each of those feasible food retailers.

## Summary of findings: Market Analysis and Site Evaluation

The objective of the *Market Analysis* was to assess the need for a supermarket, grocery store, or farmers market within the trade area in as much detail as possible. The analysis developed a demographic and socioeconomic profile of the area and explored consumer demand, existing food retailers, and access to transportation. Given these existing conditions, the next step was economic modeling of the impact of a new grocery store, supermarket, or farmers market in the First Ward. In addition, the *Market Analysis* reviewed other, less traditional types of food retailers that have been successful in similar urban, low- to moderate-income communities.

The *Physical Site Evaluation* discussed the challenges and constraints that must be addressed if development of a grocery store, supermarket, or other food retailer is determined to be desirable for the target site. The evaluation provided a general physical evaluation of the site, including its location, proximity, and accessibility to target customers, a risk analysis, review of environmental factors, legal and regulatory considerations, and a brief transportation analysis that examined access routes, constraints, and potential improvements.

That the First Ward – and particularly the neighborhood in the immediate vicinity of the target site – is in need of additional retail options to provide residents access to fresh, nutritious foods is well established. Challenges presented by the target site, however, are significant:

- **Size:** The site, at 50,529 square feet (in two sections, separated by North Main Street), is too small to accommodate an average-size grocery store<sup>1</sup> and the necessary loading docks, walkways, truck access, or customer and employee parking.
- **Flood risk:** A portion of the site is in the 100-year flood plain, according to Federal Emergency Management Agency maps, and the rest is in the 500-year flood plain.

The risk is not theoretical: there has been flooding in the area recently, including during Hurricane Irene and other major storms and weather events that have caused flooding on the Passaic River, which is only 765 feet away from the portion of the site southeast of North Main Street. New Inland Flood Protection legislation that incorporates anticipated increases in rainfall and requirements for specialized floodplain permits presents additional hurdles to potential development at the site.

- **Transportation limitations:** Over a third of households in the First Ward lack access to a vehicle, making access to reasonably priced, nutritious food by public transportation, bicycle, or foot essential for about 3,300 households. While a bus line does run roughly north-south along Haledon Avenue Mondays through Saturdays, the vicinity of the target site does not offer public transportation access to and from the east or west. This makes access to food retailers difficult for many. Although there are convenience stores, corner stores, and bodegas in the First Ward, community members interviewed and surveyed state that prices are very high and foods offered not particularly fresh or nutritious. Certainly these small stores do not carry all food groups, and



<sup>1</sup> According to the Food Industry Association, the average size of a US grocery store was 48,415 square feet in 2022. This does not include square footage for the necessary loading docks, walkways, or parking. <https://www.fmi.org/our-research/food-industry-facts/average-total-store-size---square-feet>

residents generally travel outside the First Ward to purchase fruit, vegetables, meat, and most of their weekly grocery needs. For households without a vehicle, the distance to a grocery store or supermarket that offers a full array of fresh products at reasonable prices is a serious barrier.

- **Incomes and expenditures on food:** Another barrier to the development of a grocery store or supermarket at the target site is the low level of local disposable income, and specifically, the amount of money area residents within ½ mile (likely the main customer base) spend on food shopping annually. According to the Food Industry Association, average weekly grocery spending per US household in 2023 was \$155. Annually, that would equate to \$8,060. As detailed in the *Market Analysis*, although 12% of annual household budget expenditures within ½ mile of the target site go toward the purchase of food, that number annually equates to just \$6,805 per year, an average of \$130.87 per week. Grocery stores operate under tight margins, with just 2.3% net profit after taxes, on average, and considering these already slim margins, the \$24.13 difference in average weekly spending for the area within ½ mile from the target site may bring profits below the point of viability. While not insurmountable, grant funding and/or tax incentives are likely to be required for a food retailer to close this gap.
- **Site availability:** The parking lot is in current use by Grace Chapel Baptist Church all day on Sundays, at least two evenings during the week, and periodically for other events. This means that the only food retailers that would be feasible for the target site are those that are able to set up there on a temporary basis to offer grocery shopping to the community.

All of this said, the target site also has advantages that make it a good location for a new food retailer that will serve the community. Opportunities include:

- **Densely populated area:** The First Ward is a densely populated urban area with high workforce participation. The area immediately surrounding the target site is even more densely populated, and the average household has children and multiple income earners. The number of households is expected to continue to grow in the coming years.
- **Rising demand for groceries:** About 12% of First Ward household expenditures go to purchasing food for consumption at home, and total annual expenditures of \$6,251 are expected to increase by approximately 15% in the coming five years. A more detailed analysis suggests that households are budget-conscious, seeking value over brand names, and expenditures tend to include products for babies and children, fresh fruit and vegetables, bread, and fish and other seafood. About 41% of households in the First Ward have SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) benefits for grocery purchases, and that number is slightly higher in the area immediately surrounding the target site. Incomes overall are rising, albeit slowly.
- **Shortage of local food retailers:** Stores that sell food within ½ mile of the target site are all smaller than 5,000 square feet and do not offer a full range of groceries. This means that consumers must travel more than ½ mile to larger stores that sell a fuller range of groceries than local corner stores, convenience stores, and bodegas. Given fairly low vehicle access, demand for the convenience of a local food retailer is high.

- **Target site owner’s interest in improving food access:** Grace Chapel Baptist Church’s leadership has stated its willingness to host a temporary/transient food retailer such as a weekly farmers market and/or regularly scheduled mobile grocer in order to improve the community’s access to fresh, nutritious food.

The next section looks at feasible ways to improve food access given the area’s potential and the target site’s limitations.

## Feasibility of food retail options at the target site

---

While there is a well-established need for a new food retailer offering a full selection of groceries in the immediate area of the target site, a supermarket or large grocery store is not feasible on the site itself. If another, more sizable site becomes available in this eastern part of the First Ward – or indeed in any part of the NJEDA-designated Paterson Food Desert North – the feasibility of a supermarket or large grocery store should be reexamined.

Given site limitations, there are two main types of food retailer that are feasible for the target site – both “transient” establishments that could coexist with current use of the site by Grace Chapel Baptist Church. These are a farmers market and a mobile grocery store. In addition, a “healthy corner store” initiative that increases access to fresh produce while supporting small businesses in the area surrounding the target site would also be feasible but is not explored in depth in this study.

### Farmers market

The target site is just over one acre in size, which is within the range of the average US farmers market. The average US farmers market has 25 vendors or stalls on a peak market day, with just over half selling products they themselves produced. However, newly established markets may have far fewer vendors or stalls in the initial year or two. At some markets, vendors set up inside a building or under a pavilion, but the majority of markets (64%) have no permanent physical structures. Vendors generally pay a fee to sell at the market – most commonly a flat-rate fee instead of a percentage of sales, but fees based on the size of the vendor stall are also relatively common.<sup>2</sup>

According to a USDA survey of managers at 8,140 farmers markets, the most common months of operation are June through September, with the greatest number of markets operating in July and August. There are some markets that operate year-round – particularly in urban areas – though in the mid-Atlantic region (which includes New Jersey), these are generally not outdoor markets. Saturday is the most common day of operation for all US farmers markets. In urban areas in the mid-Atlantic region, Saturday is the most common day of operation, followed by Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the average market operates 6.8 hours per week – often spread out over two market days.<sup>3</sup> The New Brunswick Community Farmers Market, for example, is open 9am-1pm on Saturdays and Tuesdays beginning in

---

<sup>2</sup> National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

<sup>3</sup> USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2020 data.



mid-June. The local climate and character of the target site suggests that a market that operates June through October or even November would be feasible, and temporary canopies set up over stalls would improve vendors' ability to sell on more days during those months. The decision on which day (or days) of the week to hold the market would depend on the preferences of Grace Chapel Baptist Church and the surrounding community. Initial operation of a new farmers market could be significantly less than 6.8 hours per week, assuming only one market day per week.

Almost three quarters of US farmers markets surveyed by the USDA are self-governing, with the majority governed by a board (or other group of people) who make decisions collectively. The vast majority of those boards include market vendors, while many also include residents and/or community members. In terms of legal status, two thirds of markets are run as non-profits, and 20% are for-profit entities. Very few are run by a government entity.<sup>4</sup>



Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market, Trenton  
Photo: [Capital Area YMCA](#)

It is not uncommon for the entity that governs or owns a farmers market to be granted use of private land on market days free of charge. But it is about as common for the market to lease land from owners of private property. These leases generally run year-to-year.<sup>5</sup>

84% of farmers markets have written by-laws, and nearly all have some sort of rules, regulations, or operating procedures that vendors must agree and adhere to.<sup>6</sup> Common rules include the following:

Table 1: Common rules and regulations for farmers markets

	% of markets
Signed agreement between vendor & market on by-laws governing the farmers market	84%
Vendors are not allowed to sublet a space or stall	53%
Adherence to market guidelines of safe food handling practices	82%
Pre-application and adherence to the approval process	68%
Requirement of participation in food safety training	33%
Vendors must be a producer of the food and/or fiber they sell	66%
Vendors must be from a defined geographical region	49%
Vendors must participate in market currency/incentive programs	24%

<sup>4</sup> National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

<sup>5</sup> National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

<sup>6</sup> For more on drafting rules and regulations for a new farmers market, see: Hamilton, N. (2002). Farmers' Markets Rules, Regulations and Opportunities. *The National Agricultural Law Center*.

Vendors selling value-added items must use local farms for majority of ingredients	25%
Membership in a market association	24%
Licensing to sell products	40%
Liability insurance	63%
Organic certification to market as organic	29%
Authorized to accept Federal Nutrition Program benefits	33%

Source: National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

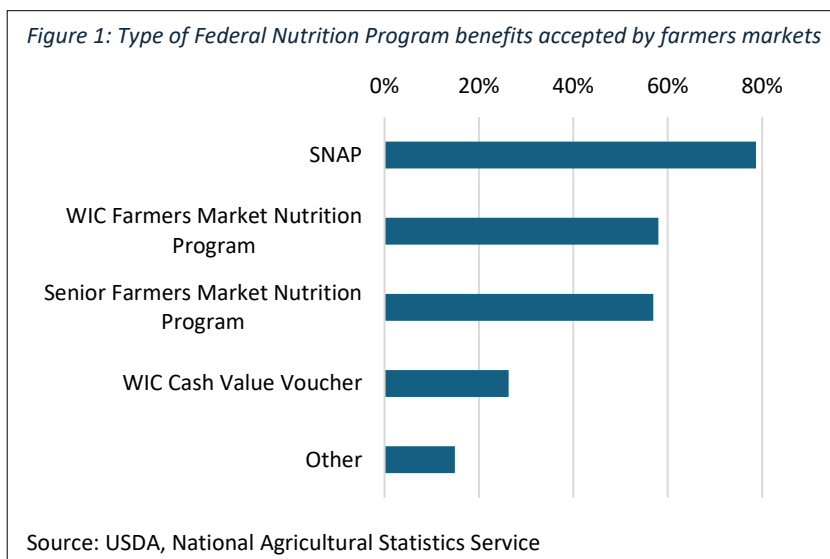
Two of these common market regulations relate to federal and local food benefits programs. Nationally, about 50% of farmers markets accept federal benefits such as the following:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP),
- WIC<sup>7</sup> Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP),
- WIC Cash Value Vouchers for fruit and vegetable purchases, and
- Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) for people over 65.

SNAP benefits are the most commonly accepted. In addition, 35% of markets accept state or local match and incentives programs such as Fruit and Vegetable

Prescription (RX) and Market Bucks. Others offer matching incentives for SNAP, WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP purchases. Only a third of farmers markets require that vendors be authorized to accept benefits, but 54% of individual vendors at farmers markets surveyed by USDA in 2019 did in fact accept SNAP, WIC, FMNP, and/or SFMNP.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to offering a sales venue, some markets provide other benefits to vendors who are interested in expanding or developing their businesses. Without permanent site improvements such as a building to house the market, some supports (e.g., storage space, shared kitchen space, or packaging services) are not feasible, but some types of training and/or business development support are possible. Some of the most common benefits to vendors – whether or not the farmers market offers formal support – are new employee hiring, an increase in the range of products vendors are able to offer, and an increase in overall production and/or in the value-added component of production. Vendors might see such large increases in their direct-to-customer sales that they expand to other farmers markets or to traditional retail markets and other businesses, such as restaurants.



<sup>7</sup> WIC is the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons specifically for use at farmers markets in addition to their regular WIC benefits.

<sup>8</sup> National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Farmers markets may offer additional direct benefits to the surrounding community, as well: some common contributions are cooking, composting, and gardening classes or demonstrations, and donations to local food banks and community kitchens. Mobile units are an additional offering of a few farmers markets and tend to benefit senior citizens who might not otherwise have physical access to the market. As an alternative, some access vans that transport senior citizens to supermarkets also offer transportation to farmers markets. In Paterson, the Passaic County Para-Transit Program offers free transportation for seniors and disabled residents to medical treatment, grocery shopping, and nutrition sites (including the Division of Senior Services Senior Nutrition Center). The program does not at this point offer transportation to farmers markets in the county, but the possibility warrants investigation.

***Highlight: Greenwood Ave. Farmers Market (Trenton, New Jersey)***<sup>9</sup>

The YMCA of Trenton initially put together a partnership and sought funding to found the Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market (GAFM) in a low-income, low-access area of downtown Trenton. In operation since 2015, the market was developed in partnership with – among others from the Trenton Healthy Food Network – the local Rutgers Cooperative Extension, a local medical center, and a local non-profit (Isles). City government support has also been instrumental: the site of the market was a vacant but privately owned lot, and the City helped the YMCA was able to come to an agreement with the property owner to lease the lot free of charge for market days. The City also assisted the founding partners in obtaining the necessary permits and licenses for operation.

The next steps were to hire a qualified market manager, recruit volunteers, hire security, and establish relationships with vendors. The GAFM has one cornerstone vendor, a family farm in a nearby county that sells produce, meat, and eggs and accounts for half of all market sales. In response to customer feedback, the vendor widened the products offered to include tropical fruits in order to meet demand from local immigrant communities. Another vendor is Isles, a non-profit that is also a GAFM partner. Isles sells produce, herbs, and flowers grown in their community gardens throughout Trenton, as well as honey from their local hives. Other vendors include local farms and purveyors of fresh and prepared foods. Key to GAFM's success is collaboration among vendors to avoid underselling each other and to provide the greatest variety of products possible.



*Photo: Capital Area YMCA*

The market sought and was awarded initial grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (which already funded a program at the YMCA), United Way, New Jersey Department of Health's ShapingNJ Healthy Community Grants Initiative, and a couple of local corporations. Regardless, the market has had to access YMCA operational funding. Separate funding from the County's Chronic Disease Coalition supported the development of a voucher coupon initiative to help customers stretch their money further at the market.

Benefit enrollment and creation of voucher programs was another crucial part of market setup. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County's Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS) and its SNAP-Eb team designed programming to help customers stretch SNAP/EBT benefits at the market while supporting local farmers and producers. In addition to accepting SNAP/EBT, WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP, the market offers incentives when customers use vouchers through two programs:

- Good Food Bucks (funded by City Green), which matches SNAP/EBT purchases of fruits and vegetables \$1 to \$1, and

<sup>9</sup> Information from *The Greenwood Ave. Farmers Market: A 5-Year Reflection and a Glance Ahead*. (2021.) Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Mercer County, Department of Family & Community Health Sciences.

- Greenwood Green program, which matches \$2 for every \$1 spent on any GAFM purchase made with SNAP/EBT, WIC, FMNP, and SFMNP vouchers.



Photo: Capital Area YMCA

Community engagement was key from day one – in fact, from before the market opened. A door-to-door campaign and focus groups were held to discuss design, and engagement with preschool families and senior housing complex residents (which border the GAFM lot) was particularly important in understanding what the community wanted. From conversations with senior residents, for example, it became clear that they cared less about having a farmers market nearby than they did about having social activities and health services connected to that market. Resident feedback is also the reason GAFM offers personal shopping and delivery services for the homebound and people with accessibility challenges. Ahead of the GAFM’s opening day, local artists were hired to paint

a mural to anchor the formerly vacant lot to the market’s mission and to the host community.

The first market day was held in 2015. Since then, there have been an average of 17.2 market days per year, with the exception of 2020, when fewer were held due to Covid concerns. GAFM estimates that it served about 24,000 people between 2015 and 2020 (the most recent data available), though this is probably an underestimate. The market is open on Mondays from late June until late August, and besides food, it also offers healthcare services, cooking demonstrations, nutrition education, family activities, and holiday and other special programming. Health services began as public education offered at one of the market tables, but market attendees can now take advantage of free health screenings and counseling from health vans that pull up to the market. In 2016, GAFM began offering free “grab and go” lunches for children under 18 on market days, funded by USDA’s Summer Food Service Program. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension also provides nutrition programming such as “Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables” and offers cooking demonstrations and seasonal recipes for preparing items sold at the market.



Photo: Capital Area YMCA

One of the main elements of a well-run market that benefits both vendors and the community is strong leadership, and nearly all farmers markets the USDA surveyed had a manager who was regularly present. Of those managers, nearly the same proportion were volunteers as were paid employees. The average manager earned about \$18.40 per hour in 2019 and worked an estimated 19.4 hours per week. Only a quarter of farmers markets had more than one paid employee, but a significant number had an average of six full- and part-time workers, most of whom were volunteers. Jobs include site/facilities manager, budget expert/accountant, and program coordinator. Volunteers tend to be an important part of market functioning, and nearly two thirds of markets relied on these unpaid workers.

There is a wide variety of ways markets finance their functioning and any salaries they pay, with vendor fees for stalls making up the largest proportion of income for the majority of markets. Other funding comes from grants, public sponsorship, and fundraisers.

Table 2: Average total income by funding source

	% of markets receiving this funding	Average amount of funding by source
Public sponsorship	9%	\$13,378
Private donations	4%	\$6,687
Grant award(s)	11%	\$15,189
Fundraiser	4%	\$9,426
Producer/vendor fees	63%	\$31,672
Other	8%	\$16,881

Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2020

Total sales and average product markups depend partly on how well established the market structure is and partly on factors such as how well developed the vendors’ business models are and the composition of specific products offered. Newly established markets and those in low- to moderate-income areas tend to have lower sales and lower markups.<sup>10</sup>

Two studies by the [Project for Public Spaces](#) on developing successful farmers markets in general and in low- to moderate-income communities specifically highlight several characteristics of thriving markets that include not only products sold but also effective “placemaking” strategies.<sup>11</sup> For example, successful markets share many of the following:

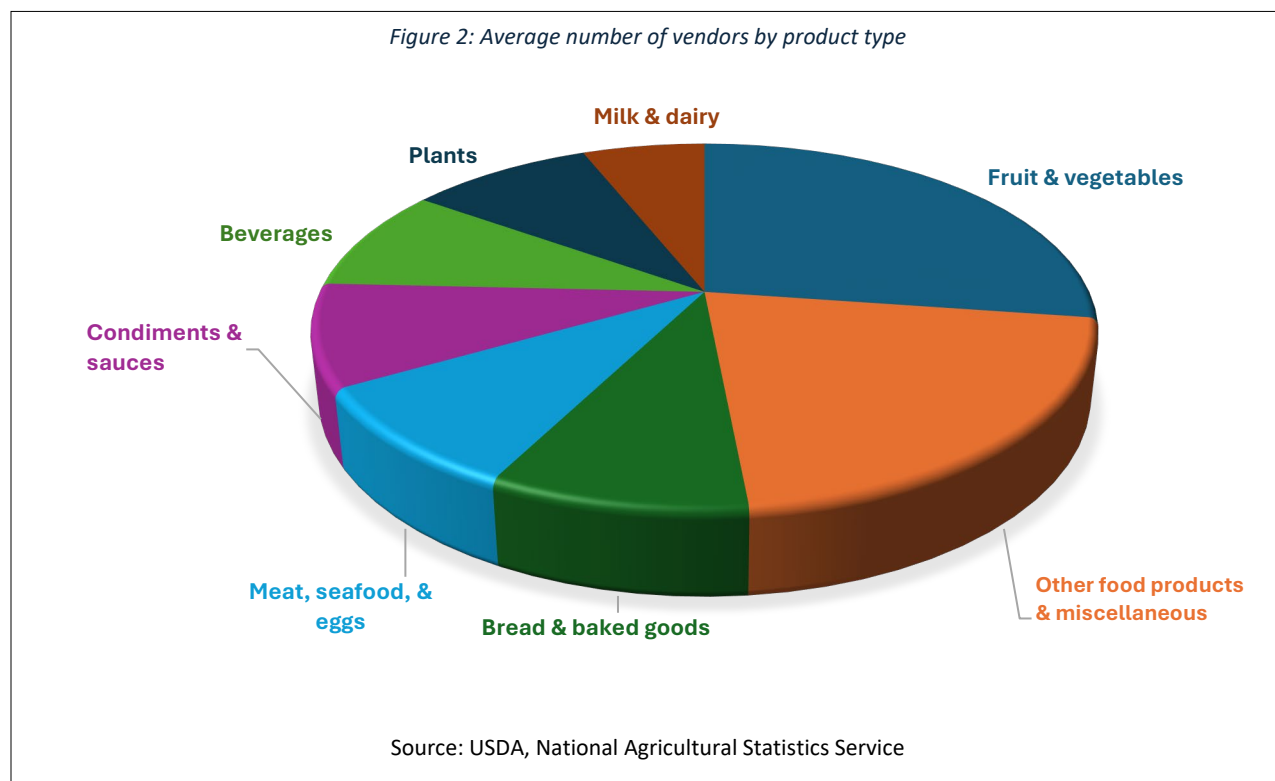
- Vendors that sell high-quality, affordable products that appeal to local audiences
- A location where potential customers already tend to pass by or congregate
- Convenient siting with parking available
- Partnerships with local businesses and organizations
- A clear market “mission” in alignment with local values
- Inclusion of public events (music, demonstrations, classes, performances, etc.) that appeal to local audiences
- Transparent management and financial practices
- Openness to innovation and new products
- A comfortable, welcoming atmosphere

Most of these characteristics must be tailored to the specific community where the market is located and will in turn dictate the style of the farmers market. The market’s mission, for example, will determine the type of partnerships formed, events held, and vendors invited to establish stalls. A market whose mission is to bring nutritious food to a community is likely to have mostly fresh food stalls and perhaps not permit sale of clothing or crafts, while a market whose mission includes supporting local entrepreneurs may have homemade food and non-food items produced and sold by local vendors.

<sup>10</sup> “Characteristics of Successful Farmers Markets: Portland Farmers Markets/Direct-Market Economic Analysis.” And: H. Petersen. 2022. “Farmers Markets of Minneapolis: 2021 Metrics.” Dept of Applied Economics, U of M-Twin Cities.

<sup>11</sup> [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/581110f944272e4a11871c01/5f0defe8fca690b57f2c1d62\\_RWJF-Report.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/581110f944272e4a11871c01/5f0defe8fca690b57f2c1d62_RWJF-Report.pdf) and <https://www.pps.org/article/tencharacteristics-2>

Product variety depends on many factors, but there are similarities across US farmers markets. The most common products sold are vegetables and fruit: 99% of markets had vendors selling vegetables, and 95% had vendors selling fruit. 94% had vendor stalls for condiments and sauces. Figure 2 shows the average number of vendors broken down by product type, with fruit and vegetable vendors the largest proportion of stalls at the average market. The second-largest category – other food products and miscellaneous – includes prepared foods, meat and dairy substitutes, nuts, soaps and body care, craft products, pet foods, and several others.<sup>12</sup>

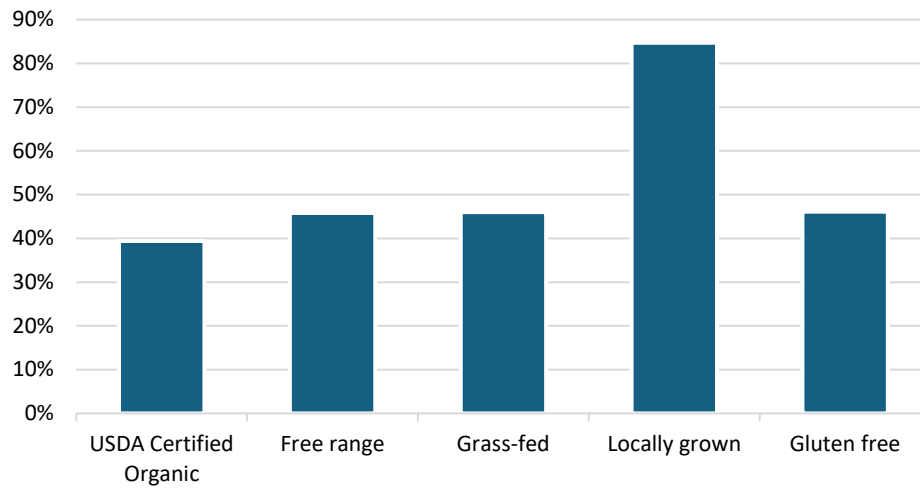


In addition to being generally produced by the vendors themselves, products sold at farmers markets also tend to be locally produced by small-scale businesses, and a greater proportion of food items are labeled organic, cruelty-free, and/or specific to particular dietary requirements than the products found in supermarkets. None of these product specifications are necessarily required, and regulations for products sold are generally decided by the governing board or management of each individual farmers market. Some vendors offer produce from community gardens, shared kitchens, or small local start-ups, and introducing products at a local market can be a useful way to present specialty goods and build a new business. This is perhaps particularly true of prepared foods, condiments and sauces, and soaps or other body care produced by urban vendors. Among the many benefits from participation in a farmers market, producers/vendors most commonly increased production and began selling at other locations – whether additional farmers markets, retail stores, or restaurants.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1 for a full list of products commonly sold at US farmers markets.

<sup>13</sup> National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Figure 3: Most common labels for farmers market products



Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service

### Highlight: South Memphis Farmers Market (Tennessee)<sup>14</sup>

In 2010 The Works, Inc., a non-profit community development organization, founded the South Memphis Farmers Market (SMFM) in a low-income, low-access area where residents had few options for food retailers other than convenience stores and



gas station mini-marts. SMFM sought to provide one option for families to buy food for nutritious meals, and the market is now in its 14<sup>th</sup> season. In 2014, The Works expanded the food access provided by the farmers market with a small brick-and-mortar grocery store (The Grocer) open year-round, and the Educational Kitchen, where free nutritional cooking classes are offered throughout the year. These three resources together create a “food oasis” that not only provides access to fresh produce and healthy foods, but also an evidenced-based curriculum to provide resources on improving eating habits.

SMFM is made up of eight vendor stalls in a lot of about 10,000 square feet. The market is held on Thursdays, with an opening day each year in late June. Compared to some farmers markets – particularly in wealthier areas of Memphis – this is a relatively short

season, and the reason is that a high percentage of customers use Community Vouchers from the state health department’s program for low-income counties. These vouchers, available only in July and August, can be used to purchase produce at farmers markets. Market management opted not to extend the season past August, as vendors are likely to see their sales drop precipitously without the vouchers.

The Healthy Ways program is an additional customer incentive to help people stretch their food budgets. The program incentivizes customers to buy fruits and vegetables – which can be fresh, canned, frozen, or dried – by offering a \$1-per-\$1 match up to \$10 per day for seniors over 60 and \$20 per day for anyone with SNAP/EBT. For example, a customer using her EBT

<sup>14</sup> BRS wishes to thank Karen Bernard (Food Programs Manager, including the SMFM and Educational Kitchen), Devin Marzette (The Grocer Manager), and Eric Story Neimeyer (Senior Grants Coordinator & Project Manager) of The Works, Inc. for giving their time and input on the South Memphis Farmers Market on May 17, 2024.

card to buy \$20 in vegetables at the farmers market will receive \$20 on a reloadable card to use on a variety of other food products (meat, milk, produce, etc.) at The Grocer or the farmers market. Individuals must sign up for the program to receive benefits. WIC benefits are not yet accepted at the farmers market because of the program's many regulations and the fact that they are so highly specialized. The free nutrition classes are an additional community benefit: the Educational Kitchen offers a six-week "Cooking Matters" curriculum, and The Works, Inc. is considering an expansion of services through extension-based programming with backing and resources from the University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University, which have dieticians on staff that create curricula and offer trainings for educators.



Photo: [The Works, Inc.](#)

Of the market's eight stalls, five are set aside for farmers selling produce, but the others can be filled by other vendors. Sale of clothing and crafts is not allowed, but past years have seen vendors selling homemade and prepared foods and body care products such as lotions and soaps. Recently SMFM has begun to receive more applications from vendors than they have spots, and occasionally vendors share a stall. However, farmers have priority, so if eight farmers apply, all of the stalls will be for farm products. Currently there are vendors who farm in the county and two from other counties within a 60-mile radius. There is no rule that says they must farm within the state, but only Tennessee farmers are able to accept Community Vouchers, which is in part a subsidy to Tennessee farmers.

Resources for staffing are limited, and the SMFM has only one official staff person – a farmers market manager who splits her time between the farmers market, the Educational Kitchen, and management of The Works' other food programs. However, staff emphasized that a single manager would not be enough support on market days. Because the market is affiliated with and located next to the brick-and-mortar store, the manager and assistant manager of The Grocer step in to provide assistance on market days, and in 2024 the SMFM brought on an intern to provide additional support. Community volunteers are also welcome. However, vendors are required to set up and break down their own stalls and provide their own tables and tents, and the vendor agreement specifies that at the end of the day, each vendor's area must look at least as clean as it did before they arrived. This system has been successful, as noted by the SMFM manager, who provides assistance to vendors as needed. On all market days, the market manager is present at a table to provide information and enrollment for SNAP/EBT and Healthy Ways.

The church that founded The Works, Inc. many years ago owns the land where the market takes place, and TWI has a long-term lease to control the location and all operations and events that take place there. Because the market takes place in The Grocer's small parking lot, customers must use street parking. In 2023, the farmers market ran for 10 weeks from late June through late August, and total attendance was 4,487. In 2024 the opening market day was held on June 27.



## Mobile grocer

A mobile grocer is an innovative solution to food access challenges in densely populated urban areas where siting a store is problematic for a variety of reasons. Sometimes the issue is a lack of available space; in other instances, very large food deserts spanning multiple neighborhoods are best served by a mobile grocer that visits each community once or twice a week. The First Ward fits both categories, and residents' relatively low access to vehicles adds another reason a mobile grocer could be a good fit: a store that visits neighborhoods on a regular schedule nearly eliminates residents' transportation barriers.

Just as there is significant variation among farmers markets in the US, the same is true of mobile grocers. There are even mobile farmers markets such as Clifton City Green's Veggie Mobile. One of the initial questions a mobile grocer must answer is which type of vehicle is best suited to the community. This is a question not only of how best to transport the food but also how community members will shop. For example, some grocers operate in a similar way to food trucks, with customers placing food orders from outside the grocery itself. Others welcome customers inside to browse shelves along a central aisle. No matter the size or layout of the grocer, offerings are by necessity limited on account of the store's relatively small interior dimensions.



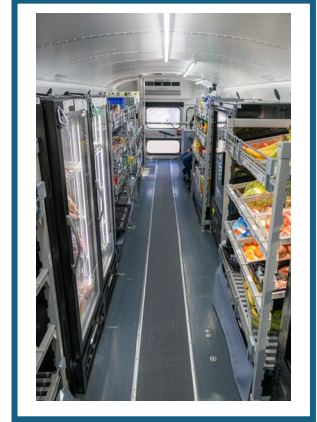
[AtlantiCare Community Mobile Market \(L\)](#); [Twin Cities Mobile Market \(R\)](#)

[The Works, Inc. Mobile Grocer](#)

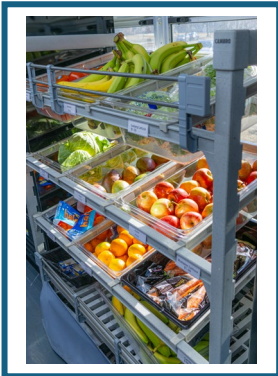
The feasibility of maneuvering a vehicle along narrow city streets – such as those in the First Ward – may in some cases provide a definitive answer to what type of mobile unit fits a community. Trailers have a wide turning radius and may fit communities with broad streets, but they may not be practical in dense urban areas. In other instances, local customer preferences for selecting their own food from shelves suggest that a retrofitted school or city bus with shelves along a center aisle would work better. For mobile grocers that serve communities with senior housing developments or a high percentage of elderly residents, a setup that allows customers to place an order at a window without entering the market (similar to that of a food truck) might work best. If city buses and school buses are able to access a neighborhood's streets, this type of vehicle might be the most reasonable choice. Another popular option that navigates most streets easily is a transport van such as the Ford Transit or Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van, but the volume of food it can carry is quite small. The decision is often one of balancing ease of access with cost, and it should be noted that retrofitting a very old bus or truck can lead to problems of escalating repair costs or, crucially, failing to be a reliable service for the community.

**Highlight: Twin Cities Mobile Market (Minnesota)**<sup>15</sup>

Founded by The Food Group MN and in operation for over 10 years, the Twin Cities Mobile Market was initially housed in two retired city buses. The city buses had the advantage of being wider and having stairs closer to the ground, but repairs were costly and time-consuming because spare parts were expensive and difficult to procure. More recently, the organization purchased and retrofitted two retired school buses. Repairs are easier and cheaper, but The Food Group MN has had to come up with creative solutions to customer access challenges on account of the high deck height and steep stairs. The market now offers both in-store shopping and “personal shopper” services, with a [menu of food items in two languages and in photographs](#) to accommodate customers from diverse backgrounds and with a variety of mobility challenges.



The Mobile Market stocks over 150 unique items from all five food groups and makes a conscious effort to offer fresh, nutritious products. Data collected by the organization confirms that produce is the number-one grocery priority for the communities they visit, followed by meat and dairy, and the most shelf space is dedicated to these top sellers. Products are generally sold at cost (0% margin), but certain in-demand but less nutritious items have a slightly higher margin in order to subsidize healthier options; for example, bacon is priced a little above cost so that milk can be sold below cost.



The Mobile Market is equipped with coolers and freezers (powered by generators so that the bus can be off while parked), shelving, and a check-out area. Cash, credit, SNAP, and Market Bucks are accepted payment methods. The Mobile Market is the only non-farmers market retailer in Minnesota that accepts Market Bucks, and it is currently the highest user of the program in the state. The Market is, however, not able to accept WIC at this time because of how complex the program is for retailers to enable. Local regulations do not require restrooms or handwashing facilities, but the organization has arrangements for staff to use facilities at each stop.

Staff include a paid driver with a special license (who also serves as customer service rep, informal social worker, and community liaison) and a paid program associate – both of whom travel the bus’s entire route. The buses each typically make two to four stops per day Monday through Thursday, with one-hour stop times and extended stops as needed. Altogether, the buses serve 25 sites weekly, all year round, serving over 10,000 people. Stops are determined based on community requests; if a property manager or

elected official contacts the Mobile Market, the organization establishes contact with community members to assess interest in a mobile market stop. Capacity is limited and demand is great, so stops are chosen carefully.

The Mobile Market primarily serves communities that show up as low income and low access on USDA food desert maps, whether they are urban or just outside the city limits. Given a clientele from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and a high percentage of immigrant neighborhoods, the organization attempts to stock culturally specific foods to the extent possible, but because the buses are not able to stop along the route for restocking, it is a delicate balance: any products set aside for a particular stop that are not sold must be off-loaded at the organization’s warehouse at the end of the day, and perishables often must be discarded. The organization has a 50,000+ SF warehouse outside the city, which it uses not only for the Mobile Market buses but also for its monthly mobile pop-up market, Fare for All, which provides fresh produce and frozen meat in bulk in staff-selected boxes for customers.



While the number of products in a mobile grocery is generally determined by the mobile unit’s size, the product mix depends largely on community needs and preferences. Given that many urban low-income, low-access neighborhoods are similar to the First Ward in that residents’ primary food shopping options are neighborhood corner stores and bodegas, the gap mobile retailers fill is for fresh produce, meat, poultry, eggs, and whole grain foods. Pricing varies by organization; some (such as Twin Cities Mobile

<sup>15</sup> BRS wishes to thank Steph Wagner (Program Manager) for giving her time and input on the Twin Cities Mobile Market and other food programming of The Food Group MN on May 15, 2024. Photos courtesy of The Food Group, MN.

Market) sell goods at cost, while others (such as The Works Mobile Grocer) sell at roughly the same price point as a large supermarket or supercenter. The decision on product margins depends on the funding and on structure of the mobile grocery program – and whether it is an independent non-profit or a program affiliated with a brick-and-mortar grocery store or supermarket chain.

***Highlight: The Works Mobile Grocer (Memphis, Tennessee)***<sup>16</sup>

The Works, Inc. (TWI) inaugurated its Mobile Grocer in October of 2022 and since then has seen such high demand that it has expanded the number of stops and area of service. Initially, it took over a year to get the 40-foot car hauler (which is towed behind a Ford F-450) fitted as a store and to file permits, pass health inspection, hire staff, and establish a route. Having seen successful mobile grocers in neighboring states that are affiliated with local grocery stores, TWI chose a business partnership with CashSaver, a multi-state chain with three locally owned stores in Memphis. Through this partnership, the Mobile Grocer purchases all its food from the chain at cost, which represents significant savings, since CashSaver purchases food in bulk from a wholesaler. Another benefit is that restocking is possible at one of the retailer’s locations between stops. The Mobile Grocer adds a retail margin of about 30% to help offset operational costs, but even with this markup, costs such as fuel, salaries, repairs, and insurance mean that the program is not self-sustaining, and additional funding sources are critical. Grants are certainly an important part of the funding mix (philanthropic organizations such as family foundations are important sources of funding for mission-driven non-profits in Memphis), and TWI’s relationships with local banks help with the timing of food purchases to stock the truck.

The Mobile Grocer passed its health inspection with flying colors, and in 2022, it began making stops at food access “hot spots” in several Memphis neighborhoods – not only low-income, low-access areas but also retirement communities and neighborhoods with a high proportion of senior citizens. A significant number of stops are at senior living facilities. A mobile unit is a good option for Memphis because of residents’ relatively low access to vehicles and limited public transportation over the geographically large city. Besides the unit’s ability to serve customers by essentially eliminating transportation challenges, there is also an advantage for the Mobile Grocer: whereas a brick-and-mortar store must attract customers to its location, a mobile store is able to go directly to customers. On the other hand, stops are set for specific times, and no specific time is going to be convenient for all potential customers. TWI staff mentioned that the current schedule (with stops between 11am and 3pm) presents challenges for many working people.



Photo: Memphis ABC 24 News, 10/12/22

Densely populated areas have the additional advantage of connecting mobile grocers to a large number of potential customers per stop – as long as those stops are chosen wisely. TWI has deep and longstanding ties to individual Memphis neighborhoods, and so it is through these relationships (rather than requests from a government institution or housing development) that new stops are proposed. When the organization weighs the possibility of adding a new stop, its Food Programs Manager is responsible for going to the community and scheduling a public meeting for nearby residents, and at that meeting she presents information about the program’s mission, how the Mobile Grocer works, the various shopping options available, the schedule, the benefits accepted, and the incentives offered. These meetings also have a Q&A period. After the Mobile Grocer has been visiting a new stop for a few months, the Food Programs Manager will return for another public meeting to ask community members if the program has met expectations, or if there is anything else they could do to improve. Feedback can be as simple

<sup>16</sup> BRS wishes to thank Karen Bernard (Food Programs Manager, including the SMFM and Educational Kitchen), Devin Marzette (The Grocer Manager), and Eric Story Neimeyer (Senior Grants Coordinator & Project Manager) of The Works, Inc. for giving their time and input on the Mobile Grocer on May 17, 2024.

as a list of products that are often no longer in stock once the unit reaches a particular stop, allowing management to make specific adjustments.



Photo: Memphis ABC 24 News, 10/12/22

The Mobile Grocer accepts cash, debit, credit, and SNAP/EBT cards but – like the South Memphis Farmers Market and The Grocer – is not able to take WIC at this time. Customers with SNAP can also take advantage of Healthy Ways incentives (see *Highlight: South Memphis Farmers Market*).

The variety of products the Mobile Grocer carries is essentially the same as what would be found in a regular grocery store, but with only one type or brand of each food item sold. No foods are prepared on the unit, which made the health department permitting process simple. Foods on the shelves are fresh, but selection is based on consumer demand

rather than a prescriptive healthy menu. One of the manager’s jobs is to know what customers at each stop want to buy, which is important for stocking the unit at the beginning of each day. Currently, the manager is also the driver and has a commercial driver’s license and skills such as the ability to connect with a wide variety of customers. The other staff on board is a cashier, who has a solid understanding of the benefit and incentive programs, as well as customer service skills. However, the cashier could just as easily take over management responsibilities. Volunteers help round out services and might do anything from helping customers carry groceries into their homes to assisting with personal shopping services for homebound individuals.

TWI chose a car hauler for several reasons. Initially, these were that they had seen this model work elsewhere and considered it to be a more attractive type of mobile unit than a school bus. Accessibility is also significantly better in a car hauler that sits close to the ground. Additional consideration is cost and reliability: parts and repair services for a Ford pickup are easily accessible and cheaper than those for a truck or bus, and it is always possible to rent another pickup truck to tow the mobile unit, which helps the Mobile Grocer remain a reliable source of groceries for the communities it serves. However, management noted that none of the equipment installed on the mobile unit was ever intended to go on the road, and repairs to items such as coolers and the cash register are extremely frequent. The unit does not have freezers. TWI made the decision in the early stages of retrofitting the trailer to include the simplest versions of necessary equipment and only the plumbing that was strictly necessary in order to keep repair costs and frequency low. Neither restrooms nor handwashing stations were required by the local health department, which allowed TWI to devote more space to groceries. The organization made agreements to give staff access to facilities at the grocer’s stops. The unit does have a wheelchair ramp, but a significant number of individuals with mobility challenges instead opt for the “personal shopper” option.



Photo: Higher Ground News, 10/13/2022

This relatively new Mobile Grocer currently makes six stops per week, with one each on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and two on Thursdays. Most stops are about four hours long (11am to 3pm), and Thursday’s stops at two senior living communities are each two hours long. In the coming year, TWI plans to build up two stops each day of the workweek for a total of 10.

Of the mobile grocers researched, none is truly self-sustaining, because making money on grocery sales is about square footage and volume, and mobile programs have neither. Grocery store companies are often more than happy to have the good publicity that goes along with having their company name on a mobile unit bringing groceries to food deserts, and one structural option that can get closer to breaking

even is a mobile store that is either affiliated or partnered with a supermarket or grocery store chain that utilizes a wholesale supplier. Access to food at wholesale prices is essential to keeping prices down, and mobile retailers are able to pass these savings on to customers – either in full or in part (although some might still apply a markup to recover more of the food costs). A more complicated structure involving a retail cooperative of independent stores could have a similar effect on food purchasing prices but involves more coordination and internal management than partnership with a store. However, either type of indirect access to wholesalers can result in somewhat limited choice in the types of products a mobile grocer carries.

One other cost-saving structure for a mobile retailer is a warehouse that provides enough storage space to allow for wholesale purchasing while maintaining freedom to choose products. This structure generally means significantly more staff to manage storage and to on- and offload food each day, which adds to personnel costs. Depending on warehouse size, it may be a solution that best fits an organization running multiple mobile units, or that shares warehouse space with other organizations (such as a food pantry). The significant initial capital expenditure on warehouse space and ongoing staffing costs must be balanced against cost savings from wholesale pricing in the longer term.

The key takeaway is that a mobile food retailer will never be able to sell enough volume on its own to meet operational costs – unless the margins it charges are extremely high, which is generally contrary to the mission in a low-income, low-access area. For this reason, grants and fundraising are essential to survival and will be discussed in more detail in a later section.

A mobile grocer's schedule and number of stops depends on funding and community needs. Those needs are best understood by direct engagement with community members. The schedule and number of stops is also determined by the size of the mobile unit and volume of food to sell: smaller units such as transit vans might only be able to make one stop before needing to be restocked, while a bus or trailer might need to make more stops in order to avoid the necessity of offloading much of the food at the end of the day and reloading the next. This is particularly true of produce and groceries that require a temperature-controlled environment. Regardless of the size of the unit, collaboration with the community at each potential stop will help the grocer to determine the number of customers, product mix, frequency of visits, and length of stop. Ideally, this communication will continue periodically for as long as the mobile unit serves the area; it is important to ensure that needs are being met over time.

One difficulty many mobile grocers face in scheduling stops is balancing staff needs with customer preferences. This might be most easily done when serving senior communities where relatively few people are at work during business hours. In areas where residents tend to be at work between the hours of 8:00am and 5:00pm, offering evening shopping hours could be ideal. However, some mobile grocers have difficulty finding staff for this schedule or might have security concerns after dark, and late opening hours generally mean very late offloading of the mobile unit.

Another common challenge for mobile grocery programs is finding the right staff for a job that requires a wide variety of skills – one mobile grocery manager described the job of manager as a driver, cashier,

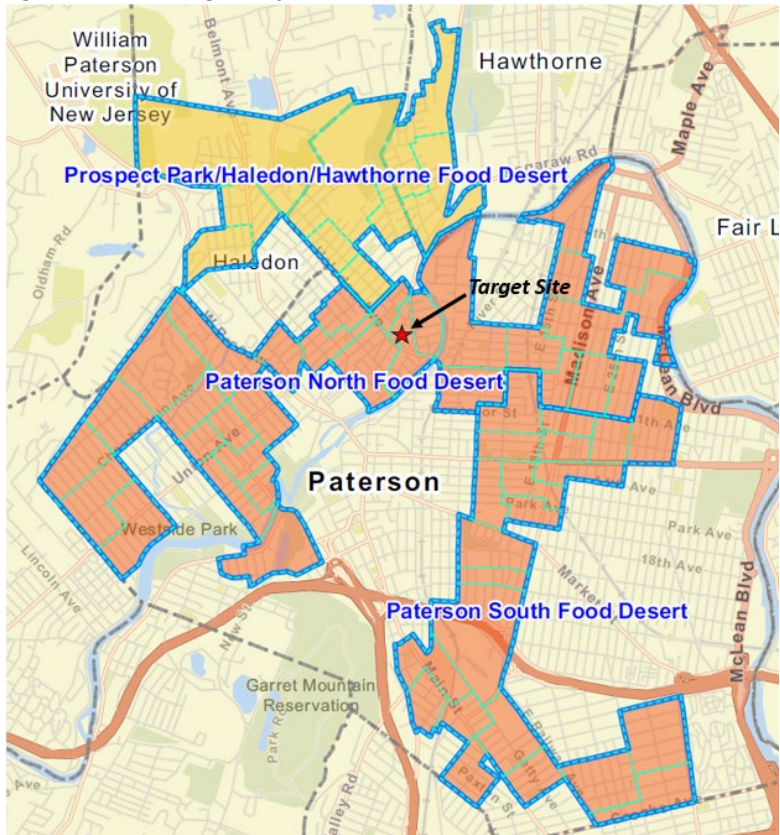
social worker, therapist, security guard, and community liaison. Other staff might be hired to stock and unload the unit. Frequently, volunteers provide important support, particularly at stops that serve senior citizens.

The service area of a mobile grocer is determined by a combination of factors that includes program funding and low-income, low-access areas located in proximity to one another. The NJEDA's [mapping tool showing designated food desert communities](#) shows a ring of neighborhoods around downtown Paterson that are in need of food retailers (see Figure 4), and although a mobile retailer might not be a good fit for all of them, these food desert designations provide potential service areas.

Another approach to creating a service area might involve pinpointing high concentrations of other potential customers in Paterson. US Census data makes it possible to identify

areas with a high proportion of residents over 65 – a demographic group that has been an important customer base for mobile grocers in other urban areas. This is shown in Figure 5, which also identifies senior living communities.<sup>17</sup> Superimposing the NJEDA-designated food desert block groups on this map, areas near Riverview Towers, Belmont 2007 Urban, and St. Joseph's Rest Home stand out as potential mobile grocer stops in the First Ward. There are several other senior residences and areas with a large senior citizen population in other areas of the Paterson North and Paterson South Food Deserts.

Figure 4: NJEDA-designated food deserts in Paterson

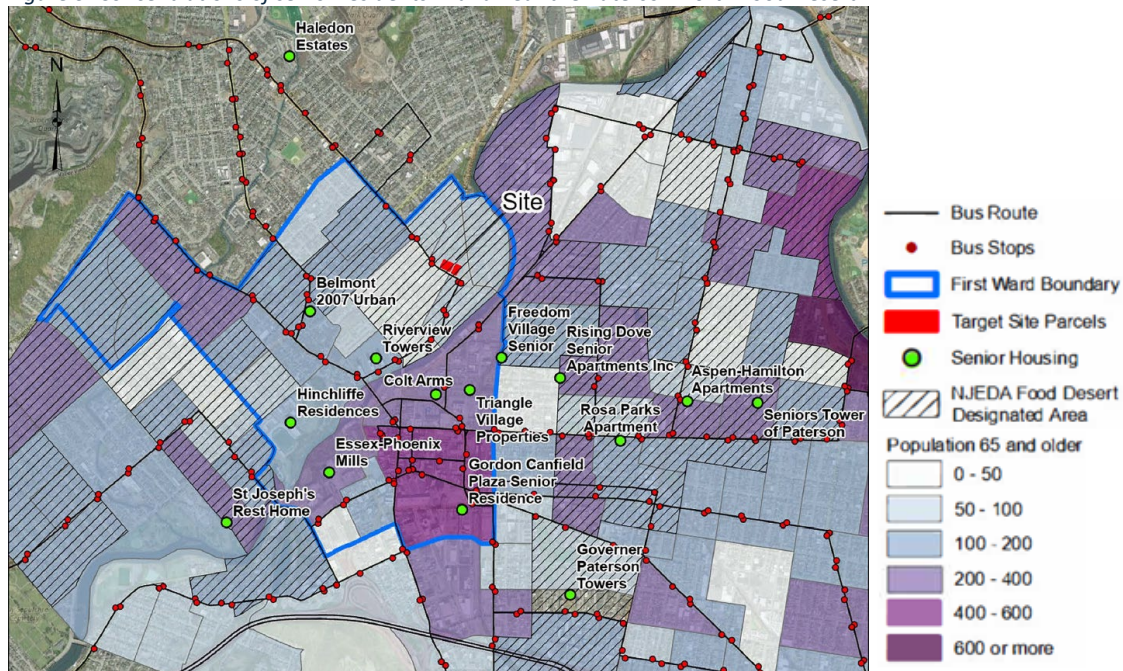


ArcGIS map layer for NJEDA-designated food deserts

Note: Orange-shaded areas are within the top 20 in NJEDA scoring. Gold-

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 2 for full-size maps.

Figure 5: Concentrations of senior residents in and near the Paterson North Food Desert



Data sources: NJEDA, US Census ACS 2017-2021, ArcGIS

Community engagement and the establishment of close relationships with neighborhood residents and organizations are key to identifying potential stops for a mobile grocer within the service area. Because a mobile grocer’s service area generally involves multiple stops, there is the potential for a program designed to benefit the target site and the First Ward to benefit the Fourth Ward, as well, or other areas within Paterson.

**Highlight: Clifton City Green Veggie Mobile (New Jersey)** <sup>18</sup>

City Green runs a wide variety of programs to support its mission to *foster equitable access to local food and green spaces, in support of sustainable, healthy communities*. With its farming, farmers market, and mobile market programs, the organization works to supply top-quality produce to communities that might not otherwise have access. Carrying out this mission in low-income, low-access food deserts – amid a constant need to explore funding options and seek grant money – has required creativity and strong local and statewide relationships. Yet City Green has expanded its reach in the area, adding a Veggie Van to the existing Veggie Mobile program to bring fresh produce to more neighborhoods in order to meet increasing demand from the community for fresh, healthy food.

The Veggie Mobile’s service area includes several cities and towns, including Paterson. Identification of suitable stops in Paterson has involved some trial and error. City Green generally looks for locations where people are already congregating or passing through – such as a bus station or public space – as most promising for customer turnout. But Paterson stops at City Hall, on Main Street, in a plaza near the post office and train station, and another near the target site were ultimately unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. At City Hall, there



Photo: City Green 2022 Impact Report

<sup>18</sup> BRS wishes to thank Jennifer Papa (Founder and Executive Director of Clifton City Green) for sharing her time and knowledge on the organization’s food access programs on June 27, 2024. Other sources of information include the *City Green 2022 Impact Report* and <https://www.citygreenonline.org/veggie-mobile>.

were plenty of customers, but City Green was unable to secure a regular place to park the Veggie Mobile, despite municipal support for the program. At the other locations, customer counts were too low to justify the stop. At stops at senior centers and senior living buildings, on the other hand, the organization has had a much easier time negotiating parking arrangements and has also had a reliable flow of customers.

City Green selects stops carefully and engages in significant marketing in communities, going door to door, handing out flyers, working with local organizations, and posting information. But community need and desire for access to City Green's produce has not always translated to a customer base for the Veggie Mobile. And while the mission-driven program does not – and does not expect to – break even, low sales and the potential for produce to spoil when repeatedly unloaded and reloaded has forced City Green to rethink its schedule of stops. Currently, the Veggie Mobile stops in the First Ward at Lou Costello Park, a pedestrian-friendly area near a school and a senior center. Engagement around this stop has included “Senior Day” events to draw SFNMP customers and promote the market. Sales at this stop (which is about a mile from the target site) have been strong, but it is by no means the Veggie Mobile's busiest market. Despite difficulties with parking regulations in some locations, the permitting process was straightforward for City Green in Paterson. City Green obtained a food vendor permit and completed paperwork with the City of Paterson Division of Health.



Photo: Passaic City Hall stop, [City Green](#)

In addition to a reliable customer base, the Veggie Mobile needs to have a designated place to park, where staff can set up a tent and table and unload food. All vegetables sold are grown organically on one of the two farms City Green works on land in and near Clifton. Some other products sold by the Veggie Mobile (and now, the Veggie Van) – fruit, eggs, and honey – are sourced from other organic farms. Generally, there are two staff members manning the truck and market: one driver/manager and one assistant who splits his or her time between the farms and City Green's farmers market programs.

According to City Green, the main consideration in selecting a vehicle (in addition to customer convenience) is refrigeration. In its earliest days, the organization used a pickup truck to transport produce, and they found that too much produce spoiled if they visited more than one stop on a hot summer day. City Green then purchased a refrigerated box truck for the Veggie Mobile, initially intending for customers to board the truck through the front side door, browse produce in the interior, and exit through the back door. However, the reality of customer mobility issues led to the current setup: produce is unloaded onto a market table at each stop. The smaller Veggie Van is a Mercedes Sprinter Van. Both the truck and the van are small enough that the driver does not need a commercial driver's license (which means savings on staff costs), and both are able to navigate city traffic and streets that are sometimes not in the best state of repair.

As at all of City Green's farmers markets, the Veggie Mobile and Veggie Van accept SNAP/EBT, FMNP, and SFMNP. City Green also has a USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program grant for their Double Bucks program, which enables them to double federal food benefits through Good Food Buck fruit and vegetable coupons, or a 50% Good Food Bucks discount every time customers use their EBP card to buy fresh produce at either mobile unit.<sup>19</sup> City Green also has a Farmers Market Promotion Program grant from USDA that not only funds some of their own marketing but also enables them to provide marketing stipends for other New Jersey farmers markets.

City Green finds mixed audiences at their mobile farmers markets. At stops where a large proportion of customers are recent immigrants who are accustomed to shopping in open-air markets and eager to buy fresh produce, offerings sell out very

<sup>19</sup> Note that City Green's Good Food Bucks program – funded by a USDA GusNIP (Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program) grant – is New Jersey's only statewide SNAP Nutrition Incentive Program. City Green implements the Good Food Bucks program at over 40 different locations (both supermarkets and farmers markets – which make up the vast majority), training and funding food retailers in 13 counties.



quickly. At others, where local residents have been living in food desert or food swamp areas for generations, with extremely limited access to fresh produce, many products have to be reintroduced. City Green does not provide formal nutrition education, but they do give customers information on the benefits of vegetables and how to prepare them..<sup>20</sup>

City Green's other funding sources vary, and because this non-profit food access program is intended as a community service instead of a profit-making venture, City Green staff is perpetually fundraising and writing grant applications. The biggest program costs are staffing, the mobile units (and repairs of the refrigeration systems in particular), fuel, and food – although food production expenses are calculated within a separate food production program budget. Staffing presents other challenges, as well – partly because the job description (part farmers market manager, part driver) requires an unusual set of skills, and partly because the work is seasonal.

In Paterson, there is a longstanding and successful farmers market (the Paterson Farmers Market on Railroad Ave.), but City Green sees its mission as distinctly different: the goal is not profit for the organization or for food producers but increasing access to fresh produce in low-income communities. And City Green's commitment to Paterson is not only through the mobile farmers market. The organization sells its organic produce wholesale and donates vegetables to the Center of United Methodist Aid to the Community Ecumenically Concerned Helping Others (CUMAC/ECHO) and makes additional produce donations to the Father English Consumer Choice Food Pantry – among other Paterson organizations it supports.



## Other types of food retailers for the First Ward

Although they are not the primary recommendations of this study, there are two other types of non-traditional food retailers that have the potential to fit the First Ward for a variety of reasons:

- **Healthy bodega/corner store initiative:** The First Ward – and the immediate surroundings of the target site – has a significant number of small corner stores and bodegas that offer some food products, although these tend to be snacks and beverages instead of fresh, nutritious produce and other foods. This type of initiative offers monetary and often technical support to store owners so that they can expand their offerings of fresh fruit and vegetables (and sometimes nutritious prepared foods) at affordable prices. Some of these programs also include a public education component that provides information to customers about nutrition and food choices. The benefits of this program are not only for residents living near these stores; the program can also support increased sales for these small local business owners. The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative, which is operated by The Food Trust and has sponsorship and funding from the Department of Health, provides a good local example.<sup>21</sup>
- **Food co-op:** Modern food co-ops are generally community centered, and unlike corporate grocery chains, they are independent and owned by the customers who shop there.

<sup>20</sup> Other City Green programs focus on food system education and outreach for a variety of audiences, exploring why some foods are so difficult to find in some neighborhoods and how to incorporate fresh vegetables into meals.

<sup>21</sup> The Healthy Corner Store Initiative works to “ensure that residents have access to delicious, nutritious food and information to choose healthier options in their local corner store,” with the main objective of improving health outcomes. For more information on this program, see <https://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-stores/>. Although this is not the targeted strategy at this site, the community/local organizations can encourage the owners of existing bodegas and corner stores in the neighborhood to participate.

Membership is open to all, and profits are usually reinvested into the store. Members choose which products the store stocks and which suppliers to use, and often this means stronger relationships to local farms and producers, which helps to concentrate economic benefits in the local area. One of the main hurdles in the establishment and maintenance of a successful food co-op, however, is that significant time and effort on the part of local community members is required. This is not a model that is feasible in all communities. Another challenge is accessing food at wholesale prices, which would likely mean establishing a relationship with a supermarket or consortium of other independent stores.

Further research and specific community outreach to gather information on the fit and viability of each of these options for the First Ward would be required.<sup>22</sup> In the case of a food co-op (or any other brick-and-mortar retailer), it would also be necessary to identify an appropriate piece of land for development. Outreach and research on the viability of a healthy bodega or corner store initiative would require extensive engagement with local owners and managers to determine the level of interest as well as the resources that would be needed to support such a program.

## Development and recommendations: Farmers market

This study initially set out to assess the possible development of a grocery store, supermarket, or farmers market on the target site in the First Ward. However, it became clear through a comprehensive physical site evaluation and local market analysis that neither a traditional grocery store nor a supermarket would be viable on the site. However, a farmers market is a transient retailer that would be both viable and practical while bringing fresh produce to local residents. This section explores the development of this type of retailer.

Farmers markets provide shopping experiences that differ from a traditional grocery store, and this type of retailer therefore has different requirements. At its most basic, a farmers market provides an opportunity for vendors/producers and customers to interact and allows customers the ability to purchase fresh produce and other foods, often locally grown or produced, without a retail “middleman.” Farmers markets can benefit the local economy, helping to improve and revitalize depressed urban centers by attracting visitors, improving access to fresh food, serving as small business incubators, and providing a safe and enjoyable space for the community to gather.<sup>23</sup>



*Cathedral Square, Milwaukee  
Photo: Project for Public Spaces*

<sup>22</sup> For more detail, see the “Studies on means of mitigating food deserts” section starting on page 31 of the *Market Analysis* component of this study.

<sup>23</sup> In the wider, ex-urban area, farmers markets also support the preservation of farmland.

Extensive planning, community outreach, and organization are essential to the success of a new farmers market. Once it is clear that the community supports the creation of a market, a full feasibility study and business planning process must be undertaken. In addition, determining the mission of the new market is one of the most crucial tasks and will guide how it is structured. For example, is the market's main objective to improve access to fresh produce? Or is it to support farmers or local entrepreneurs? Defining the mission will help identify target customers and types of products, which vendors will participate, where the market will be located, when it will operate, what staff will be needed, and which community partners will be key to successful operation.

## Site requirements

According to the Farmers Market Coalition, there are three key factors that make for a successful market:

- The market provides farmers or vendors an opportunity to sell directly to customers at fair prices;
- Fresh, local produce is available for purchase at the market; and
- The site provides opportunities for community connections and pedestrian activity..<sup>24</sup>



*Grace Chapel Baptist Church parking lot viewed from the corner of Haledon Ave. and North Main St.*

The site for a new market should be centrally located and easily accessible for the intended customer base, preferably near public transportation but also accessible to both pedestrians and cars. The site must be large enough to accommodate the anticipated number of vendors, including any vehicles used by the vendors to transport their produce. It should also provide space between the stalls to allow shoppers to socialize and incorporate corridors for customers to walk freely around the market. Designing market layout is an important part of the planning process: generally, market management will seek to maximize the number of vendors without overburdening the site. The size of the site will determine the number of vendors feasible. Research from the University of Missouri Extension suggests having firm commitments from six farmers/vendors and an expectation of at least 100 customers per market day as the starting point for development of a new farmers market..<sup>25</sup>

It is essential to review local ordinances to determine whether the proposed location conforms to zoning requirements. In Paterson, a farmers market at the target site will likely require a zoning permit from the Paterson Division of Planning and Zoning. In addition, while the off-street location of the site means that there is no need for street closures on market days, it is important to consider parking for

---

<sup>24</sup> [About FMC - Farmers Market Coalition](#)

<sup>25</sup> *Starting and Operating a Farmers Market: Frequently Asked Questions*. University of Missouri Extension publication.

customers and vendors. Vendors at some markets that have enough space park within the boundaries of the market itself, while others transport their products from nearby street parking. The target site is situated on a main arterial roadway (Haledon Avenue, CR 504) in an urban, densely built-out community, and providing reserved parking for vendors will likely be necessary. Community engagement must also include planning for customer parking on market days.

Some of the qualities that make a selected location viable include the visibility and accessibility of the space, as well as how physically welcoming it is for people.<sup>26</sup> The target site does provide visibility since it is on a main street; however, while the location is easily accessed by car, it is not easily accessible to people using public transportation. There is a bus route that runs along Haledon Avenue near the target site, but this route is not easily accessible to potential customers coming from the east or west by public transport. Some sites – such as those in parks or within built structures – may provide a more physically welcoming atmosphere, but for markets in parking lots that do not offer shade, it is important to provide some type of canopy or tent over tables to improve the comfort of both customers and vendors. Some markets (such as the Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market) commission art onsite to further improve the market’s sense of place and identity. Others rely on signage and individual vendors’ stall decoration.

Other considerations that should inform site selection include whether there are utilities onsite such as running water, restrooms that can be available for use by vendors or customers, electricity, and Wi-Fi – especially if the market will accept SNAP/EBT and credit or debit cards. It is also important to ensure that the site is accessible for those with mobility challenges and to wheelchairs, strollers, and emergency response vehicles. Nearby amenities such as restaurants, retail, parks, historic sites, schools, community centers, and housing developments (including senior housing) help create a natural gathering place and will help attract people to the area on market days.

It is also important to communicate with other local farmers markets – not only to avoid competing for the same customers but also to understand where else farmers/vendors sell their products. While market missions might be quite different, this type of collaboration will benefit a new market and help inform the decision on which days to hold a market. In some cases, a successful existing market may be interested in partnership or expansion into a new neighborhood.

## Costs

The farmers market model places the responsibility for certain costs – stalls (or market tables), canopies, staff for the vendor stalls, storage and transportation, and sometimes transaction costs – on the vendors themselves, but there are other expenses to consider. Chief among these are site leasing, market staff salaries, security, marketing, insurance, and site maintenance.

---

<sup>26</sup> [Ten Qualities of Successful Public Markets \(pps.org\)](https://www.pps.org)

Sound financial analysis is a crucial part of the planning process. Before a market can open, it will need a business plan, which in turn requires a decision on the market's structure: whether it will be run as a for-profit, non-profit, or public-private (or other type of) partnership. The mission of the market generally informs the business model and structure. Most farmers markets in low-income, low-access communities are run as non-profits, and recruiting key partners to support the market's mission is vital. If the mission aligns with that of other local organizations – such as supporting health outcomes or providing community services, or supporting the objectives of community groups or philanthropic institutions – there are opportunities for collaboration. There may also be an opportunity for public-sector investment if the mission includes providing healthy food options to the community. Collaborating from the outset could help offset some of the annual costs, and partnership with trusted local organizations will also increase the market's chance of success. If the market provides mentorship or opportunities to youth or other groups, collaboration with other organizations supporting workforce development may also be possible.<sup>27</sup>

Farmers markets should generate enough revenue to operate profitably, even if not in the initial few years. They cannot be supported indefinitely by grants alone, and vendors will not return if they are unable to recoup their expenses.<sup>28</sup> Realistic cost estimates begin with the use of land on market days. Grace Chapel Baptist Church has expressed interest in supporting access to healthy food in the neighborhood by allowing a farmers market to use the parking lot free of charge, but this issue must be revisited and finalized. Market management would need to agree with the Church on a long-term lease – for example, for a certain number of hours one day a week between June and October. A generous no-cost lease would allow market management to divert more funds into the market itself. Most markets also charge a stall fee to vendors. Amounts vary widely, as do lengths of agreements, but fees for stalls make up the largest proportion of income for a majority of markets.<sup>29</sup>

Costs for marketing and advertisement depend on the way a farmers market is structured. A non-profit (or coalition of non-profit organizations) or public sector entity may be able to limit costs by using their existing social media, website, community network, or other means of communication. Decisions on where and how to advertise depend on a good understanding of potential customers and where they get their information. Frequently, marketing costs are highest for a very new farmers market, while an established market relies on word of mouth and existing community trust. City Green assists New Jersey farmers markets by providing marketing stipends through a USDA grant.



Photo: [Washington State Farmers Market Manual](#)

---

<sup>27</sup> [How to Run a Farmers Market | Mass.gov](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Starting and Operating a Farmers Market: Frequently Asked Questions | MU Extension \(missouri.edu\)](#)

<sup>29</sup> USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2020.

Strong leadership is essential for success, but staffing costs for farmers markets are often kept relatively low by enlisting the help of volunteers and of partner organizations' staff. About half of markets have a paid manager dedicated to day-to-day operations, and the average salary is about \$18 per hour for approximately 20 hours of work each week during the market season. A smaller number of markets have more than one paid employee, and nearly two-thirds have several volunteer staff.<sup>30</sup> Jobs held by paid or unpaid staff include site/facilities manager, budget expert/accountant, and program coordinator.

While some markets write site maintenance provisions into vendor agreements and thus save on costs – for example, the South Memphis Farmers Market requires vendors to leave their area of the site in the same or a better condition than it was before the market – insurance and security costs must be considered in a market's operating budget.

## Benefit and incentive program compatibility

SNAP is managed by the USDA and the Food and Nutrition Service. SNAP provides nutritional benefits to those meeting certain eligibility criteria. Funding for the SNAP program is provided by the United States Congress in the Farm Bill, and the funds are managed at the state level.<sup>31</sup> SNAP is the largest program in the US dedicated to fighting domestic hunger and often serves as a safety net for its recipients. In general, the SNAP program provides a monthly stipend to beneficiaries for the purchase of healthy foods, enabling recipients to stretch their food budgets. Often the program provides nutrition counseling as well as funds to purchase groceries. Many states provide a variety of other services to recipients and may add additional rules or requirements.

According to the *Market Analysis*, 41% of the target area of this study receives SNAP benefits, and therefore, in order to help ensure the success of a farmers market at the target site, SNAP benefits must be accepted. The Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) and the USDA have partnered to enable eligible farmers and farmers markets to accept SNAP. The FMC notes that in the past five years, the amount of SNAP dollars spent at farmers markets has tripled.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, implementing a market program like HealthBucks (New York), Freshbucks (Rhode Island), and Good Food Bucks (operated by City Green in New Jersey) allows the market to increase customers' purchasing power without affecting farmers' earnings.<sup>33</sup> Accepting multiple payment methods opens the market to a diverse customer base, benefitting the market, the vendors, and the community.



Image: City Green 2022 Impact Report

<sup>30</sup> These numbers do not include vendors managing their own stalls or any employees they hire.

<sup>31</sup> In New Jersey, the program is officially known as NJ SNAP.

<sup>32</sup> [About Farmers Markets - Farmers Market Coalition](#)

<sup>33</sup> [Case Study of Crescent City Farmers Market | Farmers Market Legal Toolkit](#)

It is essential that a new farmers market in the First Ward accept SNAP benefits, but market management must decide whether it will require vendors to be licensed to accept SNAP benefits or whether it will instead accept benefits on behalf of all vendors. Just like any government benefit program, SNAP can be onerous for small businesses because of the application, accounting, and bureaucratic requirements. While accepting SNAP on behalf of vendors means an additional time-consuming process for market management, this is likely the most efficient and inclusive approach. To begin accepting SNAP, the farmer's market will need to apply for an official SNAP license, which will create a unique identifier for the market and will be used by the technology employed by the market for point-of-sale purchases.<sup>34</sup>

Accepting benefits such as SNAP on behalf of all vendors can lower the threshold for vendor participation in the market but requires that market management develop a payment system. A market token system is one way this can be done efficiently: customers buy tokens from market management with a credit, debit, or SNAP/EBT.<sup>35</sup> card, and those tokens can be used to purchase goods from vendor stalls. Tokens purchased with SNAP/EBT can only be used to purchase SNAP-approved foods, and markets that participate in other local or state (or market-funded) incentive programs might, for example, be able to give \$20 in tokens to a customer who purchases \$10 in tokens with SNAP. This type of system requires that market management develop a method and schedule to pay vendors for the sales they made in tokens and report SNAP purchases to USDA.<sup>36</sup> There are many ways that markets design their own "currency" – tokens, paper coupons, or vouchers being some of the most common – and management will need to weigh the demands of the market with preferences of customers to select the best fit.

Crescent City Farmers Market has a Welcome Tent where customers can purchase their desired amount of market currency with a credit, debt, or SNAP/EBT card, which they can then use at market stalls just as they would cash. The market currency is made up of different colors of tokens that can be used to purchase different foods – some only SNAP-eligible items, and others only produce through a market-funded incentive program. Still others – tokens purchased with a credit or debit card – can be used for anything in the market. Tokens, which do not expire, can be cashed back in at the Welcome Tent or saved for another market day. At the end of a market day, vendors receive an invoice for



*Crescent City Farmers Market tokens*  
Photo: Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT, from the [Center for Agricultural Food Systems](#)

<sup>34</sup> [How Do I Apply to Accept Benefits? | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> EBT, or Electronic Benefits Transfer, is an electronic system that allows a SNAP participants to pay for food using SNAP benefits and is used in a similar way to a credit card – only for specific types of purchases. For more, see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt>

<sup>36</sup> [SNAP Guide for Farmers Markets - Farmers Market Coalition](#)

the tokens they have accepted, and the amount is used by the market as stall rental payment and/or returned to the vendors by check. Careful bookkeeping is essential to the success of this system.<sup>37</sup>

Markets that accept SNAP often have additional incentive programs that allow SNAP beneficiaries to increase their spending power. Incentive programs may be run by an outside organization (such as City Green), or they may be run by the market itself and funded by a grant or other fundraising.

Collaboration with City Green on their Good Food Bucks program would further support a First Ward farmers market and access to fresh food in the First Ward.

One other incentive program requires a different type of market partnership: a partnership with a local hospital, medical system, or health insurance company might allow the market to accept “healthy food prescriptions” in the form of vouchers. Customers that receive these vouchers from their medical provider or insurance company can use them for specified products at the market.

**Highlight: Glenwood Sunday Market (Chicago)**<sup>38</sup>

The Glenwood Sunday Market was founded in 2010 as an affordable market with a mission centered on access to nutritious food. The intention from the beginning was that the market would be able to accept SNAP on behalf of all of its vendors, but very few farmers markets had gone through the USDA process as SNAP outlets at that point. Because the application required a “store owner,” the market founder applied as the “owner”, certifying that the market would not sell anything that was not approved by SNAP to be sold to people who have these benefits. The market was and is required to report to the USDA annually on what products are being sold that are SNAP-approved. The market founder also set out from the beginning to create an incentive program to be supported through market fundraising.



Market table selling tokens

Photo: Glenwood Sunday Market [Facebook page](#)

Management created its own market currency system that customers can buy with a debit, credit, or SNAP card. The system involves color-coded wooden tokens: red are for the dollars that are deducted from the customer’s SNAP account, and purple are for the matching incentive program through the market (spend \$10, receive \$10). Both may be used on any SNAP-approved food. Additionally, there is a statewide SNAP Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) available to customers as paper vouchers, but this program only allows for purchase of produce. The market-sponsored program (\$10 match for SNAP customers) aims to supplement through its own fundraising to enable customers to purchase any food they want at the market. Tokens do not expire (although FMNP vouchers do at the end of the season), and management noted that sometimes people who receive market incentive tokens might save up for a couple of weeks to purchase more expensive, non-FMNP-approved products such as meat or baked goods.

At the end of each market day, vendors turn tokens in to market management along with a form reporting on the day’s sales, and then management compiles what vendors are owed and cuts monthly checks. During the current 2024 season, management estimates about \$3,000 per week in SNAP spending.

<sup>37</sup> How a Market Currency System Enabled One Market to Accept SNAP Benefits and Credit Card Payments. Retrieved from <https://farmersmarketlegaltoolkit.org/case-studies/crescentcity/>

<sup>38</sup> BRS wishes to thank Sheree Moratto (market founder and Sustainability Director for the Rogers Park Business Alliance) for giving her time and input on the Glenwood Sunday Market on July 12, 2024.



The market-funded incentive program has been an important draw for both farmers and “food artisans” (who sell value-added products), because it means higher revenues. Initially consisting of seven vendors in 2010, the market now has 23 – and although it has applications for far more stalls, management made the conscious decision to keep the market small and focused only on food products. This food-only focus was important in attracting farmers and food producers at the beginning, as was the decision not to charge vendors fee stalls in the first year. Vendors do pay for stalls today, and fees are in fact the highest of any farmers market in Chicago because it is such a busy, high-sales market. In 2017, the market began implementing a sliding-scale fee system based on whether a vendor has a brick-and-mortar location (and its location), how many employees it has, and whether it is selling produce or value-added products. The top tier is \$75 per week and the bottom tier is \$15. The market also runs a program to help entrepreneurs (including but not limited to vendors) with business development to grow and improve their operations. The market invites a “featured vendor” each week to help small businesses grow.

The market is not permitted by its parent organization (Rogers Park Business Alliance) to operate in the red, but its objective is not to build up any reserves, either, since this would indicate that more funding could have been used to help customers purchase more food. That said, fundraising and grant-writing efforts must be constant to support the market’s operation. Hosting events and other placemaking efforts is expensive, but management feels that they help make the market successful and contribute to vendors’ strong sales. The market is also located in a Business Improvement District and receives BID sponsorship dollars.

The market has chosen partnerships carefully. Two of the more successful ones have been with local schools and food pantries. The market partners with schools that have kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade specifically, because city data has shown this age group to have the highest levels of food insecurity.

Partnership with local food banks is also mutually beneficial: market customers can buy food to donate to the food bank’s “special guest” stall, and the food bank advertises to their clients that they will be at the market, introducing new customers to the market and informing them about the SNAP and incentive programs available there. Because it is situated in a neighborhood with a high proportion of immigrant households, market management is always looking for new ways to create relationships with community members and groups.



## Schedule/frequency

Initially, most farmers markets operate on one day of the week for a particular period of the year, and after several successful years, management might consider adding a second market day and/or extending the market season. Sundays are a popular market day but not feasible for the target site. Saturday is another common market day for many successful operations, largely because of work schedules for potential customers. However, the selected day should meet the needs of the customer base – and, in this case, the needs of Grace Chapel Baptist Church, as well. Again, community engagement to understand the preferences of target customers and schedule of other area markets is key.

## Partnership with vendors and producers

Selecting the correct mix of vendors for the market is essential to creating a popular and successful market. Diversity is key, with a variety of vendors that sell fresh produce, eggs, meats, seafood, cheese,

baked goods, and other prepared foods to meet local demand.<sup>39</sup> Once again, community engagement is essential to understanding customer demand, which will in turn inform market management’s selection of vendors. Appropriate planning also increases the potential for positive local economic impact, because market shoppers often spend money at retailers or restaurants near the market. In fact, a market that has a symbiotic relationship with area businesses helps boost sales, which affects local tax revenues. This impact has been documented in the Crescent City Farmers Market in New Orleans, Pike Place Market in Seattle, and Capital City Public Market in Boise.<sup>40</sup>

The market’s mission may also determine partnerships with vendors and producers. Some markets make support for farmers and producers who are people of color central to their mission, while others prioritize organic products or products that appeal to a particular immigrant or cultural group. For many markets in low-income, low-access areas, ensuring that participating vendors offer affordable products is essential. The *Market Analysis* highlighted local households’ limited disposable income and the large proportion of Latino residents in the area surrounding the target site, and the Community Survey showed that many residents value quality and affordability equally. This information provides a useful starting point for a discussion on desired vendor partnerships. As was stated in the previous section, it is essential that participating vendors accept SNAP and other benefits in order to make fresh produce as affordable as possible.

Identifying farmers or producers who sell at other local farmers markets is also important for potential partnerships. While farmers or other producers will make decisions based on profitability, there are often savings on transportation when a vendor sells at more than one area market.

One decision that market management must make in the early stages of market planning is whether there will be some vendors that are not permitted. For example, some markets do not allow stalls selling crafts or clothes – particularly if nutrition is the main mission. Some markets may only allow vendors to sell food they have produced or grown themselves, while others allow vendors to sell other producers’ items. Some markets only allow organic products, while others define “locally produced” very narrowly. Again, a clear definition of the market’s mission will help management determine which vendors fit the market best.

## Farmers Market Recommendations

Once it is clear that the community supports the creation of a market, a full feasibility study and business planning process must be undertaken. This planning process should include extensive community engagement in the area surrounding the target site.

The site is an at-grade surface parking lot that offers little shade during the hot summer months. In order to make the market area welcoming to customers, vendors will need to provide tents or canopies

<sup>39</sup> [WSFMM-2012.pdf \(wafarmersmarkets.org\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Economic Catalysts: Exploring the Impact of Farmers’ Markets on Local Economies \(texasrealfood.com\)](#)

for their stalls. Placemaking efforts – such as special events, music, art, and activities – will help to attract customers and add to the welcoming environment. Market planning should also consider what valuable community services could be offered. Another consideration is how Wi-Fi service will be supplied for payment transactions (required) and whether vendors and customers can be given access to running water and restrooms (desirable).

It is essential that SNAP/EBT and other benefits are accepted for payment, and ideal if market management also partners with City Green to offer Good Food Bucks. It is more efficient for a market (as opposed to individual vendors) to accept SNAP and other benefit programs on behalf of all vendors. A market currency system – such as tokens – is one good way for a farmers market to facilitate use of benefits, but it does require detailed bookkeeping.

At least one paid staff – a market manager – is recommended, unless the organization or coalition of organizations managing the market can dedicate at least 20 staff hours per week to the project. It is also recommended that management partner with local institutions such as community organizations, educational institutions, and service providers to recruit volunteers to assist on market days. But strong market leadership comes from paid staff responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the market.

As seasonal and transient uses, farmers markets generally do not have municipal parking requirements. Paterson's Division of Planning and Zoning has indicated that a zoning permit would be required; however, no site plan is required. Truck vendor licenses may be required by the Paterson Division of Health as well as the Passaic County Health Division. Not every farmers market provides parking; however, when it is available, it needs to be managed effectively to provide parking for vendors and allow for turnover of parking spaces to accommodate customers arriving by car.

Extensive community engagement efforts and a full business plan will be required before a managing organization or coalition of organizations can seek funding to support a new farmers market at the target site. The management structure most likely to be successful is a coalition of non-profit organizations, with representation from respected partners working both in the First Ward and in the wider area of Paterson and Passaic County – and with support from municipal departments.

## Development and recommendations: Mobile grocer

This study's second recommendation for the target site is a mobile grocery store. A typical grocery store model relies on attracting customers to a brick-and-mortar location; a mobile grocer, on the other hand, takes the store to the customer. A mobile unit can only carry a small volume of goods and must personalize its products for a specific audience. And while this personalized service can be an advantage, providing a limited selection of products means that it is essential to understand customer demand on a hyper-local level. Convenience for customers is a balance, as well: while customers' transportation

challenges are all but eliminated, the store's hours and schedule will not work for all potential customers all the time.

Devising a business model for a mobile grocer that visits a community with limited disposable income adds another layer of complexity. Traditional grocery stores already operate with slim profit margins, and the small size and sales volume of a mobile grocer mean that per-items costs are significantly higher than for a grocery store or supermarket with more sales area. In a low- to moderate-income community, it is not possible to make up this difference by raising prices. A good business plan must account for multiple community challenges at the same time – not only lack of local retailers but also limited disposable income and access to transportation.

## Site requirements

A site must be easily accessible to the mobile unit, which means that the type of mobile unit chosen must be appropriate not only for the site's ingress and egress but also for the surrounding streets. Given the First Ward's density and narrow streets, a mobile unit that consists of a trailer pulled behind a pickup, for example, may present challenges because of its wide turning radius. A refrigerated box truck may be more practical for Paterson. Because city and school buses access the general area of the target site, at least in theory a retired city or school bus could be a viable alternative. The target site's location on Haledon Avenue (CR 504) provides easy access, but the mobile grocer will also need to access the target site from major roads and highways.

Grace Chapel Baptist Church's willingness to host a mobile grocer at the target site eliminates the need to secure reserved on-street parking at this location, but it might be necessary to set aside a limited amount of customer parking. In addition, because a mobile grocer's route is made up of multiple stops, initial planning would require arrangements for reliable parking for the unit at all stops along the grocer's route.

Plumbing, electricity, and access to restrooms (for customers) are desirable amenities but not site requirements for most mobile grocers – although it is necessary to plan for locations where staff can use restrooms. Wi-Fi service is a requirement for grocers that accept SNAP/EBT and credit or debit cards – all of which are essential to a successful retailer in the First Ward.

## Costs

A financial analysis to determine annual operating costs is critical in the planning phases, and it is important to understand that operating a mobile grocer that serves low- and moderate-income communities will never be profitable – in fact, all mobile retailers researched for this study operate in the red. Sustainability depends not only on finding long-term funding sources but also on developing strategic partnerships. For example, partnering with a supermarket chain or an organization with access to refrigerated warehousing space would help to reduce food costs by allowing the mobile grocer to purchase wholesale.

Costs other than food include the purchase and outfitting of a mobile unit, fuel, insurance, and staff salaries. Before purchasing a mobile unit, it is important to carry out a feasibility study that examines the service area, expected customer base per stop, road conditions, and parking restrictions. If it is determined that a retired city or



*Virtua Health's Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store*

school bus – or other vehicle that will require retrofitting – is the preferred mobile unit, the grocer's budget should include not only one-time retrofitting costs but also frequent repair costs for all equipment on board. Whichever type of vehicle is chosen, refrigeration is essential. Some units have freezers, as well, but this choice depends on the foods that will be stocked. Some mobile units also have generators that allow them to continue powering equipment at stops while the vehicle is off. All grocers need to install and maintain a cash register and electronic payment equipment.

Staff salaries are another significant operating cost. A mobile grocer will require at least one staff person to drive the vehicle (depending on the vehicle, this may have to be someone with a commercial driver's license, which increases staff costs) and a second person to assist customers and manage the cash register. Both staff generally also load and unload the mobile unit each day. Most mobile grocers researched had at least two paid staff people, and any that had volunteers were able to provide additional assistance to customers. Other costs include fuel, vehicle insurance, and annual maintenance.

Given high costs and low sales volume, identifying partners – trusted community organizations, businesses, government entities – that can help reduce the burden of operating costs is essential. Addressing these financing challenges with long-term planning at the outset will help make a mobile grocer more reliable to the community it serves. Because the service area of a mobile grocer is often quite large, the potential for partnerships often goes far beyond a neighborhood or even an individual urban area.

There are existing mobile services in nearby areas – such as City Green's Veggie Mobile and Passaic County's new CUMAC-operated mobile pantry – and there may be opportunities to collaborate in order to serve residents in the vicinity of the target site.

## Benefit and incentive program compatibility

Given the socioeconomic character of the community surrounding the target site, a mobile grocer must be able to accept SNAP and other benefits. This means that a mobile grocer must apply for a license to

accept SNAP/EBT *and* stock SNAP-eligible items. Once a license is granted, the mobile grocer must use a SNAP point-of-sale device for SNAP purchases.<sup>41</sup>

Ideally, management will also partner with City Green to be able to offer customers the Good Food Bucks program at the mobile grocer.

## Schedule/frequency

Many of the mobile grocers researched had a mission-related service area but needed to do significant community engagement in individual neighborhoods to determine a schedule of stops. At times this was a process of trial and error, but generally speaking, grocers that carry out more community engagement and have the best understanding of demand on a hyper-local level tend to have to make fewer route adjustments.

The length of each stop will need to be determined, as well. This will depend on the number of stops the mobile unit needs to make each week, and the expected number of customers at each stop. A related question is whether the unit will restock between stops. With space at a premium, the grocer's management must strike a balance between stocking enough and not stocking so much that staff must offload a great deal at the end of the day, or that much of the produce spoils before it can be sold. It can be difficult to determine if restocking will be required, since it is hard to anticipate exactly what customers will buy at each stop, but some grocers that partner with local grocery stores are able to reload sold-out products before moving on to the next location. Most, however, simply run out when products are sold. Generally, mobile grocers that have access to warehousing facilities do not return to restock during the day because of the extra time and staff effort it would require.

## Sourcing the food

An organization running a mobile grocer will have to decide whether its mission determines what type of food it sells. For example, some organizations prioritize fresh produce and nutritional foods (such as the mobile units run by AtlantiCare and Virtua Health), while others simply stock a limited selection of what a supermarket's shelves hold. In other words, the mission might be improving access to groceries, or it might be more. In some cases, partnership with local farmers can help give mobile grocers access to fresh produce (while also providing a sales point for the farm's products), but this is unlikely to be an affordable option in Paterson.

The Works, Inc.'s Mobile Grocer in Memphis, Tennessee is an example of partnership with a grocery store chain that provides the mobile unit with a reliable source of food *and* lower costs on account of wholesale pricing. The grocer purchases food from its partner at cost and is able to make up at least part of its operating expenses by selling the food at a markup. Mobile grocers that do not have grocery store partnerships or warehouse facilities will have to purchase food at higher cost, which in turn increases operating expenses.

---

<sup>41</sup> [How to Accept SNAP Benefits at Your Store | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)

## Mobile Grocer Recommendations

The target site is able to accommodate most types of mobile unit, but careful consideration should be given to several other factors: cost, suitability for Paterson streets, accessibility for customers, and desired interior sales space. It is also important to decide how customers will shop. A model that welcomes customers onboard to browse aisles is preferred in some communities, but in others it may be more practical for customers to place orders at a window – similar to a food truck model. It is essential that any mobile unit chosen have refrigeration, and freezers may also be desired. Fitting the mobile unit with the necessary equipment is a significant initial capital outlay, and realistic expectations for frequent repairs (of the mobile unit and equipment) are important in creating an operational budget.

The suitability of a mobile unit for Paterson and the streets in the vicinity of the target site is another important consideration. While many types of units may be able to navigate major roads in the city, smaller streets in the First Ward could present limiting factors. Discussion with the City Traffic Engineer and Traffic Superintendent is an important step in deciding on a mobile unit.

Plumbing, electricity, and restrooms for customers may be desirable, but the only requirement is arrangements for staff to use restrooms at stops. At least two staff are necessary, and management should make an effort to recruit volunteers to assist customers, particularly at stops with a significant senior citizen population.

The ability to accept SNAP/EBT and other benefits – as well as credit and debit cards – is essential, and the mobile unit must have access to Wi-Fi to process payments.

It is also important that the mobile grocer have access to refrigerated warehousing in order to be able to buy food in bulk at wholesale prices. This could be accomplished through a partnership with a local grocery or supermarket chain (ideally one that works with the mobile grocer to purchase food wholesale) or through a partnership with an organization that can offer warehouse space.

Extensive community engagement will be necessary to identify a service area and individual stops along a regular route. Local outreach will also help management decide what foods to stock in order to meet customer demand.

A mobile grocer is a transient use, and a zoning permit may be required by the Paterson Division of Planning and Zoning. The Paterson Division of Health requires a food truck vendor permit, and a temporary food event application must also be submitted.

## Operation and management

---

Profitability for food retailers such as grocery stores and supermarkets comes down to sales volume. This is the reason that large supermarkets and supercenters have proliferated over the past ten years while small grocery stores have not: large retailers and retail chains are able to purchase food wholesale and sell at a relatively low markup (2.3% on average<sup>42</sup>) because of the amount of sales space they have and their volume of sales. It is possible for a much smaller grocery store to survive by increasing retail margins significantly, but this formula will not work in a low- to moderate-income area. One of the most significant barriers to the development of a grocery store or supermarket at the target site (besides the physical limitations explored in the *Physical Site Evaluation*) is the amount of money area residents within ½ mile – likely the main customer base – spend on food shopping, which is \$24.13 less per week than the US average. Although at first glance this may not seem like a significant amount, this difference would likely bring profits below the point of viability for traditional stores because of their already slim margins. This is the reason that it often takes a mission-driven organization with outside funding sources to bring fresh, nutritious food to a low-income community.

Identification of a for-profit company that would be interested in establishing a mobile grocer or farmers market on its own is not likely because neither of these food retailers would be profitable in the community surrounding the target site. Organizations such as Clifton City Green, The Food Group MN, the YMCA of Trenton, and The Works, Inc. (all with legal structures that are non-profit organizations) have stepped in to bring these types of food retailers to urban food desert communities, relying on grant funding, fundraising, private-sector partnerships, and collaborations with other organizations to keep programs running in the absence of profits.

Partnership with local government or with a private-sector company can help make a farmers market or mobile grocer feasible, although – perhaps particularly in the case of a mobile grocer – “feasible” does not mean self-sustaining. Long-term subsidies are certain to be necessary, and identification of a private sector partner that has a vested interest in the community is important. This may be a local health provider or insurance company (both of which have an interest in improving community health through nutrition) or a supermarket chain or other company that benefits from the positive publicity of committing funds to provide a community service. The following are potential partners in and near Paterson that might be able to provide long-term funding or other support:

- St. Joseph’s Health
- Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey
- Aetna
- Shop Rite
- Stop & Shop

Stop & Shop has shown its commitment to improving food access in Passaic County through their food pantry program focused on access for children. They work directly with schools in which at least 50% of

---

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.fmi.org/our-research/food-industry-facts>



students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. Partner schools are within a five-mile radius of Stop & Shop stores. There are no schools in Paterson that currently benefit from this program, and the two stores closest to Paterson are just over five miles away in Wayne and Clifton. That said, given Stop & Shop’s interest in supporting food access in the County, the corporation is a potential partner for a mobile grocery program in particular.

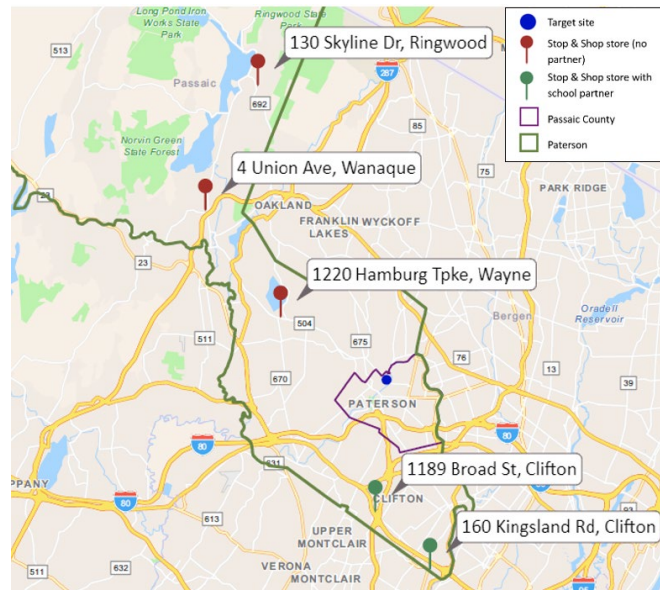
There are also examples of private-sector companies that provide food resources to their communities without partnering with a non-profit organization.

AtlantiCare, for instance, is a healthcare provider that recently started a mobile grocer to bring fresh and affordable food to Atlantic City, which ranks second highest out of the state’s 50 NJEDA-designated food desert communities. With funding secured from NJEDA and two family foundations, AtlantiCare began providing service with the Community Mobile Market in June of 2024, “to meet the needs of the community it serves by addressing food insecurity as a means to improving overall health and well-being.”<sup>43</sup> The benefit is not only to local residents; the box truck is clearly labeled as an AtlantiCare project, which provides good press for the company as a corporation that cares about the community.

A second type of private-sector partnership that can be tremendously beneficial to a mobile grocer in particular is affiliation with a supermarket or grocery store chain. There are two main advantages: being able to purchase food at wholesale prices, and the possibility of restocking the mobile unit between stops. Purchasing wholesale is a significant cost savings that is not usually available to retailers that sell a small volume of food, and it would enable the mobile grocer to pass these savings on to customers (and/or reduce the amount of grant or other funding sought for operational costs). And for mobile units that are very small or make many stops in a single day, it can be helpful to be able to stop along the route to restock sold-out products.

There are instances when individuals or groups of farmers or food producers found new farmers markets, but it is more common – particularly in urban areas – for the venture to be organized by a non-profit or community organization, a group of organizations, or even a government entity in partnership with a local organization.<sup>44</sup> Clifton City Green worked with the Bloomfield, NJ health department to set up a new full farmers market that grew out of what had been a stop on the Veggie Mobile’s route. The

Figure 6: Stop & Shop School Food Pantry Program



Note: Store and partner school locations as of June 2024

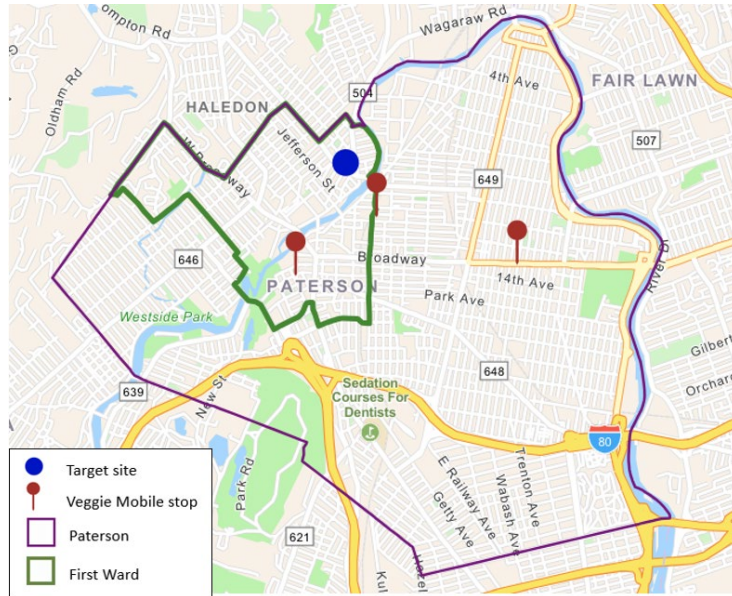
<sup>43</sup> <https://www.atlanticare.org/news/atlanticare-community-mobile-market-rolls-out-new-grocery-store-on-wheels>

<sup>44</sup> [Starting and Operating a Farmers Market](#). University of Missouri Extension.

same sort of partnership could bring City Green’s expertise in establishing and managing farmers markets and farm stands together with County government or the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County to found a new market or establish a new stop for the Veggie Mobile at the target site.

In addition to its expertise in supplying produce to local communities at its farm stands, community-supported agriculture program, and mobile farmers markets, City Green has also created a wide network of partnerships, has a dedicated team of expert grant-writers, and manages volunteer and educational programs. Moreover, City Green runs New Jersey’s Good Food Bucks program to help SNAP beneficiaries purchase more produce at farmers markets and grocery stores and partners with the Passaic WIC office. City’s Green’s deep understanding of benefits programs for farmers markets would be a strong asset to any partnership. The organization uses USDA funding to support its programs, including one to offer marketing stipends to farmers markets across the state. City Green would bring all of this expertise and its well-respected name to a coalition of organizations managing a farmers market that includes local partners active in the First Ward and Northside neighborhood.

Figure 7: City Green Veggie Mobile stops in Paterson



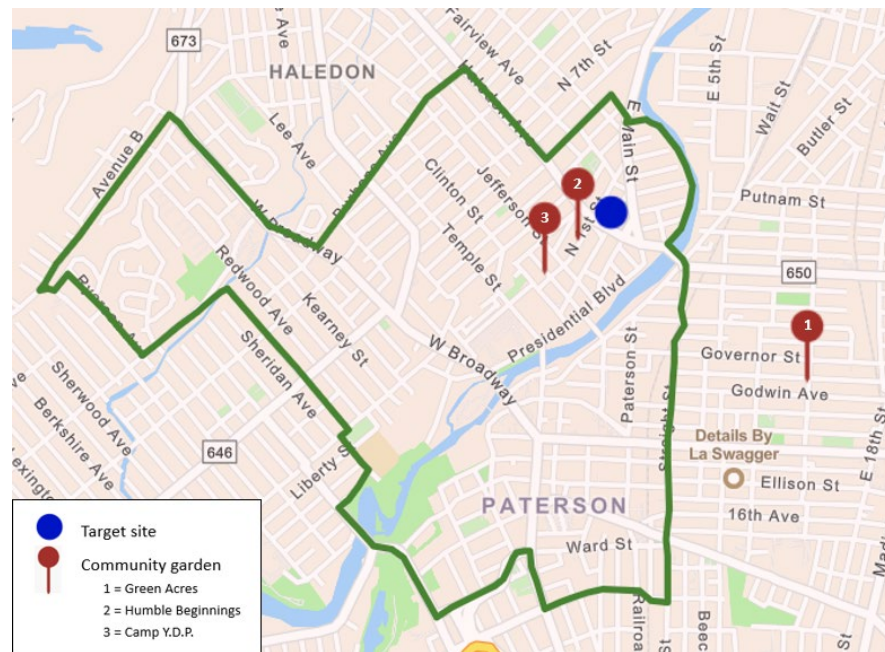
The addition of other organizations with strong community relationships in the First Ward and the area around the target site to any partnership is key. The Greenwood Avenue Farmers Market in Trenton offers a great example. The initial partnership of the YMCA of Trenton and the New Jersey Farm to School Network brought together two partners with complementary strengths that included strong relationships with funders, expertise in fundraising, deep community ties, and an understanding of what it takes to establish and manage a farmers market. Early in the planning stages, other local institutions were invited into the partnership, and each brought its own expertise and relationships. The following are some examples of local organizations (in no particular order) that would bring strengths to a coalition of partners that could establish and manage a new farmers market or mobile grocer with a route in the First Ward:

- Northside Coalition
- Passaic County Habitat for Humanity
- CUMAC/ECHO
- Grace Chapel Baptist Church

- Camp Y.D.P.
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County
- A Better Market
- Eva’s Village
- Boys & Girls Club of Paterson and Passaic
- Paterson Public School 12 and School 28
- Salvation Army Paterson
- YMCA of Paterson
- United Way of Passaic County
- Hispanic Multipurpose Service Center
- Star of Hope Ministries
- Paterson Healing Collective
- New Destiny Family Success Centers, Inc.
- Norwescap
- New Hope Community Ministries
- Catholic Family and Community Services of Passaic County
- Oasis, A Haven for Women & Children
- Seminary Baptist Church
- Victory Temple
- Health Coalition of Passaic County
  - Health Coalition of Passaic County Community Champion – GirlTrek Community Champion
  - Health Coalition of Passaic County Community Champion – Diabetes Community Champion

Another interesting potential partnership for a farmers market specifically would be with the three community gardens Passaic County Habitat for Humanity supports. Habitat has provided assistance to community groups and Camp Y.D.P. (which is a resource for preschool, after-school programs, and summer camp), who have constructed raised beds for a variety of plantings – including

Figure 8: Community gardens supported by Passaic County Habitat for Humanity



vegetables. Two of the gardens are in the immediate vicinity of the target site, and one is less than a mile away.

CUMAC/ECHO provides food pantry services in Paterson and was recently awarded a grant administered by the County of Passaic Department of Human Services to operate a mobile food pantry in other areas throughout the county. The organization has been active in Paterson for almost 40 years and has established deep local roots as a community resource and emergency food source. Its main Paterson pantry – Choice Marketplace – is laid out in a similar way to a grocery store, enabling guests to browse aisles and choose groceries that will last them five to seven days, depending on their household size. However, resources only allow for one visit per month, and CUMAC provides wraparound services to help connect people and households with benefit programs that will (either later in the month or perhaps at some point farther in the future) allow them to use SNAP and other programs to access affordable food retailers such as mobile grocers.<sup>45</sup> CUMAC could be a key member of a partnership or coalition of organizations that establishes a mobile grocer in the First Ward, bringing expertise in food programs and benefit enrollment, community relationships, fundraising ability, and a well-respected name to any group.

Whatever the composition of a partnership that addresses First Ward food access challenges through a potential mobile grocer or farmers market, collaboration with Passaic County and City of Paterson – including Municipal Council – officials is key. As a first step, it would be important to invite input and cooperation from the Mayor’s Office, the office of the First Ward Council Member, and the Paterson Department of Health & Human Services.

## Funding sources

---

As is clear from the sections above highlighting various mobile grocers and farmers markets in other urban food desert communities, outside funding sources would be critical to the establishment of a similar retailer in Paterson’s First Ward. In addition, it is almost certain that long-term funding would be necessary for these food retailers to continue to operate in the First Ward.

Appendix 3 outlines potential funding sources, eligible applicants, grant amounts, cost share, and funding objectives. These funding sources are divided into four main categories:

- Federal
- State
- Foundations
- Corporations and other potential (funding) partners

Appendix 3 is by no means an exhaustive list; it is intended as a starting point. Once the County and its partners draw their conclusions from this study, if it is determined that a mobile grocer or farmers

---

<sup>45</sup> BRS wishes to thank Jessica Padilla Gonzalez, CEO of CUMAC/ECHO, for sharing her time and knowledge in an interview on July 2, 2024.

market is desirable at the target site, it will be essential to carry out a feasibility study for the specific food retailer chosen, identify a coalition of partner organizations or institutions, craft a business plan, and identify which funding sources are most closely aligned with the project's structure and objectives.

## Environmental considerations

---

There were two main environmental issues highlighted in the *Physical Site Evaluation*: one is that part of the target site is located in the 100-year flood zone, and the rest is in the 500-year flood plain; the other is that existing environmental contamination is unknown but could involve either underground storage tanks or leaked fluids from old vehicles that have been stored on the lot. However, neither of these issues disqualifies the site from hosting a mobile grocer or farmers market. Parking lots are commonly the location for mobile grocers, and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture recommends them as a location for a farmers market in an urban area.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusions

---

This part of the study recommended two types of food retailers for the target site and examined their models, structures, costs, requirements, and potential funding sources. Both are feasible for the site and fit community needs, but recommendations for these two very different types of retailers are distinct:

- A farmers market that holds weekly market days at the target site not only offers access to fresh produce and nutritious foods but also has the potential to create a new and vital community gathering in the heart of the Northside. However, this model is seasonal and presents challenges for an urban community that must form creative partnerships to bring fresh produce to market customers. If the County chooses to pursue this option, a market operator (or coalition of organizations acting as operator) must define the market's mission carefully – based on community preferences – before pursuing partnership with vendors. A farmers market will be most successful at this location if it offers not only affordable food but also events, activities, and services for market attendees. Effective “placemaking” is the key to a popular and sustainable farmers market.
- A mobile grocer all but solves transportation challenges in a community with fairly low vehicle access and inadequate public transport. It is also particularly beneficial to senior citizens. While it is not possible to create a perfect route to serve all potential customers within Paterson's NJEDA-designated food deserts, a mobile grocer is able to address food access challenges in multiple locations over a wide area by bringing the store to the customers. However, a mobile grocer that sells affordable and healthy food is an expensive model because of the fact that operational costs are always far higher than sales. It also presents logistical challenges such as finding a reliable supplier, food storage, and maintenance of expensive equipment. A mobile grocer's best chance of success in the First Ward would be a partnership: either with a local

---

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/md/prog/farmersmarkethelp.html>

supermarket chain that offers wholesale pricing and retail expertise, or with another local organization with a similar mission and access to a refrigerated warehouse and expertise in addressing food insecurity in Passaic County.

One of the most important takeaways from this study is that if the County chooses to pursue development of a farmers market or mobile grocer in the First Ward, building diverse and resilient partnerships and coalitions is essential to the success of the program. Success will also require working closely with the City of Paterson and with Passaic County to help leverage government resources. Input from community stakeholders confirmed that food access is an important issue throughout much of Paterson, and also that buy-in for a proposed program from both community members and local organizations is essential.

Despite their differences, both farmers markets and mobile grocers share challenges in operational complexity and funding sources. Both require significant planning, strong leadership, partnership with likeminded organizations, and the need for extensive community engagement. If the County chooses to support a farmers market or mobile retailer for the First Ward, formation of a strong organizational partnership, creation of a business plan, and community outreach in the desired service area would be essential next steps.

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many individuals who made themselves available for interviews on a variety of topics for this study. BRS, Inc. wishes to thank the following individuals for their time and valuable input:

- Jennifer Salt Taylor, RDN, CHES – Passaic County FCHS Educator, Department of Family & Community Health Sciences, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Passaic County
- Teresa Holman – Community Organizer, Passaic County Habitat for Humanity
- Teresa McDermott, M. Ed. – Director, Camp Y.D.P.
- Steph Wagner - Program Manager, Fare for All & Twin Cities Mobile Market, The Food Group MN
- Karen Bernard – Food Programs Manager, South Memphis Farmers Market and Educational Kitchen, The Works, Inc.
- Devin Marzette – Manager of The Grocer, The Works, Inc.
- Eric Story Neimeyer – Senior Grants Coordinator & Project Manager, The Works, Inc.
- Mark Dinglasan – Executive Director, New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate
- Deborah Hoffman – Director, County of Passaic Division of Economic Development
- Rev. Glorious Shabazz – Minister, Grace Chapel Baptist Church
- Kevin Benjamin – Deacon in Training, Grace Chapel Baptist Church
- Jennifer Papa – Founder & Executive Director, Clifton City Green
- Mary Celis – President & CEO, United Way of Passaic County
- Kenneth M. Morris, Jr., MHA, MA – Vice President of External Affairs, St. Joseph’s Health
- Shana Manradge – CEO, A Better Market, and member of the United Way Food Policy Council
- Jessica Padilla Gonzalez – CEO, CUMAC/ECHO
- Rodney Addison – Nutritionist, Onyx Repository Foundation
- Danielle Petillo, MSW – Impact Passaic Coordinator, Passaic County Department of Human Services
- Kimberly Birdsall, M.P.H. – Executive Director, Health Coalition of Passaic County
- Sheree Moratto – Founder, Glenwood Sunday Market (Chicago, IL), and Sustainability Director, Rogers Park Business Alliance
- Barbara A. Blake McLennon – Director, City of Paterson Department of Community Development
- Arti Kakkar, DHA, Ed.S., LMFT – Executive Director, County of Passaic Department of Human Services

This feedback provided important insights in conjunction with public input solicited through a community engagement process throughout the duration of the study. In particular, BRS wishes to thank the Northside Coalition for welcoming us to their monthly meetings in January, May, and July 2024, and all Paterson residents who responded to the Community Survey between January and March of 2024.

We are also grateful for the valuable input provided by Sasha Lowery (Community Development Manager, Passaic County Habitat for Humanity), Scott Millard (CEO, Passaic County Habitat for Humanity), and Melissa Flynn (Community Action Board Manager, Health Coalition of Passaic County).

## Appendix 1: Products commonly sold at US farmers markets

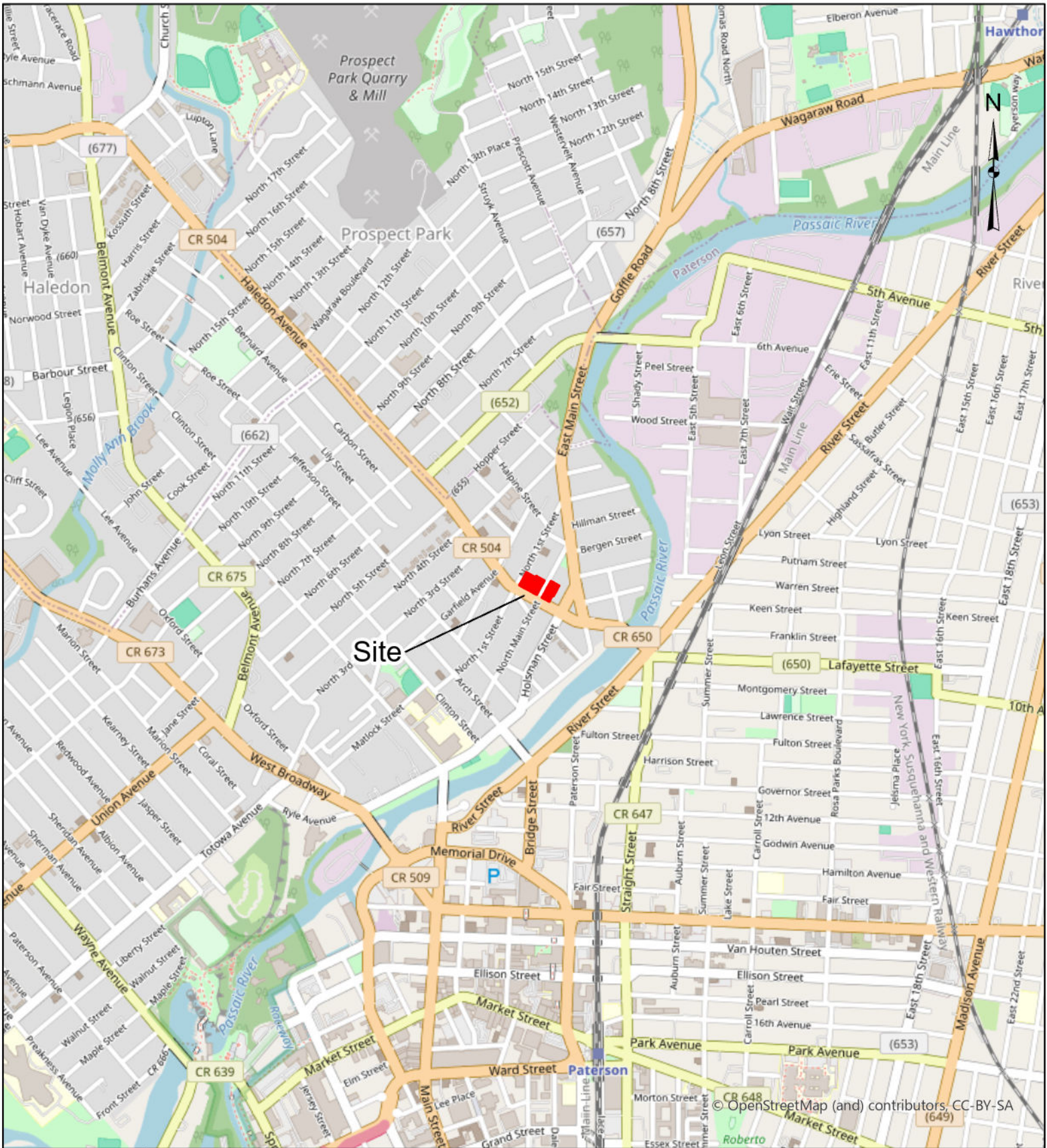


<b>Products Sold in US Farmers Markets (2019)</b>	
	Percent of surveyed markets selling product
<b>Milk and dairy</b>	<b>44.2%</b>
Cheese	92.0%
Yogurt	29.3%
Milk	34.6%
Butter	30.6%
<b>Bread and baking goods</b>	<b>90.9%</b>
Baked goods	99.8%
Grains/flour	17.6%
<b>Fruit and vegetables</b>	<b>99.6%</b>
Fresh fruit	95.3%
Fresh vegetables	99.3%
Fresh/dried herbs	79.6%
<b>Meat, seafood, and eggs</b>	<b>84.5%</b>
Fish and/or seafood	28.0%
Red meat	70.2%
Poultry	52.5%
Eggs	93.9%
<b>Condiments and sauces</b>	<b>94.1%</b>
Honey	93.2%
Canned fruits or preserves	87.8%
Maple syrup	38.8%
<b>Beverages</b>	<b>60.4%</b>
Alcoholic beverages	28.2%
Coffee and/or tea	73.6%
Other non-alcoholic	73.8%
<b>Plants</b>	<b>86.5%</b>
Cut flowers	83.3%
Plants in containers	83.8%
Bedding plants	63.7%
Nursery stock	29.8%
<b>Other foods</b>	<b>77.9%</b>
Tofu and/or meat dairy substitutes	7.7%
Nuts	40.9%
Mushrooms	49.0%
Wild harvested/foraged	17.6%
Prepared foods	70.0%
Seeds of edible plants	18.7%

Fermented and pickled foods	58.8%
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	<b>82.7%</b>
Crafts and/or woodworking	82.6%
Soap and/or body care	84.0%
Pet food	32.9%
Services	19.0%
Other	15.5%

Note: Product breakout percent is of respondents who reported selling within the Product Class (indicated in **bold** text).  
Source: National Farmers Market Managers 2019 Summary (August 2020). USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

## Appendix 2: Full-size maps



**Legend**

■ Site Parcels

Scale 1:15,000  
0 0.13 0.25 0.5 Miles

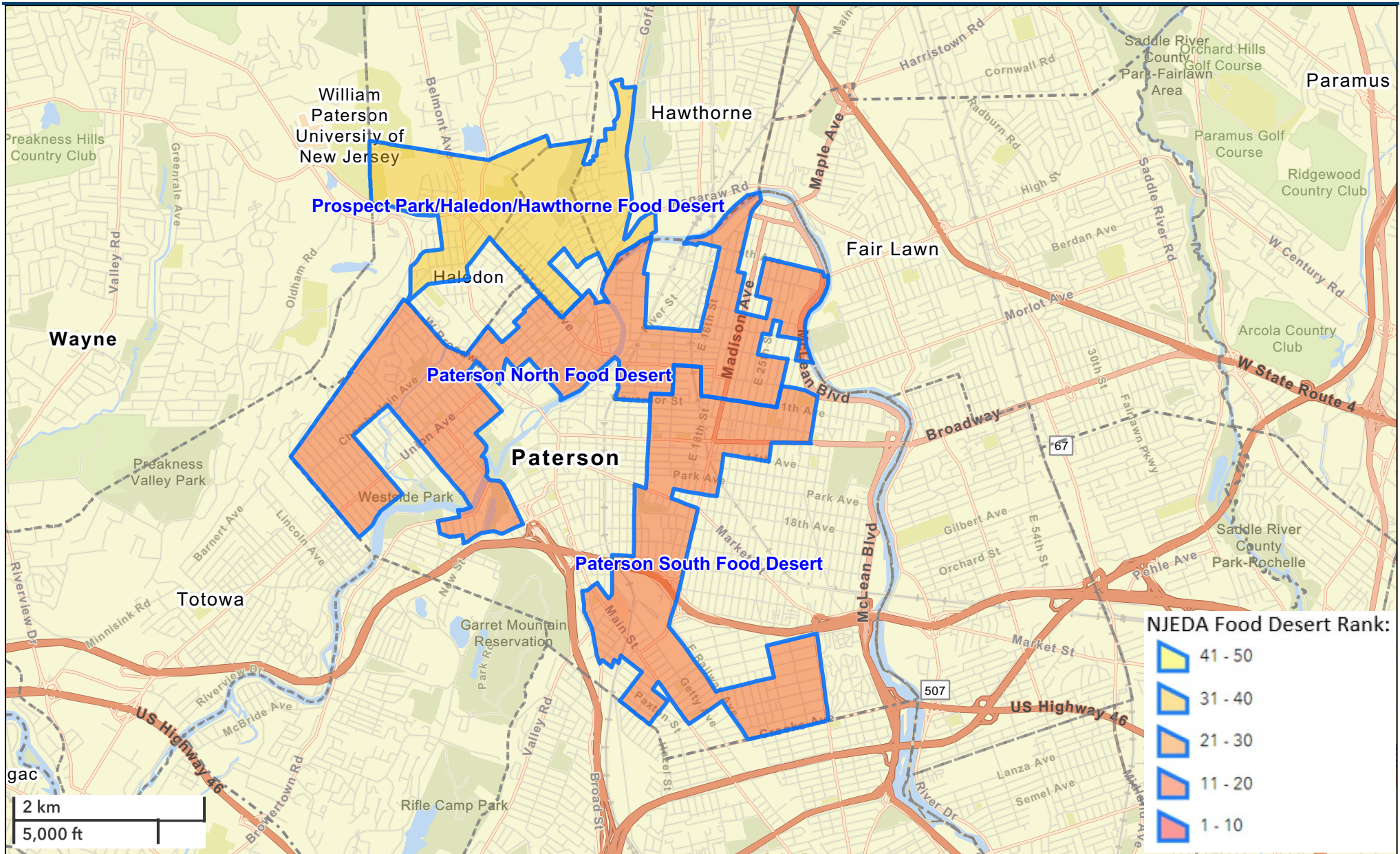
Figure Title **Site Location Map**

Client **County of Passaic**

Figure No. **1**

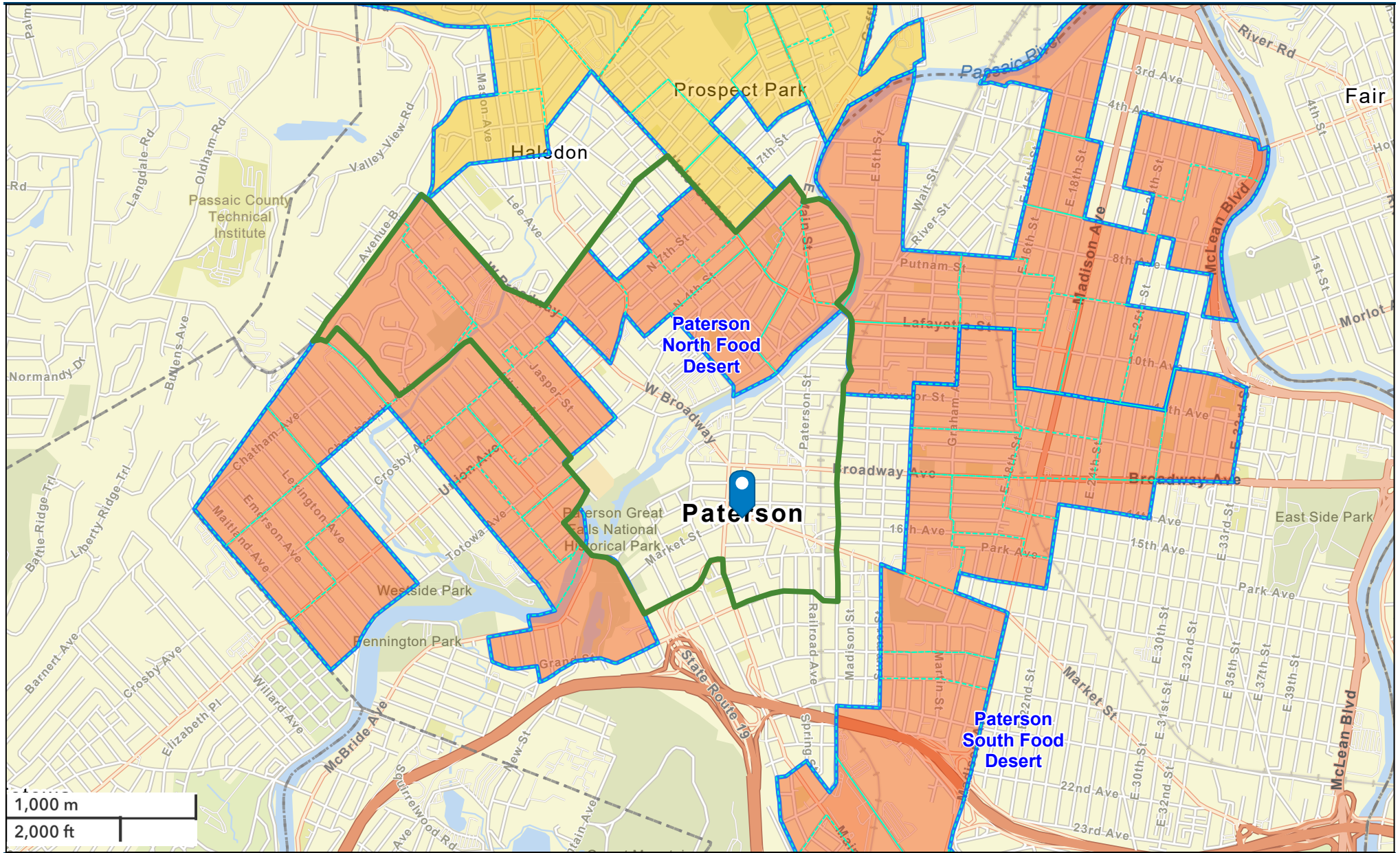
Project **Market Analysis Paterson, New Jersey**

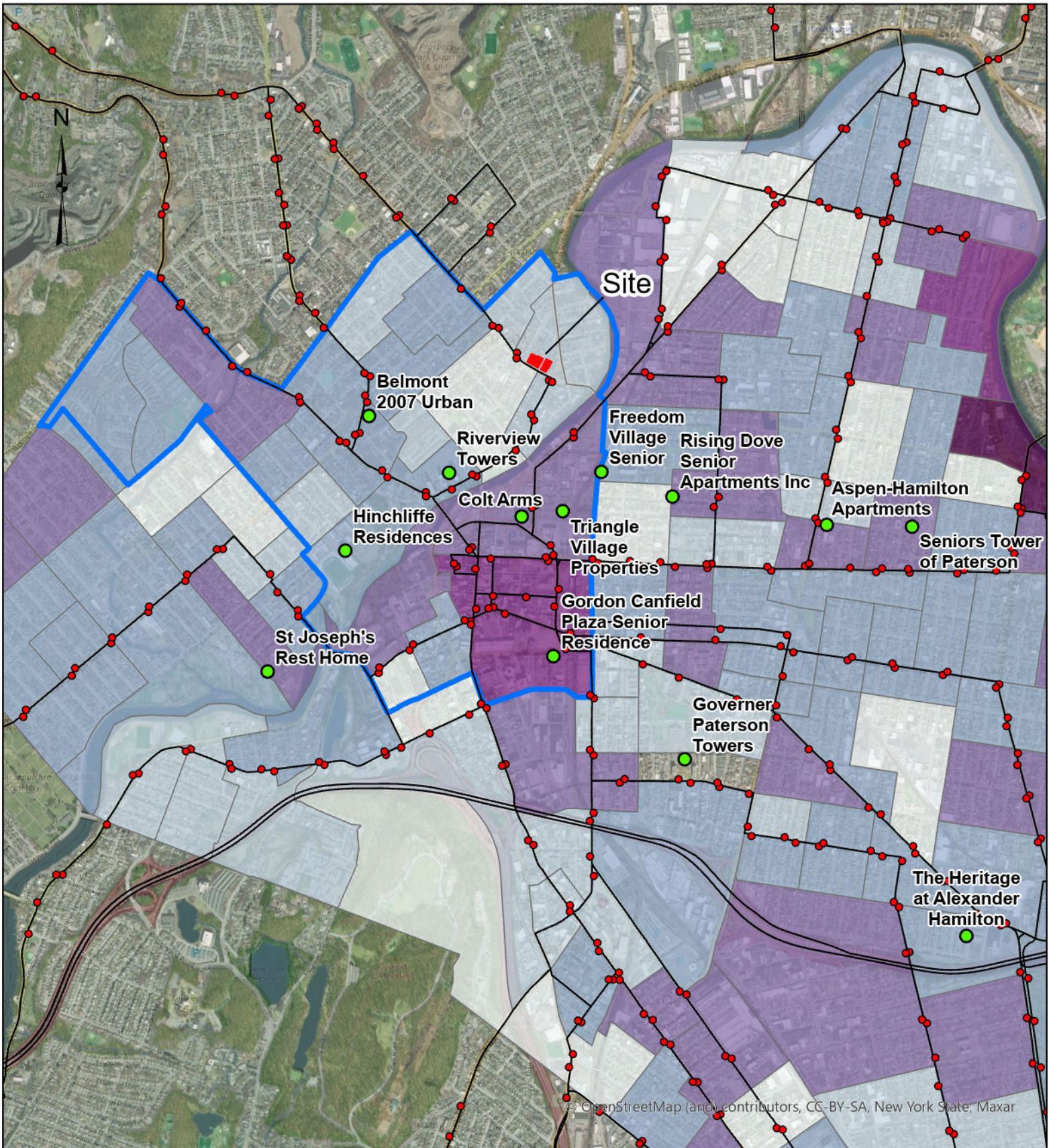
Print Date **2/22/2024**



2 km  
5,000 ft





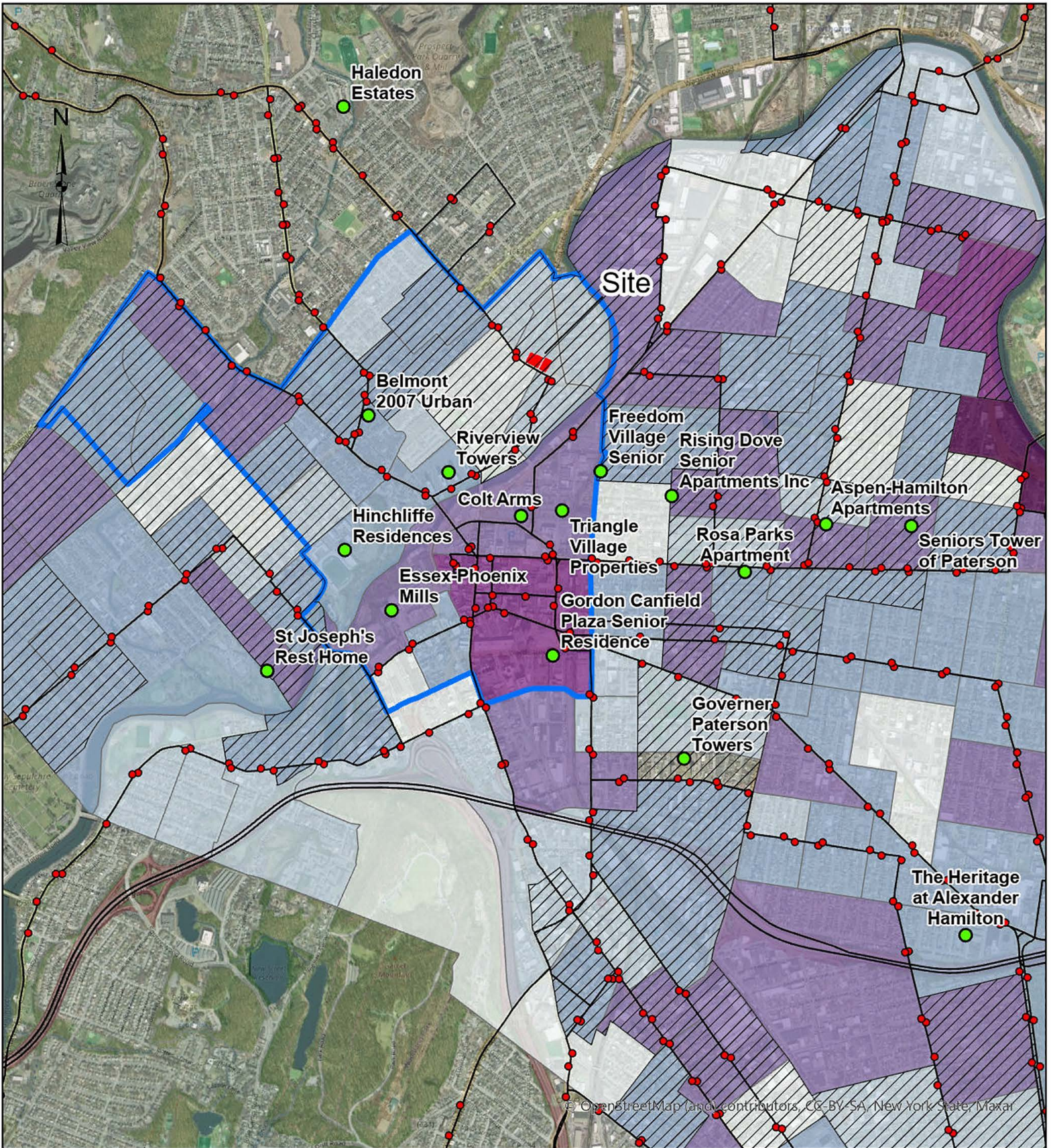


© OpenStreetMap (and contributors), CC-BY-SA, New York State, Maxar



Legend	
	Bus Route
	Bus Stops
	First Ward Boundary
	Target Site Parcels
	Senior Housing
Population 65 and older	
	0 - 50
	50 - 100
	100 - 200
	200 - 400
	400 - 600
	600 or more

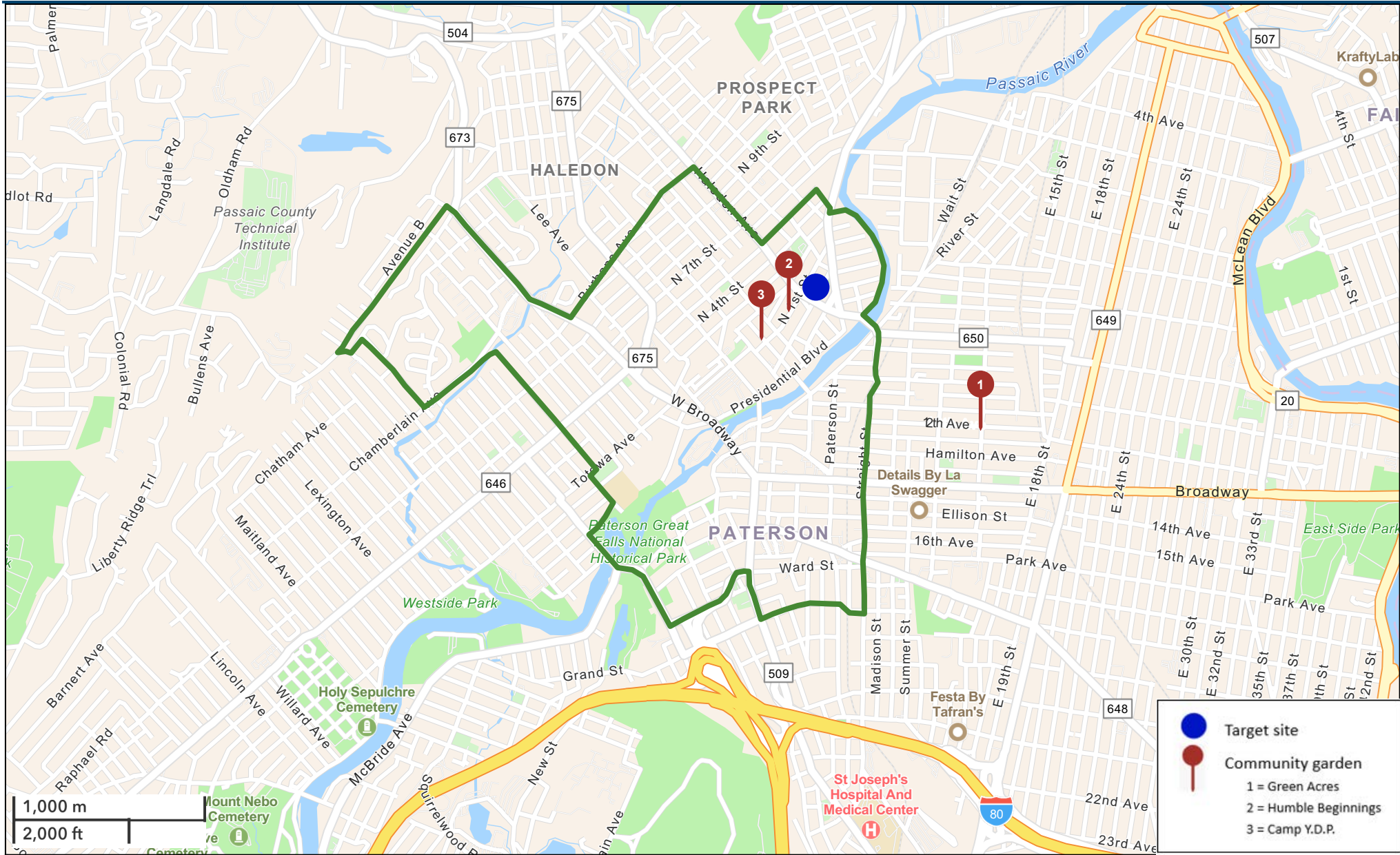
Scale	0 0.2 0.4 0.8		
1:25,000	Miles		
Figure Title			
<b>Public Transit and Census Data</b>			
Client			Figure No.
County of Passaic			<b>3</b>
Project			Print Date
Market Analysis Paterson, New Jersey			7/2/2024



Legend	
	Bus Route
	Bus Stops
	First Ward Boundary
	Target Site Parcels
	Senior Housing
	NJEDA Food Desert Designated Area
Population 65 and older	
	0 - 50
	50 - 100
	100 - 200
	200 - 400
	400 - 600
	600 or more

Scale	0 0.2 0.4 0.8 Miles		
1:25,000			
Figure Title	<b>Public Transit and Census Data</b>		
Client	<b>County of Passaic</b>		Figure No.
Project	<b>Market Analysis Paterson, New Jersey</b>		<b>3</b>
			Print Date 7/3/2024

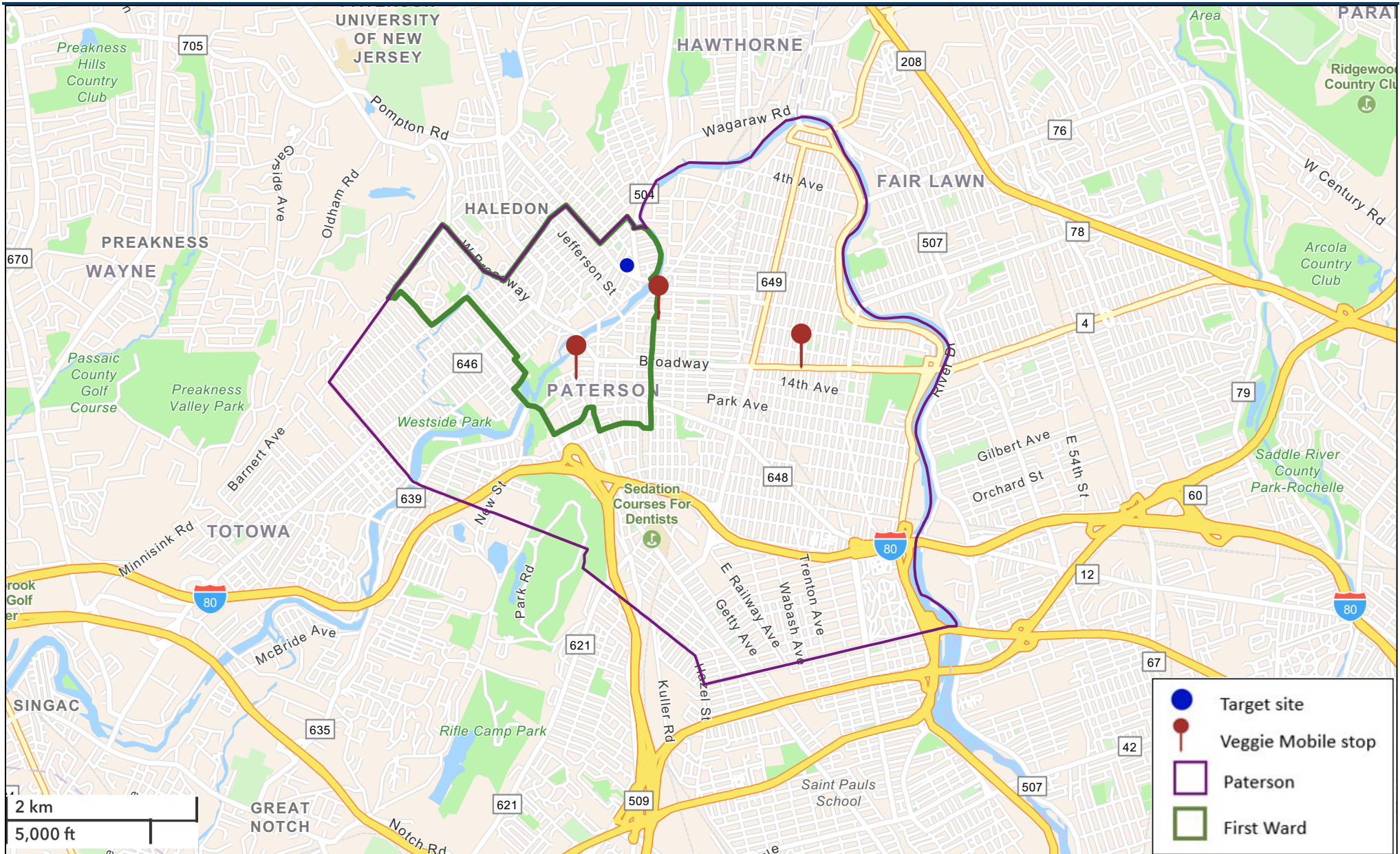




	Target site
	Community garden
	1 = Green Acres
	2 = Humble Beginnings
	3 = Camp Y.D.P.

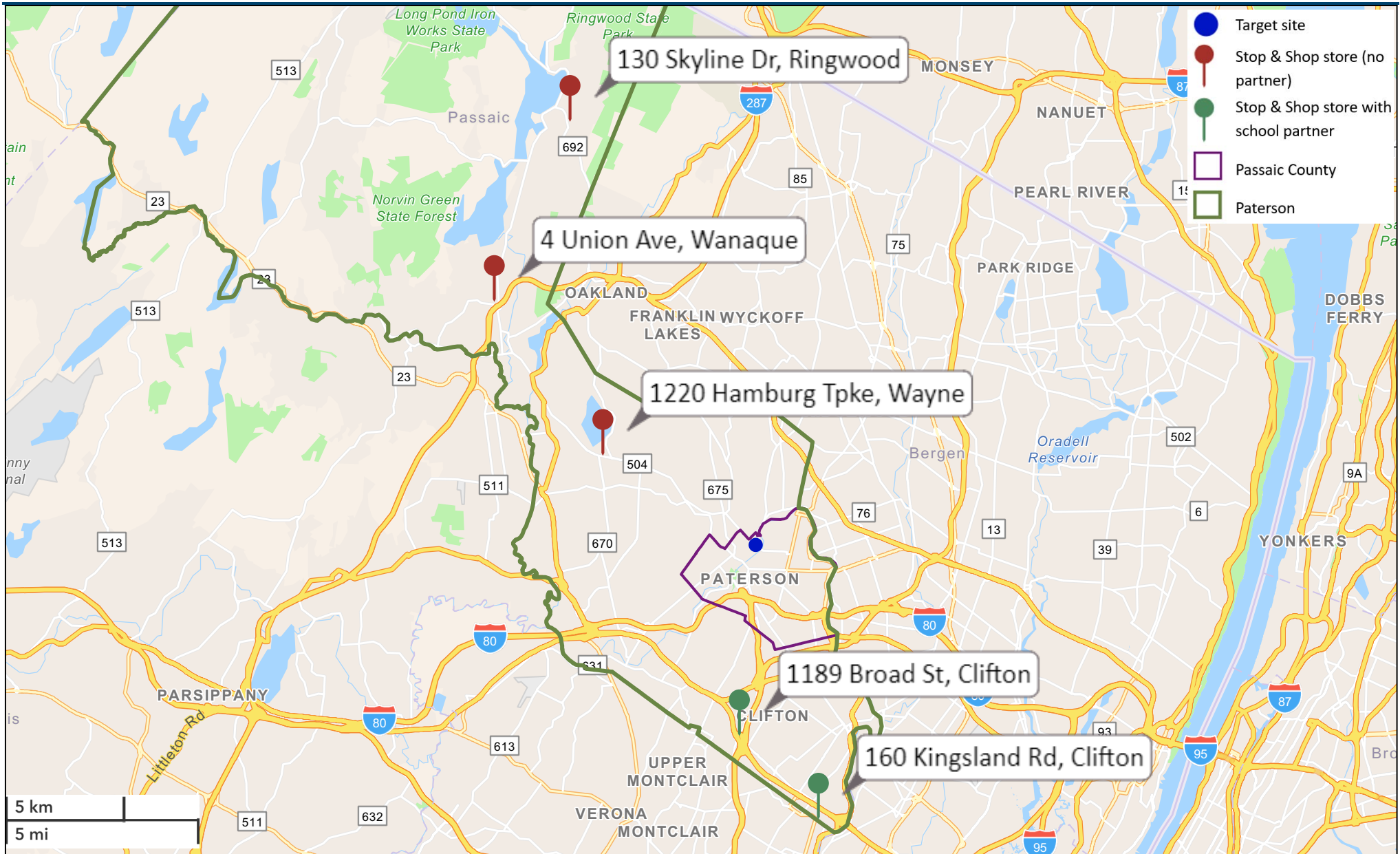
1,000 m  
2,000 ft

# Clifton City Green Veggie Mobile stops in Paterson



# Stop & Shop School Food Pantry Program

Store and partner school locations as of June 2024



## Appendix 3: Funding sources

## US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

### Community Food Projects Competitive Grants

Eligibility: Nonprofits and Public Food service providers

Grant Range: \$35,000 to \$400,000

Cost Share: 1 to 1 match required

The primary goals of the CFP are to meet the food needs of low-income individuals through improving access to food, increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for the food needs of their people, and promote comprehensive responses to local food access, farm, and nutrition issues.

Two types of projects are supported: (1) Community Food Projects (CFP) and (2) Planning Projects (PP). Examples include planning for long-term solutions; the creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers; food distribution; and community outreach to assist in participation in Federally assisted nutrition programs and equipment necessary for the efficient operation of a project.

<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program>

### Healthy Food Financing Initiative

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is a public-private partnership administered by the Reinvestment Fund on behalf of USDA Rural Development. HFFI was created to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities. HFFI provides financial and technical assistance, either directly or through other partners and intermediaries, to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and food retail supply chain enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas.

#### NJ Program Model:

The Reinvestment Fund partnered with the New Jersey Economic Development Authority in 2009 to create the New Jersey Food Access Initiative (NJFAI). In 2012, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation invested \$12 million into the initiative. NJFAI makes subgrants and loans available to support supermarket developers and operators, food hubs, and other formats of fresh food retail that will increase access to fresh, healthy foods in underserved areas across the state, with an emphasis on serving the following ten cities: Atlantic City, Camden, East Orange, Elizabeth, Jersey City, Newark, New Brunswick, Paterson, Trenton, and Vineland. NJFAI has financed 22 projects with loans and grants totaling \$25.2 million since August 2016 with many projects receiving HFFI funding. NJFAI funded projects have served 475,000 people, retained or created more than 1,700 permanent jobs, and developed 610,000 square feet of food retail space.

<https://www.investinginfood.com/impact/>

### Farmers Market Promotion Program

Eligibility: Municipalities, counties, nonprofits; agricultural businesses, cooperatives, producer networks, CSAs, and economic development or public benefit corporations are eligible to apply

Grant Range: \$50,000-\$250,000 for CB projects; \$100,000-\$500,000 for CTA projects

Cost Share: A cost share equal to 25% of the grant in cash or in-kind contributions is required

The purpose of this program is to increase domestic consumption of, and access to, locally and regionally produced agricultural products, and to develop new market opportunities for farm and ranch operations serving local markets by developing, improving, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to, or assisting in the development, improvement, and expansion of, domestic

farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

FMPP offers Capacity Building (CB) and Community Development Training and Technical Assistance (CTA) project types. Priority consideration will be given to projects that benefit communities located in areas of concentrated poverty with limited access to supermarkets or locally or regionally grown food. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>

## US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program

Cost share: Match required

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program “provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities,” primarily for low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons. Paterson is not eligible for funding from this source from the County, but the City itself receives CDBG funding from HUD. The Paterson Department of Community Development administers the funding received annually for a variety of programs related to expanding economic opportunities that support community revitalization. Mobile grocer programs are not eligible for funding, but a farmers market theoretically would be.

However, very limited funding is available (only \$500,000-\$600,000 for all activities in Paterson), and the program serves a wide variety of community development projects. In addition, the City will not fund duplicate projects. “Duplicate” is defined broadly to mean projects with similar goals in the same ward, and the CDBG program is already funding several food banks and other food access projects in Paterson – including in the First, Second, and Fifth Wards. To be considered not duplicative of current projects and be eligible for funding, a project would need to service the Third, Fourth, and/or Sixth Ward. Alternatively, if a farmers market in the First Ward received CDBG funding, another food access program currently working in this ward would not be funded (or would lose funding).

Any activity funded would need to benefit a low moderate, very low moderate or extremely low moderate income community. A proposed project must have substantially different goals than other food access projects in the First Ward and must provide a unique service.

[https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/comm\\_planning/cdbg](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/cdbg)

## US Health and Human Services

### Community Economic Development Program (CED)

Eligibility: Private, non-profit organizations that are Community Development Corporations (CDCs), including faith-based organizations.

This federal grant program funds CDCs that address the economic needs of low-income individuals and families through the creation of sustainable business development and employment opportunities. Examples of projects funded include shopping centers, and agriculture initiatives. Grants are awarded for the following project costs: Startup or expansion of businesses, physical, or commercial activities; Capital expenditures such as the purchase of equipment or real property; Allowable operating expenses; and Loans or equity investments.

## New Jersey Department of Agriculture

### Specialty Crop Block Grants

Grant Range: Up to \$40,000

For the purpose of this grant program “specialty crops” are defined as vegetables, fruits including grapes for wine, nuts, horticultural products including honey, herbs, potatoes, sweet corn and other specialty crops including algae. To be eligible for a grant, projects must “enhance the competitiveness” of specialty crops and might include, but are not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, “buy local” programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product.

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/grants/farmersmarket.html>

### Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Grants

Eligibility: Local government, nonprofits or institutions such as hospitals/universities

This program supports projects that further develop local sustainable processing, storage and distribution as a means of food security and providing additional availability of products for the Food Deserts and Underserved Communities of the state. Construction of a new facility, purchase of equipment or delivery vehicles are eligible costs.

Infrastructure Grant Application – Projects requesting more than \$100,000 that intend to develop new, middle-of-supply-chain infrastructure for eligible agricultural products. The USDA has defined a funding range of \$100,000 - \$3,000,000 per application. Applications must provide a 50% match in funding, 25% if the applicant entity qualifies for a reduced match.

Simplified Equipment-Only Application – Projects requesting between \$10,000 and \$100,000 for equipment purchases related to middle-of-supply-chain activities. There is no match requirement for simplified equipment-only projects.

<https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/grants/rfsigrants.html>

## NJ Economic Development Authority

### Food Desert Relief Program

Eligibility: Grocery Stores or supermarkets

***There are two reasons neither a mobile grocer nor a farmers market would qualify for this program in its current iteration. One is that the funding is for development (or rehabilitation) of a built structure of at least 16,000 SF. The other is that the retailer must operate on a full-time basis, which is defined as “at least 60 hours per week every week of the year.” This is far more operating hours than a standard mobile grocer or farmers market.***

Grant Range: The NJEDA may sell all or a portion of the tax credits to provide grants and loans to qualified supermarkets, grocery stores, and small- and mid-sized food retailers in food desert communities for equipment, technology costs, and initiatives to ensure food security of residents.

The Food Desert Relief Program addresses the food security needs of communities across New Jersey by providing up to \$40 million per year in tax credits, loans, grants, and/or technical assistance to increase access to nutritious foods and develop new approaches to alleviate food deserts. Through the Program, the NJEDA has identified 50 food desert communities across the state in coordination with the

Departments of Community Affairs and Agriculture. NJEDA will also award tax credits to incentivize businesses to establish and retain new supermarkets and grocery stores in food desert communities, offer technical assistance on best practices for increasing the accessibility of nutritious foods, and provide grants and loans for food retailers of all sizes to fund equipment costs associated with providing fresh food, technology costs associated with supporting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) payments, and initiatives to ensure food security.



<https://www.njeda.gov/food-desert-relief-program/>

### **Food Retail Innovation in Delivery Grant (FRIDG)**

Eligibility: Food Retailer

Grant Range: between 30% and 50% of the total project cost (inclusive of locker purchase, delivery, and installation) up to \$250,000.

This program provides grants to food retailers to purchase self-contained, temperature-controlled lockers and install them in FDCs., which will facilitate food delivery and improve access to high quality groceries, including fresh produce, for Food Desert Community (FDC) residents. Through the utilization of refrigerated lockers, the FRIDG program will help to increase the availability of nutritious food in FDCs while assisting food retailers to adapt to new business models that can help sustain their businesses. Through FRIDG, supermarket retailers can subsidize the purchase of refrigerated locker units and will begin delivering to these units, which must be placed within an FDC, and may be placed near local organizations, such as food banks and community centers that are convenient for residents of the community and a place where residents facing food insecurity may already access services. This model will also give FDC residents the ability to order online and have groceries delivered to a convenient central location without having to travel long distances to reach food retailers, as many FDC residents without a nearby grocer are currently forced to do.

<https://www.njeda.gov/food-security-programs/>

## **FOUNDATIONS**

### **New Jersey Innovative Healthy Food Retail Initiative**

Eligibility: For-profit, nonprofit, and cooperatively owned businesses, community health and other anchor institutions, state and local governments, and tribal governments working to improve food access for underserved communities in New Jersey through food retail.

Grant Range: \$1.5 million in funding is available for grants of up to \$200,000 each

This initiative provides grant funding for innovative, community-focused healthy food retailers striving to improve access to affordable, fresh, and healthy foods in underserved areas of New Jersey. Grants will support the implementation of new projects or the expansion of existing ones, focusing on processing, distributing, aggregating, marketing, or selling healthy, fresh, and affordable foods in New



Jersey communities with limited healthy food access. Projects should seek to implement innovative ideas that are beyond the traditional, full-service grocery store and demonstrate long-term sustainability if awarded.

This initiative is a collaborative effort between Reinvestment Fund and The Food Trust and is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

[NJ-innovativehealthyfoodretail@reinvestment.com](mailto:NJ-innovativehealthyfoodretail@reinvestment.com)

### Support for individuals

#### **Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)**

In 2021, City Green was awarded the first GusNIP grant in New Jersey to support their nutrition incentive program, Garden State Good Food Network. City Green grows and distributes food to their local community through a network of farmer's markets and location-specific deliveries via the "Veggie Mobile," with a goal of providing access to local farm-fresh food along with meaningful job and volunteer opportunities in an agricultural setting.

#### *Enhancing Sales of Locally Grown Produce through a Single Box Multi Produce Item Web Based Purchasing Platform for distribution directly to individuals New Jersey (\$39,520)*

The Landisville Produce Co-operative (LPC) will increase the sales of its grower members local foods through a new system of direct customer ordering of a single box quantity of produce via a web site ordering portal. The system will allow individuals to place orders for a variety of local produce supplied by the Co-op's grower members. These produce items will then be subjugated into a single carton box and allocated for either pick-up or shipment via Doordash, Grubhub, or other distribution vehicles directly to consumers.

### Additional Potential Funders

A search of smaller funders should focus on

- Family Foundations
- Corporate Foundations
- Healthcare Foundations
- Bank Foundations
- Community Foundations

These organizations should be based or conducting business in Paterson/Passaic Co. and/or have an interest in addressing food security issues or community development. Some of these funders may require a personal touch to be invited to apply. Examples include:

- Feeding America, Food Security Equity Impact Fund
- Bank of America
- Columbia Bank Fund
- TD Charitable Foundation
- Valley National Bank
- JPMorgan Chase / Chase Provident
- Northern NJ Community Foundation
- Bayer Fund
- Community Foundation of NJ
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (e.g., [Pioneering Ideas: Exploring the Future to Build a Culture of Health](#))
- Henry and Marilyn Taub Foundation

- Geraldine R Dodge Foundation
- McMaster Carr
- Novo Nordisk
- AstraZeneca (e.g., [US ACT on Health Equity Community Engagement and Investments](#))
- The WAWA Foundation
- Walmart Foundation (e.g., [Spark Good Local Grants](#))
- Aetna
- Horizon Well Care and Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey
- Hackensack Meridian Health
- St. Joseph's Health
- United Way
- Partner for Health Foundation

**Additional resources:**

Food Research and Action Center:

[https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/NJ-Federal-Funding-Opportunity-Guide\\_February-2022.pdf](https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/NJ-Federal-Funding-Opportunity-Guide_February-2022.pdf)

Community Food Bank of New Jersey:

<https://cfbnj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/CFBNJ-2023-ANNUAL-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>