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Connecting Local Foods to Communities through a Local Food Value Chain in Petersburg, Virginia

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Agenda

- 1** Background
- 2** Formative Evaluation
- 3** Local Food Aggregation & Distribution Program
- 4** Food Distribution Programs and Socio-Ecological Model
- 5** National Framework for Health Equity and Well-Being
- 6** How to start a Local Food Aggregation Program



Organizations



PHOPs (Petersburg Healthy Options Partnerships):
Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
grant team focused on improving access to healthy
foods in Petersburg, VA from 2018 – 2023



Agency through which the CDC funding was
granted



River Street Education is the 501(c)(3) food
access organization which currently has the
local food aggregation and distribution program
under its umbrella

Background

Disconnect between healthy food supply and demand in the City of Petersburg, Virginia

Demand/need:

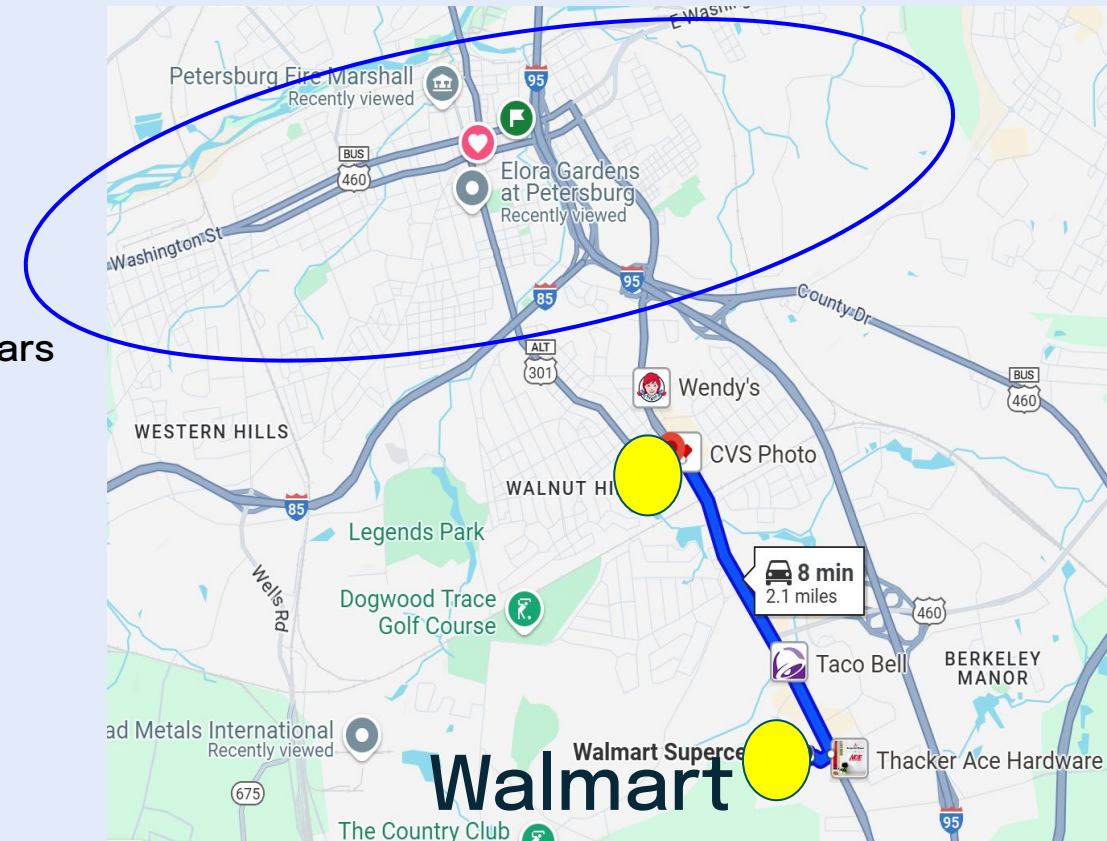
- 18.2% of population is food insecure (12.1% in Virginia); child food insecurity is the highest in VA (39.4%)
- 9 of 11 census tracts classified by the USDA as low-income, low-access
- Two major grocery stores in Petersburg are not easy to get to for much of the population

Nutrient-Dense, Fresh Food Supply:

- Local Farmers/Growers sell elsewhere to get more revenue
- Two-thirds of vegetable growers and 78% of fruit growers would grow more with greater and more predictable demand and support
- 70% of farmers and producers want to expand production within 3-5 years

Healthy Food Access Related Health Outcomes:

- Adult obesity prevalence in Petersburg is 47% vs. 35% in VA
- Diabetes prevalence in Petersburg is 17% vs. 11% in VA
- 48% of Petersburg residents report hypertension vs. 36% in VA



Formative Evaluation

- During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, heard the demand to develop a local food system - connect farms to community members
- Surveys to assess demand related to pop-up market locations and days/times and the Market @ Petersburg Public Library
- Community members, organizations, and small businesses collaborated to create new farm retail markets in the City of Petersburg

5. If the Petersburg Public Library sold locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables and/or ready-to-eat meals on scheduled days and times, would you buy these types of items at the library?

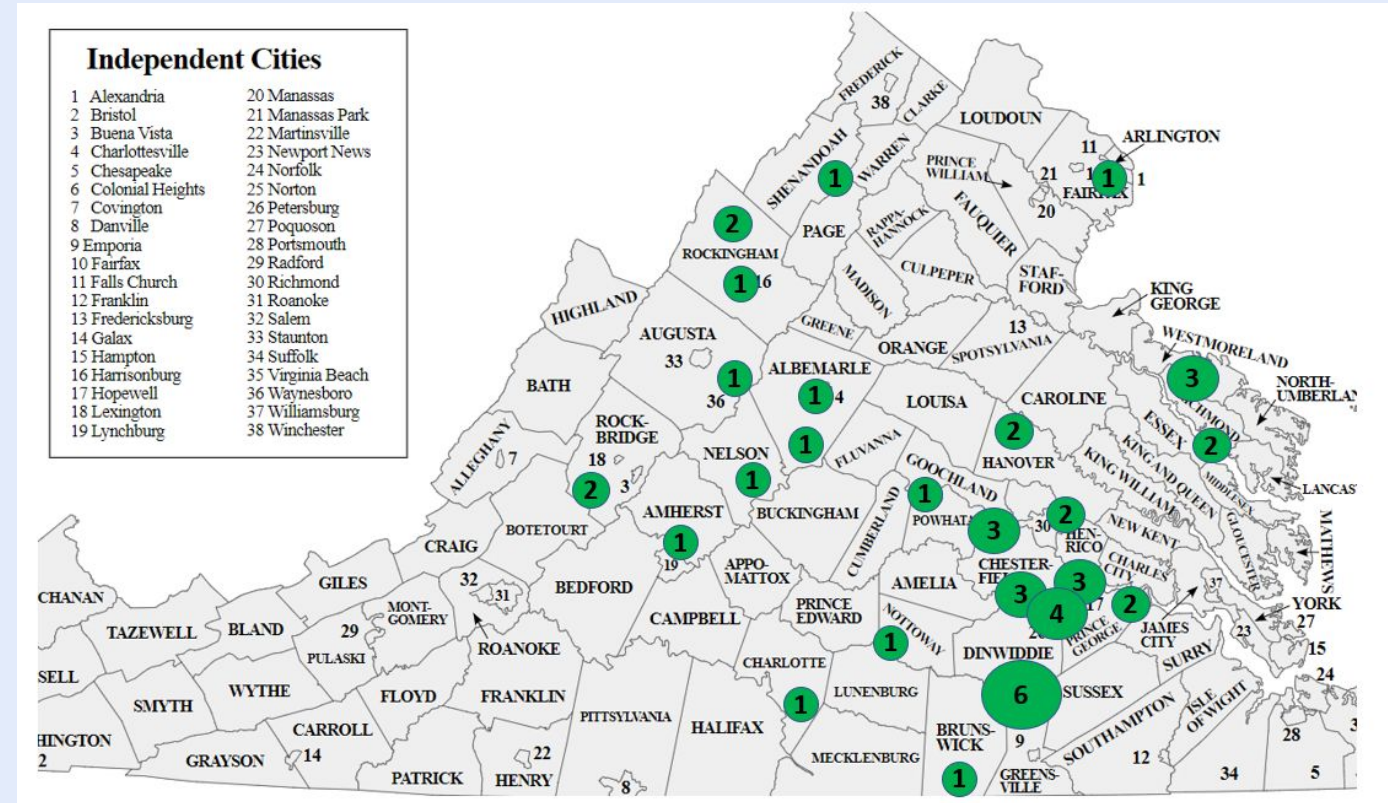
Please circle one: Yes / No / I don't know



Local Food Aggregation & Distribution Program

Food hub which prioritizes healthy food access for Petersburg residents.

- Aggregation program is a partnership between 60+ local growers/producers and River Street Education
- Distributes these products to the community through:
 - **An indoor farm market at the Petersburg Public Library (Market @ PPL)**
 - **Produce Prescription Programs**
 - **“Farm-to-food pantry” program/ Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program**



Map of Growers/Producers in the Local Food Aggregation Network

Socio-Ecological Model



Distribution Programs & Socio-Ecological Model

Farm to Food Pantry

Model Levels: Community, Institutions & Organizations

Reach: 15,500 individuals

Impact: 52,562 pounds of food distributed through five food pantries and three schools

Market @ Petersburg Public Library

Model Levels: Community, Policies, and Institutions & Organizations

Reach: 5,377 customers

Impact: \$27,115 of fruits & vegetables sold with 17% of sales through SNAP and double bucks program

Produce Rx Program

Model Levels: Community, Interpersonal, & Individual

Reach: 45 participants

Impact: Produce bags provide the recommended weekly cups of fruits and vegetables. Food demos and social support enhance the program.

Distribution Programs & Impacts

Supports and provides new markets for 60 local growers and producers.

Improves financial and geographic access to fresh, local foods.

Shortens the supply chain and increases the resilience of the City and its residents.

Because of the systems in place, the programs have:

- **Provided \$236,273 in income to local growers & producers**
- **20,922 people were reached through local food distribution programs**
- **183,181 cups of produce were provided to community members through local food programs**



Partnerships and Acknowledgement



Umbrella nonprofit which facilitates the local food aggregation and distribution program and the Market @ PPL (Petersburg Public Library)



Organizations/teams which assisted with planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of applied research/education



Virginia's Nutrition incentive program (Virginia Fresh Match) is available at the Market @ PPL

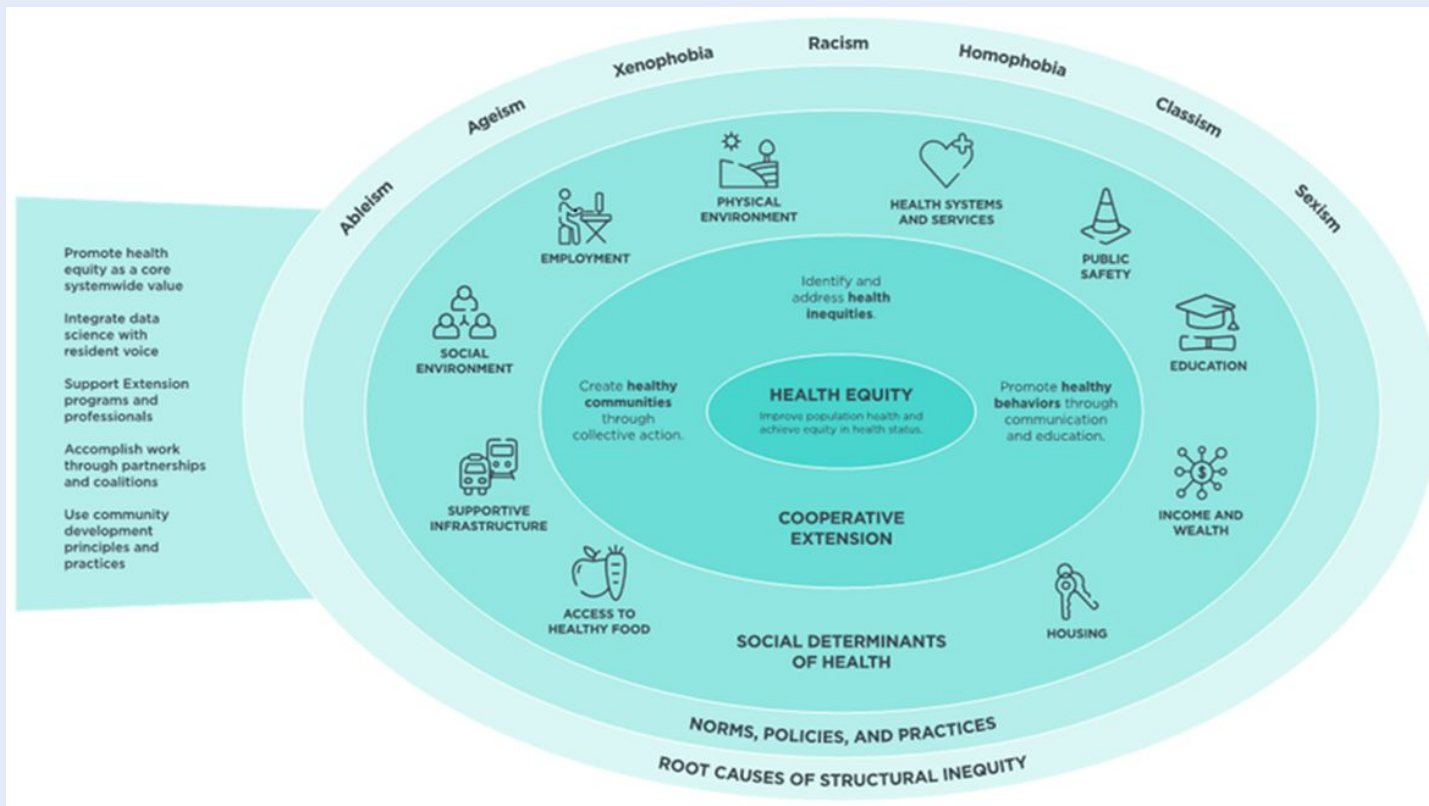


Host of the Market @ PPL



Funding/resource partners

National Framework for Health Equity and Well-Being



- **Advance health equity as a core system value**
 - Focuses on increasing geographical and financial access to healthy foods
- **Utilize community assessment processes that integrate data science and resident voice**
 - CHNAs, formative evaluation, continuous improvement-focused surveys
- **Invest in Extension's health-related professionals, programs, and initiatives**
 - Developed relationships with state and local funders
- **Establish partnerships across sectors**
 - Food hub and distribution outlets are a collaboration between nonprofits, funders, Petersburg residents, farmers and producers, and local & state agencies
- **Utilize a community development approach**
 - Co-designed and build with the community
 - Program of a local nonprofit

Food Systems Resilience

A **resilient food system** is able to withstand and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures a sufficient supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.

(John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future)



How to start a Local Food Aggregation Program

- Organization's Mission and Values
- Business Model
 - Revenue generation mechanism(s)
 - Value Proposition
- Planning
 - Market Study
 - Market size, growth, and segments
 - Feasibility Study
- Community Collaboration
 - Social, Environmental, and Economic Impact
- Development of infrastructure and systems



Thank you



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