

Appetite for Change

Impacts and opportunities: Results from a discussion of Appetite for Change's Fresh Corners project

In 2013, Appetite for Change (AFC) received funding from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota through the Health Equity in Prevention (HEiP) initiative. Through its HEiP funding, AFC developed Fresh Corners, a network of local vendors, urban gardeners, residents, and partner organizations working to improve the food system in North Minneapolis through policy, systems, and environmental changes.

In November 2014, a group of 14 project stakeholders were invited to a Ripple Effect Mapping discussion about AFC's health equity work. The discussion participants included AFC staff and representatives from Project Sweetie Pie, the Main Street Project, and West Broadway Farmers Market, along with local residents and growers. The discussion was intended to not only provide the participants a chance to consider how successful the project has been in achieving its intended goals, but also to identify the indirect or unexpected project impacts.

PROJECT IMPACTS

During the discussion, all participants had opportunities to describe Fresh Corners' achievements and to discuss the indirect impacts of its work. The participants grouped these observed impacts into six main types of changes that resulted from Fresh Corners' work: fostering an increased connection to the community; contributing to a greater availability of and access to fresh produce; helping change local policy; changing perceptions and increasing awareness/knowledge; building connections in the community; and generating an economic impact. Participants were not asked to rank the relative importance of these impacts relative to one another. However, the graphic included in this summary does show how many times the participants identified a change in each key area and offers a few examples of key impacts identified by the participants. A summary of the discussion related to each area of change follows, and the specific impacts identified by the participants during the mind mapping exercise are listed in the Appendix.

What is Ripple Effect Mapping?

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool used to better understand the intended and unintended impacts of a project. It is particularly helpful when evaluating complex initiatives that both influence, and are impacted by, the community. REM is a facilitated discussion with project staff and local stakeholders that creates a visual "mind map" during the discussion that shows the linkages between program activities and resulting changes in the community.

This approach is intended to help demonstrate the project's impacts more holistically and to describe the degree to which different types of impacts are observed by project staff and community stakeholders.

Ripple Effect Mapping: Appetite for Change

FOSTERING AN INCREASED CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

Local gardens are creating a stronger sense of community ownership

7%

CONTRIBUTING TO A GREATER AVAILABILITY OF AND ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE

Local growers are buying seed and compost with the help of Fresh Corners
Fresh produce is becoming more visible in the community
Fresh produce is becoming more affordable

11%

GENERATING AN ECONOMIC IMPACT

Retailers are understanding that there is a demand for fresh produce and that it can help grow their business

Fresh Corners is helping community organizations sell their produce

Fresh Corners is supporting local growers as they cultivate their business

11%

BUILDING CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Community members are generating stronger connections

Local growers are forming new connections with one another

Community organizations are building and strengthening connections

30%

HELPING CHANGE LOCAL POLICY

Fresh Corners helped generate testimony in favor of changes to the Minneapolis staple food ordinance
Fresh Corners helped inform and pass changes to the Minneapolis farmstand ordinance

11%

CHANGING PERCEPTION AND INCREASING AWARENESS/KNOWLEDGE

Retailers and growers are increasing their understanding about selling and purchasing fresh produce

Community members are increasing their awareness about the availability of produce and its impact on their health

29%

Community members are increasing their awareness of local food issues

Community members are expanding their knowledge about gardening and growing food

Fresh Corners

Fostering an increased connection to the community

During the discussion, participants shared that the Northside community gardens, cultivated by Fresh Corners growers, have increased residents' connection to their community. Participants pointed out that the gardens have given residents a stronger sense of ownership over their neighborhood and that residents are highly protective of the gardens, treating the gardens like they are an extension of their backyard. In addition, the availability of fresh, locally grown produce purchased by residents helps them feel more connected to the community.

I see people who look like me who are asking how they can get involved in the garden. The community is taking ownership of how they grow food. We can grow food and have a garden.

Contributing to a greater availability of and access to fresh produce

Participants highlighted that one of the key impacts of Fresh Corners is its contribution to the local food system. Fresh Corners helped local growers purchase seed and compost to start their gardens. It also helped growers sell their produce through the Aggregation Table at the West Broadway Farmers Market, which increased community members' access to fresh, locally grown produce. A participant shared that the produce sold at the Aggregation Table was more affordable than produce at grocery stores like Cub. In addition, Fresh Corners has assisted local growers in selling their produce to corner stores. Corner store owners have found that the locally grown produce is more affordable than produce they would purchase through a major grocery store.

More community members are noticing the Fresh Corners signage in stores and at the farmers market, along with the increased presence of fresh produce.

Helping change local policy

Fresh Corners has informed the development and passage of local policy changes regulating food and farmstands. Corner store owners who work with Fresh Corners expressed their support for changes to the Minneapolis staple food ordinance by testifying at a City Council hearing. The changes to the ordinance will help increase the amount of healthy food options in licensed grocery stores, including non-traditional grocery stores, such as corner stores. In his testimony, a corner store owner discussed how it is often more convenient for residents to go to corner stores in their neighborhood to buy healthy food rather than traveling to a grocery store. In addition, some Fresh Corners growers gave input to the Food Policy Council, which lobbied the City of Minneapolis for allowing farmstands to be open for a longer period during the year. A local Fresh Corners grower testified for the first time at a Planning Commission hearing for the changes to the farmstand ordinance. After testifying, the grower became interested in learning more about urban land use policy and joined the Land Access Subcommittee of the Planning Commission.

Northside community members attended the Minneapolis City Council meeting focused on the changes to the farmstand ordinance to offer their support. A participant shared that she "had never seen such a powerful manifestation of public will affecting powerful people in City Council."

Changing perception and increasing awareness/knowledge

Participants shared multiple examples of how Fresh Corners is influencing community members by increasing awareness of local food issues, expanding knowledge about gardening and growing food, and increasing community members' awareness of the availability of produce and its impact on health. Participants reported how more community members in North Minneapolis are having conversations about the source of their food and the availability of fresh produce. For example, local youth working with Fresh Corners are researching why there is a lack of healthy, fresh produce at the Cub grocery store in North Minneapolis. Northside community members are also expanding their knowledge about gardening by learning different growing techniques and the role that insects play in cultivating fruits and vegetables. A local grower mentioned that she knew youth were becoming more comfortable with gardening when they did not mind getting dirty. In addition, Fresh Corners is working with retailers, such as corner stores, to help them understand how their business could benefit from selling fresh produce to meet the demand for healthy food in the community.

There is a raised consciousness among community members and they are looking for solutions to address food issues.

More community members are asking for information about Fresh Corners. This is a sign that people are becoming more aware and want to work together to solve the local food issues.

Building connections in the community

Throughout the discussion, participants highlighted that Fresh Corners has built connections among residents, local growers, and community organizations. Participants reported that residents who live near community gardens are connecting with one another and forming cross-cultural relationships. For example, a grower connected with an elder from a Hmong family who was interested in helping tend to one of the local gardens. Fresh Corners also connected growers to one another through the Growers of Color group, which brought together Hmong, Latino, and African American growers to discuss issues of race and the challenges of growing and selling food. In addition, Fresh Corners helped connect several local organizations working on food issues on the Northside, such as Project Sweetie Pie, Main Street Project, Afro-Eco, Youth Farm, and Project Superman. They engaged these organizations through growing food, organizing events, and creating a training curriculum for urban growers.

Participating in Fresh Corners has given me a deeper appreciation of the work [the program] has been able to build and [its ability] to strengthen new, lasting relationships. That's a big thing.

I would go to the gardens and hang out and [the growers] would have lunch and dinner. Before [Fresh Corners], I did not know other black growers in the community.

Generating an economic impact

Participants reported that Fresh Corners helped generate an economic impact for local growers. Staff organized 12 referrals which connected growers' produce to buyers. In addition, they helped the Hmong Farmers Association sell its produce at Northpoint Health and Wellness Center, which increased the Association's connections to the community and their sales. Fresh Corners growers also provided produce for the dinner at the end of the FLOW Northside Arts Crawl. After the event, the chef that organized the dinner purchased additional produce from the growers.

Fresh Corners works with retailers to help them understand that there is a demand for fresh produce and that it can help grow their business.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Some of the challenges and opportunities identified during the discussion related to Fresh Corners' ability to find additional space for growing gardens on the Northside, and to continue to build the capacity of its growers to distribute their produce and manage their business operations. A staff member also mentioned that Appetite for Change is working with a University of Minnesota researcher on a federally funded evaluation of the Minneapolis staple food ordinance. Appetite for Change would like the evaluation to develop into a community-based participatory research project that would incorporate community residents' thoughts in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The following questions may be helpful for Appetite for Change and its partners to consider as they plan their future work for Fresh Corners:

- What role could Fresh Corners play in helping guide the evaluation of the staple food ordinance? What knowledge or experience does bring that would enrich and connect the evaluation to the community?
- What are some strategies that Fresh Corners could use or organizations it could collaborate with to strengthen or support growers' ability to distribute produce?
- How can Fresh Corners continue to advocate for changes to the built environment that support the creation of additional garden spaces?

APPENDIX: Project impacts identified by discussion participants

FOSTERING AN INCREASED CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY

The Appetite for Growing Garden helps generate conversation among community residents. They are interested in it and how they can become involved.

Local gardens are creating a stronger sense of community ownership.

The community garden has helped residents feel ownership over a part of their community.

In multiple garden spaces the local residents are highly protective of the gardens. They see the gardens as an extension of their backyard.

"I see people who look like me who are asking how they can get involved in the garden. The community is taking ownership of how they grow food. It is about us to. We can grow food and have a garden." -A Fresh Corners grower

Some vacant lots in the community have become garden sites for Fresh Corners' growers. The gardens bring people together and help create awareness of local food.

The ability of community members to purchase fresh, locally grown produce helps them feel more connected to their community.

CONTRIBUTING TO A GREATER AVAILABILITY OF AND ACCESS TO FRESH PRODUCE

Local growers are buying seed and compost with the help of Fresh Corners.

More community members are growing food in their backyard and there are more farms and gardens in North Minneapolis.

Fresh produce is becoming more visible in the community.

A participant shared that more community members are noticing the Fresh Corners signage in stores and at the farmers market, along with the increased presence of fresh produce. She shared that it is important that residents "see [the fresh produce] rather than Hot Cheetos & Takis."

A participant recently learned about Fresh Corners and shared that they noticed the Fresh Corners signage and fresh produce inside stores, and that it is very important to be able to buy locally grown food.

Fresh produce is becoming more affordable.

Fresh Corners delivered produce to the West Broadway Farmers Market Aggregation Table. This helped increase residents' access to fresh, locally grown produce. A participant shared that the produce sold at the Aggregation Table was less expensive than produce at other grocery stores like Cub, thus making the produce more affordable for community members.

One participant highlighted that it is neat to see growers specialize in certain produce or the production of specific products like honey, which one grower cultivates in her hives.

Several North Minneapolis corner store owners bought produce from Sam's Club or Cub to sell in their store. However, they found the produce at these stores was too expensive.

Fresh Corners has helped local growers sell their produce to corner stores, which has allowed corner stores to order produce year round and dramatically increased their interest in carrying fresh produce. In addition, corner stores have found that the locally grown produce is more affordable.

Appetite for Change worked with 11 local corner stores that were part of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative funded through the Statewide Health Improvement Program. These stores took part in Fresh Fridays, a program in which residents who spend up to \$3 on fruits or vegetables at one of the 11 corner stores receive additional fruits and vegetables of equal or lesser value for free.

Appetite for Change helped the stores set up displays of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Fresh Corners growers have had a difficult time finding land to grow food. In response, the director of the Jordan Area Community Council suggested advocating to the city to use vacant home lots for urban farms. This approach could lead to the production of local food along with helping to address vacancy. It could also create green spaces in neighborhoods and help more community members become involved in urban agriculture.



HELPING CHANGE LOCAL POLICY

Fresh Corners helped generate testimony in favor of changes to the Minneapolis staple food ordinance.

A local resident and youth leader with Appetite for Change both testified at that hearing for the changes to the ordinance.

Corner store owners who work with Appetite for Change testified at a hearing, expressing their support for the changes to the ordinance.

The City Council took the input from a corner store owner when enacting the staple food ordinance.

In his testimony to the City Council, a store owner shared how customers are unaware that they can buy healthy foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables) at corner stores, and that it is often more convenient for residents to go to corner stores in their neighborhood rather than traveling to a grocery store for healthy foods.

Fresh Corners helped inform and pass changes to the Minneapolis farmstand ordinance.

Some Fresh Corners growers gave input to the Food Policy Council, which lobbied for a more relaxed farmstand ordinance.

Cam Gordon and local food advocates proposed an amendment to make it easier for local growers to sell produce by increasing the number of days that a farmstand can be open.

A local Fresh Corners grower testified at a public hearing for the farmstand ordinance hosted by the Planning Commission. Members of the commission learned about the grower's experience selling produce to his community and neighbors.

The grower had not done any policy advocacy work before giving his testimony to the commission. A staff member from Appetite for Change shared that "[testifying] literally lit a fire inside of him." He joined the Land Access Subcommittee of the Planning Commission and is reading more about urban land use policy.

Northside community members attended the Minneapolis City Council meeting focused on the changes to the farmstand ordinance to offer their support. A participant shared that she "had never seen such a powerful manifestation of public will affecting powerful people in City Council."

Forty community members wrote letters to the City Council supporting changes to the farmstand ordinance.



CHANGING PERCEPTION AND INCREASING AWARENESS/KNOWLEDGE

Community members are increasing their awareness of local food issues.

In North Minneapolis more community members are having conversations about the source of their food and the availability of fresh produce.

A participant shared that there is "a raised consciousness" among community members and that they are looking for solutions to address food issues.

A participant shared that more community members are asking for information about Fresh Corners. For her, this is a sign that people are becoming more aware and want to work together to solve the local food issues.

A participant shared that he has been personally inspired to learn more about how and where his food is grown. He has incorporated what he has learned into presentations and his writing.

Local youth noticed that the Cub grocery store in North Minneapolis is different from Cub stores in high-income communities around the city. The Cub in North Minneapolis has a lack of healthy, fresh produce. Youth and other community members are working with Fresh Corners to investigate why there is a lack of produce through a series of surveys and conversations with the management at Cub.

A participant mentioned that he was inspired by the amount of energy put toward Fresh Corners' work, and how they are countering the global food system, which is a monopolized industry with a lot of money and power.

Community members are expanding their knowledge about gardening and growing food.

Community members are changing their perception about gardening.

Youth are becoming more comfortable with getting dirty while working in the community garden.

A grower observed how residents are becoming more comfortable with gardening. She shared that community members are not scared of certain bugs, like bees, after they learn the role they play in growing food.

A grower noted that residents "are not as worried about getting their shoes dirty. There is a change in perception [about gardening]."

Community members have more knowledge about specific approaches to growing food and local policies governing local food.

The Growers of Color group, which Appetite for Change helped organize, hosted a training with an agronomist from Mexico, who gave a presentation in Spanish about the intersection between the oil industry and the industrial agricultural system and how the relationship between the two created dependency on fertilizers, rather than treating soil in different ways. The group talked about how you can use alternatives to traditional fertilizer like sea shells. This is an approach that indigenous people have been using for a long time.

Fresh Corners worked with the Public Health Law Center to produce a report on the City of Minneapolis' policies regarding composting, greenhouses, and growing local food. The report was designed to be more accessible for community members who did not have previous knowledge about city policy.

The chair of the Food Policy Council wants to work with Fresh Corners to help publicize the report and make it a resource for residents and other local growers.

Youth and adults are gaining knowledge about growing food.

A grower shared that he has "seen the urban farming model bring the community together," and that youth and adults have more knowledge about how to grow, harvest, and prepare food.

Youth who are engaged in programs sponsored by Appetite for Change are sharing their knowledge about growing, harvesting, and selling produce.

The Fresh Corners growers have worked to inform local preschool students about where their food comes from and how it is being grown locally.

Retailers and growers are increasing their understanding about selling and purchasing fresh produce.

Appetite for Change works with retailers (e.g., corner stores) to help them understand the local demand for fresh produce and how their business could benefit from selling fresh produce.

Local growers have a better understanding of how to sell produce to retailers.

A Fresh Corners staff member hosted canvassing and market training programs that focused on how to do outreach and help local growers sell in the community and at churches.

The canvassing and training programs are being used at Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Community members are increasing their awareness about the availability of produce and its impact on their health.

People in the community have started to become more conscious of what they eat and how to take care of their health.

A participant who works in the garden at Redeemer Lutheran Church, a Fresh Corners community partner, shared that she has been eating more healthy by buying fruit at a corner store.

Community members are more aware of the fresh, locally grown produce and understand that they should eat it because it benefits their health.

A participant noted that prior to Fresh Corners, community members' were not as focused on eating fresh produce and the impact it has on health.

Community members who have connected to growers have asked them to cultivate specific vegetables that they cannot find at farmers markets or grocery stores.



BUILDING CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY

Community members are generating stronger connections.

There are deepened connections between community members who live near the community gardens and the growers. They are getting to know one another and sharing ideas for vegetables that could be grown in the garden.

"I'm very impressed being born and raised in this area to see [new] community connections and how we really have people in the community supporting community growers, purchasing fresh fruit ...or eating salad that is literally out of a [local] garden and handpicked." -A community resident

The residents are supporting the local food system. Gardening has connected people who live close to each other.

Forming cross-cultural relationships.

A Fresh Corners grower connected with members of the Hmong community and learned about their culture and growing practices, which was shared with other Fresh Corners growers.

In one of the local gardens, a Hmong family approached a grower and asked if their grandmother could weed the garden. The grower agreed and established a friendship with the grandmother and her family. He shared that in having her help with the garden "she had an activity to do while the family was at work. She felt good because it was something that she used to do [in her native country]. It was collaborative."

Some of the growers have learned about different ethnic Middle Eastern dishes from the corner store owners.

Creating connections among youth and between youth and corner stores.

Youth have increased their connections by participating in Appetite for Change's Food Ambassador and Community Cooks programs.

There are improved relationships between local youth and corner store owners. The owners are connecting with local youth and seeing them not as a threat, but as neighbors and partners. Before Fresh Corners, the youth were only allowed to go into some of the corner stores two at a time. Now, the owners are calling them by name. There is a sense of community between them.

Cultivating new personal connections among community residents.

"Participating in Fresh Corners has given me a deeper appreciation of the work [the program] has been able to build and [its ability] to strengthen new, lasting relationships. That's a big thing." -A community resident

"Even though I've been involved in Fresh Corners and the Northside food work for almost four years, I feel like through this work I've made new connections specifically with people here and with food ambassadors and meeting new people who are passionate and making connections. That was really powerful for me." -A community resident

"Through this work, I've found family and met people. It brings the whole notion of community to the forefront." -A Fresh Corners grower

Local growers are forming new connections with one another.

Fresh Corners helped establish deeper connections among local growers which is a critical step to cultivating a regional sustainable food system. The connections also help strengthen ties to the community.

The Fresh Corners growers are interested in growing more cooperatively and being more planful about who grows what produce.

"I would go to the gardens and hang out and [the growers] would have lunch and dinner. Before [Fresh Corners], I did not know other black growers in the community." -A Fresh Corners grower

The Fresh Corners growers collaboratively work on policy issues impacting the community. A grower shared, "I built relationship and trust and [now feel] I need to stay up to date with what is going on in the community."

Fresh Corners helped organize a meeting for the Growers of Color group, which brought together Hmong, Latino, and African American growers. Fresh Corners continues to help organize this group.

Members of the group are talking about developing a logo that alerts consumers about produce that is grown by people of color.

"[The group is] important to [creating] solidarity, talking about challenges with land tenure, [helping growers connect to local stores that] will sell [their] produce, and dealing with race issues." -Appetite for Change staff member

Community organizations are building and strengthening connections.

Appetite for Change built a relationship with the Redeemer Lutheran Church garden. Redeemer staff asked Appetite for Change to come and do training with their youth on food as an organizing tool.

Fresh Corners has worked with and helped connect several local organizations focused on food. Project Sweetie Pie, Main Street Project, Afro-Eco, Youth Farm, and Project Superman are all realizing the importance of working together.

The Main Street project trained Fresh Corners growers and is creating a training curriculum for urban growers.

Sam Grant from Afro-Eco led the social innovation food lab and was the campaign coordinator for Fresh Corners' Good Food Community Advocacy Campaign, which is focused on building a local food system in North Minneapolis through policy change, entrepreneurship, and organizing young people by training them about the food system and social justice.

Participants of Project Superman and Youth Farm accounted for some of the local growers working with Fresh Corners.

Fresh Corners had an event with Project Sweetie Pie that included a fresh food stand and artists performances. The event focused on bringing together artists and growers.

Fresh Corners worked to support the West Broadway Farmers Market.

The Aggregation table at the West Broadway Farmers Market helped establish connections with growers. An Appetite for Change staff member shared, "[We were] able to work with growers and say, we have several outlets for your products [such as] the farmers markets or corner stores."

GENERATING AN ECONOMIC IMPACT

Retailers are understanding that there is a demand for fresh produce and that it can help grow their business.

Fresh Corners organized 12 referrals, which connected local growers' produce to buyers.

Fresh Corners is helping community organizations sell their produce.

Fresh Corners helped the Hmong Farmers Association sell produce at Northpoint Health and Wellness Center, which increased the Association's connections to the community and the their sales.

Fresh Corners helped Redeemer Lutheran Church's youth gardening program sell locally grown produce to a corner store that was located directly across the street from the store.

Initially, the community had some negative perceptions about the store, but after it started selling the youth gardening program's produce, community members have a more positive view of the store.

Fresh Corners is supporting local growers as they cultivate their business.

Local growers received startup funds from Fresh Corners to help them gain experience and take some risks as they started growing and developing.

The Fresh Corners growers are paid for their locally grown produce.

Community members are able to purchase local, organic produce.

Fresh Corners growers provided the produce for the dinner at the end of the FLOW Northside Arts Crawl.

The chef that prepared the food for the dinner has purchased additional produce from the growers.