

Growing a Farmers' Market in South Providence

Veronique Ok, UNH Sustainability Fellow

Mentors: Julius Kolawole, African Alliance of Rhode Island

1. Introduction

South Providence, Rhode Island

South Providence is considered a “**food desert**”. The area has an abundance of convenience stores and fast food restaurants that outnumber grocery stores with affordable and nutritious foods. Thus, many residents within the area have to travel longer distances for healthier and sometimes more expensive foods.

Solving issues of **food insecurity and access** is part of a larger problem. South Providence has historically diverse population, with varying levels of socioeconomics. There are a disproportionately higher number of residents in SP vs. Providence Metro who:

- **Live under or close to the poverty line**
- **Lack reliable transportation**
- **Lack affordable housing**

Without addressing these core issues, solving food insecurity can be a difficult feat.



2. Methodology

A Community Approach

Community engagement was a key aspect during the development of the market. A planning committee was created to make sure insight from the community was included.

The planning committee helped with outreach, marketing, and logistics. Having marketing material in both Spanish and English was critical to reach a broader audience. We chose to invite Southeast Asian vendors and performers to have representation within the market.

Objectives

- Develop and implement strategies to increase viability of the Pop-Up Farmers Markets
- Provide culturally relevant and affordable produce for the South Providence community



Images are courtesy of Emily Vaughn

3. Preliminary Results

Culture, Art, and Food

The first market of the season was on **July 1st at Columbus Square** and had a Southeast Asian theme. The market included:

- **Culturally relevant and affordable foods**
 - Two Southeast Asian Vendors
 - Three AARI Farmers
- **Performances by two Southeast Asian dance groups**
- **SNAP/WIC Assistance through Farm Fresh RI**
- **Providence Healthy Communities Office vouchers**

3. Challenges

Next Steps in Solving Food Insecurity

Challenges included:

- Engaging targeted customers and populations
- Finding culturally appropriate vendors and events
- Measuring and defining “success” in the market through surveying

Next steps will include:

- Interpreting survey
- Improving outreach for returning customers
- Measuring “success”
- The next market will be on **August 2nd, at Roger Williams Park**



Images are courtesy of Emily Vaughn

References

1. ProvidenceRI.gov



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