Food Security in the Inner City

Melanie Donahue | Colin Etzel | Keeon Tabrizi

Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Abstract

Food security in the American inner city is one of the greatest food problems of the 21st century. The residents of these chronically distressed areas have difficulty obtaining healthy, affordable food to feed themselves and their families. Depending on imports and over-reliance on the city’s food availability which low income leaves the poor urban residents without access to food. In many cases, the desperation of this complex situation leads to the abandonment of nutrition and morals in favor of a full neglect.

In response to these devastating efforts, a variety of solutions have been proposed to combat the food security problem. Where food aid seems to prove counterintuive, it is clear that food aid won’t solve the problem of the problem—essentially seeking to change inner city dynamics. Moving food retail into the city while respecting the use of urban agriculture promotes food self-sufficiency and availability. Meanwhile, bettering urban growth and crime would provide greater consumer purchasing power for local transportation and food.

The success of the initiative depends on its regular monitoring and promotion. Both professionals and self-evaluations would provide a reliable assessment of the problem’s changing nature due to the solutions, as well as a conservation of test progress. Simultaneously, the project of food and new promotional methods can add to the necessary awareness and financial support to ensure that the initiative realizes its maximum potential satisfying the appetite of American inner cities.

Problem

Food Security: “Access by all people at all times to sufficient food and nutrition for a healthy and productive life.”

Inner City: “Concentrations of U.S. Census tracts having a 20 percent poverty rate or higher, or either:
• Poverty rate or unemployment rate 1½ times or higher than surrounding metropolitan area
• Medium household income is ½ or less than the surrounding metropolitan area.”

Food Security: “The median density of inner cities in 2000 was 6,113 residents per square mile, compared to 327 persons per square mile in the surrounding metropolitan areas.
• 40% of inner city residents are low income, earning less than $20,000 annually.
• Companies assume that inner cities are not attractive markets because the average income per household is only $22,000 versus $42,000 nationwide. These averages neglect the power of the density of inner city dollars and the considerable number of urban middle-income consumers.”

Solutions & Mechanisms

System of Solutions addresses:
• Accessibility:
  • Increased supply
  • Reduced crime
  • Greater purchasing power
• Quality:
  • Reduced crime
• Availability:
  • Increased supply

Mechanisms:

- CSA & Agricultural Education
- Inside Landscaping
- Urban Gardening
- Employment Opportunities
- Increase
Income

Monitoring & Evaluation

Project Success is measured by changes in:
• Food availability, access, diversity, and quality
• Income and crime rate
• Necessity of food aid

Evaluation committee monitors project through:

Data Sharing
- Community initiatives
- Project and least important
- Periodic meeting schedules
- Flooded with feedback

Panels & Surveys
- Project meetings
- Community meetings
- Periodic feedback

Major Findings
- Significant through feedback
- Project meetings
- Periodic feedback

Radio Ads
- Increased awareness
- Increased participation
- Increased feedback

Promotion

Target audience: Consumer, Supplier, Donor, groups in inner city food systems

Funding
- National needs, national funding
- Local needs, local, state funding
- Community needs, community participation

Regional Conference
- Increased awareness
- Increased participation
- Increased feedback