A Look At The Socioeconomic Impact of Omaha's Food Deserts: City Sprouts' Utilitarian Approach

By Robert and Michael
The Omaha metro area has 26 subdivisions labeled as food deserts.

Many residents must travel miles just to reach the nearest supermarket.

This produces a lack of healthy foods in communities, which contributes to health problems (E.g. diabetes and obesity).
City Sprouts

- Oldest community garden in Omaha.
- Located directly in a food desert.
- An urban farm and educational research center.
- Providing cooking classes, workshops, and social events.
City Sprout's Focus and How They Help With Food Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Increase the amount of fresh food and locally grown produce in the community.</th>
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<td>Educate</td>
<td>Provide education on gardening and sustainability.</td>
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<td>Provide</td>
<td>Provide employment opportunities.</td>
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<td>Build</td>
<td>Build community.</td>
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A Closer Look. . .

- **Little Sprouts**
- Summer youth garden program.
- Introduces kids to nature, healthy lifestyles, and organic food growing.
Growing Gardeners Workshop

- Collaboration with The Big Garden.
- Offers four seasons of hands-on workshops.
- Features skills and techniques for every gardener and urban farmer growing, cooking, preserving and eating healthy local food.
Urban Farming Internship

- Provides part-time employment to young adults, training them in agriculture, horticulture, culinary arts, public health and life skills.
- Gain experience in customer service, job readiness and leadership.
- The interns use teamwork to help manage the urban farm and the community gardens.
- To qualify, you must be 16–20 years old and eligible for Free and Reduced Meals.
Farm Fresh Market Stand

- The interns run a market stand for fresh produce.
- Open on Saturdays from June through September, from 10 a.m. to noon.
- WIC, SNAP and SFMNP vouchers are accepted.
Interns With First National Bank

▪ First National Bank helps the interns:
▪ Understand paychecks (Social Security, Medicare, taxes, etc.)
▪ Learn how to start a banking and checking account.
▪ How to get a loan for a car.
Since 2002, 6,038 refugees from 23 different countries have resettled in Omaha.

Often times, refugees can't find their home food in grocery stores.

City Sprouts allows them to plant and have access to ingredients otherwise not available.
Partnership With Crazy Gringa Hot Sauce (CGHS)

- CGHS provides revenue for City Sprout's internship program.
- And City Sprouts provides high quality ingredients and community engagement for CGHS.
- City Sprouts sees this as a successful model for urban food production, processing, and sales.
- They hope to inspire more businesses to adopt the model as a method to strengthening the local food economy.
Video Series Made Available For After School Programs

- Garden based health and wellness video series for 4th and 5th graders in Hispanic communities.
- Focuses on growing foods.
- Sugar swaps.
- Physical activity and nutrition.
- Videos depicted Hispanics, so it gives the kids a connection.
Little Free Library and Pantry

- Open to anyone who wants to use it.
- Mainly the books focus on gardening, farming or food.
- "We're one big community, and we need to care about the health and happiness of everyone."

-City Sprouts community engagement director Shannon Gennardo
Truck Farm Omaha

- Mobile garden in the back of a pick-up truck.
- Focuses on educating Omaha-area youth about healthy eating, environmental sustainability and the benefits of growing one’s own food.
- Engages with the kids, showing them that growing food can be fun.
- Gets them to question where their food comes from.
A Review

- Provide early education for kids on organic foods, gardening and healthy lifestyles.
- Help involve teens with their community, while teaching valuable life and work experience.
- Teach residents how to garden.
- Provide families needed nutrition and decrease the obesity epidemic.
- Help refugees get settled in their new home and provide them their country's food.
Our Evaluation

- While City Sprouts does an excellent job of providing the Omaha community with fresh foods, education, and building community,
- We believe if City Sprouts gave more focus on creating partnerships, it could help solve Omaha's food desert issue or at least lessen its negative impact on the community.
Starting urban garden programs in prisons could help Omaha's food desert problem by providing more produce for the community.

These programs have also been shown to reduce the recidivism rate – which would in turn strengthen families and the community.
Evaluation

- Partnering with the boy scouts and girl scouts would also help with the amount of produce made and assist in social networking.

- City Sprouts does a great job recruiting volunteers with their long reputation in Omaha, but the more the merrier.
Evaluation

- Partnering with churches in Omaha can be an option for obtaining public space for the gardens.
- We suggest that City Sprouts make an effort to get involved with nearby churches.
- Further volunteer work can be found as well.
Evaluation

- City Sprouts has a small team of workers that do so much for the people of Omaha.
- They provide quality food for marginalized people.
- Educate crucial information about food.
- And make great strides toward creating a happy community for all.
- We mostly did a lot of physical labor.
- Renovated their chicken coop.
- Relocated the smaller chick coop.
- Added length to their fence.
- Toured their facilities (learned about their beehives, tilapia farm and aquaculture).
The chickens play a major role in the education pieces for children, as well as provide eggs for the community.

We were happy to know that we helped in an integral part of the learning process.

We helped make the community garden look more attractive and approachable.

And even got to hold newborn chicks.

By partnering with City Sprouts, we contributed to the furtherance of education and the distribution of fresh produce in an area that doesn't have a lot of access to quality food.
Silky
Chicks

▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKejEpyCpiE
Food deserts are an injustice to the citizens living in them.

Omaha is lucky to have organizations like City Sprouts and other community gardens, for the negative impact of food deserts would no doubt be worse without them.
What We Wanted To Know

- What is City Sprout's impact on overall public health in the area and how much influence do they have on Omaha's culture?
- We conclude that City Sprouts greatly impacts the overall public health in Omaha in a positive way.
- The insightful educational programs alone prove to be influencing the community's knowledge on nutrition and healthy substitutes for sweets.
- Community gardens support health through engagement.
- And they contribute to environmental benefits, as well as reduce the purchasing of plastic wrapped foods from stores.
- City Sprouts influences Omaha's culture to be more green and eco-friendly.
What We Wanted To Know

- What cultural factors have led to the growth of community gardens in Omaha and do they contribute to the greater happiness of all?

- Omaha is greatly segregated between the rich and the poor, creating food deserts in many areas.

- A lack of supermarkets in low-income areas have paved the way for community gardens to grow.

- Community gardens do not discriminate and are open to the entire community.

- They seek to promote fresh foods in a safe and healthy way.

- They engage the community in many ways.

- We conclude that they do contribute to the greater happiness of all.
Helpful Skills

- Skills from courses:
  - Qualitative research methods
    - Psychology and Sociology
  - Sociology and deviant behavior theories
  - Utilitarian theory from PHL Ethics
  - Alternative ways to get food/not rely on supermarkets
  - Political Science Public Policy Analysis