BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT

BRIDGEPORT FOOD COMMERCE FEASIBILITY STUDY

InfoBpt
InfoBridgeport.com
The Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District

September 2015

CONFIDENTIAL

Carmody CONSULTING

NEW VENTURE ADVISORS LLC

BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT

BRIDGEPORT FOOD COMMERCE FEASIBILITY STUDY

Michael Moore, President and CEO

ABOUT BRIDGEPORT DOWNTOWN SPECIAL SERVICES DISTRICT

The Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District (DSSD) serves as the business improvement district for Bridgeport, Connecticut's central business district. In that role, DSSD is charged with supplementing city services to ensure Downtown Bridgeport is a safe, welcome setting in which to live, visit and invest. DSSD oversees daily environmental maintenance of physical conditions, manages the beautification of three open-spaces and works with the Bridgeport Police Department to coordinate public safety. DSSD also implements a Creative Placemaking agenda at historic McLevy Green while also producing branded events such as the Downtown Thursdays Free Concert Series and Downtown Farmers Market. DSSD recently introduced the BridgeportCREATES working group to recruit commercial enterprises to downtown Bridgeport and position downtown as a hub for the regional creative economy.

Dan Carmody, President and CEO

ABOUT CARMODY CONSULTING

With more than 30 years' experience in business development, downtown, neighborhood revitalization and regional food systems, Dan Carmody has a rich and broad array of experience around North America. From ten years in the trenches as a tavern keeper through twenty years of community-based economic development in the second tier industrial cities of the Midwest (Rock Island, IL and Fort Wayne, IN), Dan currently serves as the President of the non-profit that operates the nation's largest public market in Detroit, Michigan. He is recognized as a national thought leader in the worlds of downtown and regional food system development. As a long time participant and former board member of the International Downtown Development Association, Dan has developed outstanding competencies in downtown strategic planning, organizational capacity building, community-based development, downtown special event programming and downtown housing development.

Kathy Nyquist, Principal
Saloni Doshi, Engagement Manager
Seth Sherry, Research Analyst
Megan Bucknum, Food Systems Specialist

ABOUT NEW VENTURE ADVISORS LLC

New Venture Advisors helps communities and entrepreneurs identify market-based food systems solutions and build them into successful enterprises. In over 40 food systems projects, NVA has led a comprehensive and collaborative process that builds from existing assets to create enterprises that expand local food production, strengthen the livelihood of small and beginning farmers, promote healthy food access and improved eating habits, and bring economic development opportunities to the region.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND ACTION PLAN

The Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District (DSSD) serves as the Business Improvement District for downtown Bridgeport, CT. The DSSD is charged with fostering a safe, welcoming and business-friendly environment within downtown, and the group oversees the continuous improvement of physical conditions, promoting downtown's many cultural assets and designing initiatives to drive demand to downtown businesses. Carmody Consulting and New Venture Advisors were contracted to work with the DSSD on a food systems assessment that aims to **catalyze the development of a thriving food district in downtown Bridgeport** that results in an increase in outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables downtown and an increasing population of young professionals as residents in the district.

The core team recommends that the DSSD pursue a variety of interdependent strategies to establish a unique, robust "food ecosystem" in downtown Bridgeport. **It is important that recommendations are not considered in isolation, as the interrelated nature of these recommendations cannot be overstated.** Cities with strong food cultures generally have not just one agency or business focused on food commerce development, but have a myriad of entities focused on various aspects of a food supply chain; from production to consumption. Some are committed to the launch and support of food entrepreneurs, others on expanding and strengthening a city's restaurant scene, others on promoting healthy food access to low income populations, and others on agricultural production in and around a city. Ideally, these entities are well networked, both informally and formally (through associations, working groups and joint ventures), so opportunities to collaborate are proactively identified and pursued. **Recommendations are split into two components:**

(1) *Programmatic Recommendations*, which are important action steps to be taken immediately, require low investment, and whose goals are primarily to improve upon the food enterprises and initiatives that are already in place downtown. By successfully executing these programmatic recommendations, DSSD can improve the prospects of entrepreneurs and food business owners who have already invested in ventures in downtown Bridgeport, while simultaneously establishing a strong baseline foundation for the success of any new enterprise ideas that are implemented long-term.

(2) *Enterprise Recommendations*, which are steps in support of the development of large scale, tangible enterprises or markets that do not currently exist in downtown Bridgeport. Several of these should be executed only after key Phase I recommendations have been pursued, establishing a larger overall market size for food ventures in downtown Bridgeport and enabling any new initiatives and enterprises to be more broadly and successfully marketed.

The following **Action Plan** summarizes the recommendations and specific next step to be taken by the DSSD and other local stakeholders. The three recommendations that have strong potential with next steps that should be pursued immediately include:

(1) **Make programmatic improvements to Bridgeport's downtown farmers market**, to attract professionals and residents and increase traffic. This will require an increased budget in order to hire a dedicated market manager. The market may or may not be best owned by DSSD moving forward.
(2) **Develop and execute a strong brand and marketing campaign**. DSSD should hire an experienced branding and marketing agency to establish downtown Bridgeport's brand assets and create an effective marketing strategy.
(3) **Launch a culinary and restaurant incubator program and shared-use kitchen**. Initial steps are already in motion for this incubator, with Michelle McCabe (Council of Churches), Cristina Sandolo (Green Village Initiative) and Michelle Margo (DSSD) working in collaboration. An immediate and critical next step to take before an incubator is designed and launched is to conduct a feasibility study, assessing interest and needs among potential incubator entrepreneurs, identifying and evaluation kitchen spaces, and developing financial models to understand profit and loss potential.

Detailed recommendations, background research, case studies and best practices to support these next steps can be found in the **"Strategic Recommendations" section on page 28.**

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN FOR DSSD

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	OWNERSHIP	CURRENT STATUS	IMMEDIATE NEXT STEP	TIMELINE
PHASE I: PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS					
(1) Develop and execute a strong brand and marketing campaign	Hire an experienced firm to develop a cohesive brand development for downtown's food district, and execute a comprehensive marketing campaign with the goal or promote downtown Bridgeport to residents, employees, students, and visitors.	DSSD leads by hiring an experienced brand management firm to execute strategy	• Some brand development already executed • Cohesive branding and marketing with firm not started	• DSSD to establish a budget for firm • DSSD to develop and field an RFP	• ASAP
(2) Programmatic improvements to downtown farmers market	Focus on attracting residents, employees and visitors (moving beyond subsidized customers). • Hire dedicated market manager • Move timing of the market to evening hours • Add programming (i.e. cooking demonstrations, music, etc.) • Recruit additional diverse vendors	Market can be owned and operated by DSSD, another nonprofit, or a new nonprofit entity. Operating entity should hire a dedicated full-time market manager who recruits vendors, promotes market, and manages day-to-day operations (vendor fees, location, managing vendor committees, etc).	• Michelle Margo and DSSD already in discussions about market improvements	• DSSD to establish a budget for the 2016 downtown market • DSSD to determine optimal ownership structure, and if market should be run by another entity • Market owner to hire market manager	• Begin efforts in December 2015 (in prep for summer 2016 market)
(3) Establish an independent food policy council	Bring together food systems leaders at least once per quarter with the goal of sharing updates, identifying ops for collaboration, and minimizing duplication of efforts. This entity will help build connections and networks among Bridgeport's different food-related entities.	DSSD leads effort of coordinating working group of independent entities. Group elects 1-2 individuals to organize and lead sessions. Alternative approach: Establish council through legislation, bringing appointees on as members.	• Nonprofit community is well connected already • DSSD has organized several one-off events	• DSSD to organize an event in Nov or Dec 2015 to share study results, gauge enthusiasm level for a food policy council, and identify potential leaders of this group	• Q4 2015
(4) Establish a cohesive and strategic restaurant association	An association would bring together restaurant owners, sponsors and other supporting food systems leaders and focus on:	Association would be a distinct 501(C)3 entity funded through membership fees and sponsorships. DSSD could support launch by identifying restaurateurs and stakeholders interested in	• CT has a basic restaurant association • Otherwise, no efforts in place	• DSSD to meet with prominent downtown restaurateurs for planning and feedback gathering session, and to identify 1-2	• TBD

RECOMMENDATION	DESCRIPTION	OWNERSHIP	CURRENT STATUS	IMMEDIATE NEXT STEP	TIMELINE
	• Collaborative initiatives (i.e. local sourcing) • Marketing efforts (restaurant week, Taste of Bridgeport)	leading, and helping to secure launch funding.		restaurants to spearhead efforts	
(4) Execute events and after-work promotions, with strategic partners	Forge strong relationships with large employers and residential building management. Execute series of post (and pre) work events, promotions and organized initiatives – building on success of Summer Music Series.	DSSD leads, owns and executes	• Summer concert series has been successful	• DSSD to set up meetings with employers and building management companies • Develop 1-2 events to pilot in 2016	• Winter 2016
PHASE II: ENTERPRISE RECOMMENDATIONS					
(1) Launch a culinary and restaurant incubator program and shared-use kitchen	Incubator would provide business support services and commercial kitchen space to current and aspiring food business owners, to catalyze food innovation in the district, bringing new restaurants and specialty food businesses into downtown Bridgeport.	Pilot to be run by Council of Churches, with support from DSSD and other community leaders. If the pilot is successful, long-term ownership could be under Council of Churches or separate owner / operator.	• Michelle McCabe (Council of Churches), Michelle Margo (DSSD), Cristina Sandolo (Green Village Initiative) and Max Perize in launch discussions	• Conduct feasibility study to identify startup costs required, profit / loss potential, and long-term (post pilot) strategy • Study will assess interest and needs of food entrepreneurs through surveys and interviews, and evaluate church spaces	• ASAP
(2) Establish a pop-up market in downtown Bridgeport	*If downtown farmers market improvements are successful, this may be an extension of this market.* Monthly wholesale and retail pop-up venue that attracts residents, employees and visitors and provides entrepreneurs with a marketing venue.	TBD. The market could be led, owned and operated by the entity that runs the downtown farmers market or a separate nonprofit or for-profit organization. (See Phase I, Recommendation 2) Event planning company focused on pop-ups should be engaged.	• Not started	None. In late 2016: • Assess success of both the downtown market and culinary incubator • Interview wholesale buyers, market vendors and incubator entrepreneurs to gauge interest and needs	• Fall 2016
(3) Establish a small format, neighborhood green grocer in downtown Bridgeport	Neighborhood grocer would be small (less than 7,500 sq ft) and carry fresh fruits and vegetables, along with other staples. It would serve residents, visitors, employees and low income populations. Would have a focus on local products.	Independent owner / operator, to be identified.	• Not started	• Conduct feasibility study to determine products and services to offer, startup costs, ongoing profit / loss potential, potential locations, and funders / partners. • Identify owner and operator	• Winter 2016

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

A variety of potential funding sources may be available to support the research, planning and implementation of the above recommendations. This section describes categories of funding that align with one or more of the recommended strategies, to direct the team's efforts in pursuing next steps.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service: AMS runs both the Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and the Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). FMPP funds farmer-to-consumer direct marketing projects, including any efforts to launch or improve farmers markets. LFPP funds food enterprises that support sales between farmers and wholesale buyers. Both are potential funding sources for DSSD, and can support farmers market, culinary incubator and pop-up venue work. The USDA awarded $52 million across these programs in 2014, funding both planning and research projects (including feasibility studies) and implementation projects (including business planning and launch efforts). The deadline for these grants is in the spring, with awardees typically announced in early fall. Planning grants have previously been capped at $25,000 and implementation grants at $100,000 and the grants require a monetary or in-kind matching component.

US Small Business Administration: The SBA Small Business Innovation Research Program **(**SBIR) funds the critical startup and development stages of small businesses, targeting the entrepreneurial sector where most innovation and innovators thrive. It also encourages the commercialization of technology, products or services that stimulate the U.S. economy. It is available to small businesses independently operated, for-profits with no more than 500 employees. Funds are available in three phases, up to $750,000 total. If any of the above recommendations are executed in a way that leverages technology, or if individual businesses within a culinary incubator are exploring food production related technology, this grant may be of particular interest and relevance.

US Treasury's Healthy Food Financing Initiative: HFFI provides funding to increase access to healthy food in communities, particularly lower-income neighborhoods without grocery stores or other sources of fresh produce and nutritious food. Funds can be used to finance the opening of new grocery stores or renovate existing stores to expand the supply of healthy food. Funds can also be used to improve distribution systems and do outreach and education to consumers about healthy food choices. These funds are typically used for implementation of these efforts, not planning. HFFI may be of relevance to groups working on the development of a green grocer in downtown Bridgeport.

Small Business Lenders: Small business lenders will often provide businesses that are not typically bankable with loans to support infrastructure, equipment and working capital. These loans can be backed by the SBA or provided by CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions). For example, Connecticut businesses may have access to loans through Community Economic Development Fund (a statewide non-profit organization that helps start, stabilize and grow small businesses in CT that are not bankable), Community Investment Corporation (a source for SBA loans), and Community Capital Fund (funder of economic development related projects in Bridgeport).

Foundations: There are a number of *community foundations* focused on the development of sustainable, healthy and prospering communities. For example, Surdna Foundation (based in New York City) and The Vermont Community Foundation (based in Middlebury, VT) invest in healthy food and sustainable agriculture related ideas and innovations that may lead to thriving communities. Additionally, *health foundations* have been actively funding food systems development work nationwide, including feasibility studies and planning efforts related to healthy food. Connecticut has a number of foundations that support health and healthcare initiatives, including: Connecticut Health Foundation, Aetna Foundation, and the Community Health Network Foundation. Finally, *family foundations* are a tremendous source of funding for the local and healthy food space. For example, the Kresge Foundation has been a major funder of local and healthy food initiatives in Michigan. Connecticut has a number of family foundations with a health and/or wellness focus, including: Stop & Shop's Family Foundation, McGraw Family Foundation and Newman's Own Foundation.

Depending on the vision and mission of the funder, it may be important to emphasize the impact of recommendations on the following goals outlined above:

- wealth creation in low income communities
- health equity, including healthy food access in low income communities
- the revitalization of a specific community or area, and the degree to which it leads to more prosperous residents and businesses, and improved economy, culture and safety in a region
- small business development and success
- small, independent farmers in a region and the degree to which it will expand their production, improve their profitability and help move more local and healthy farm products

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District (DSSD) serves as the Business Improvement District for downtown Bridgeport, CT. The DSSD is charged with fostering a safe, welcoming and business-friendly-environment within downtown, and the group oversees the continuous improvement of physical conditions, promoting downtown's many cultural assets and designing initiatives to drive demand to downtown businesses.

Carmody Consulting and New Venture Advisors were contracted to work with the DSSD on a food systems assessment that aims to **catalyze the development of a thriving food district in downtown Bridgeport**, and results in an increase in outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables downtown and an increasing population of young professionals as residents in the district.

The steps of the food systems assessment included the following:

1. Better understand the local food landscape in downtown Bridgeport and surrounding areas.
2. Identify a myriad of innovative strategies that will encourage food related commerce and economic development in the downtown area of Bridgeport, CT. Strategies may include for-profit enterprises, branding and marketing strategies, non-profit initiatives, policy changes, etc.
3. Evaluate and narrow these to the top three, high potential strategies, based on input from community leaders, business owners, and residents of downtown Bridgeport.
4. Conduct in-depth research on these top three strategies, including a review of national case studies, interviews with experts who have launched or run these types of enterprises, and a baseline financial assessment.
5. Put forth recommendations on immediate and longer term next steps for the Bridgeport Downtown Special Services District to pursue in order to develop a thriving food district.

The following core team members were engaged throughout the project.

NAME	POSITION	ROLE
Mike Moore	President/CEO, Bridgeport DSSD	Local project lead
Dan Carmody	President and CEO, Carmody Consulting	Lead consultant, subject matter expert
Saloni Doshi	Engagement Manager, New Venture Advisors	Lead researcher, study author
Seth Sherry	Research Analyst, New Venture Advisors	Interviewer
Megan Bucknum	Food Systems Specialist, New Venture Advisors	Interviewer, researcher
Kathy Nyquist	Principal, New Venture Advisors	Project oversight
Michelle Margo	Consultant for Marketing, Communications and Special Projects, Bridgeport DSSD	Advisor and stakeholder
Michelle McCabe	Hunger Outreach Coordinator, The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc.	Advisor and stakeholder
Cristina Sandolo	Executive Director, Green Village Initiative	Advisor and stakeholder

STUDY METHODOLOGY AND STATUS

The research plan for the assessment consists of the following components;

Background secondary research
Baseline secondary research to gain a foundational understanding of Bridgeport's existing food landscape, local market and conditions that would support or hinder food commerce related initiatives in downtown Bridgeport. This analysis includes: demographic and economic conditions, local food production capacity in the county and state, existing food enterprises in downtown Bridgeport, and general demand trends related to food.

Qualitative research: Interviews and In-Person Event
New Venture Advisors interviewed 12 key contacts and food systems leaders, as identified by the DSSD, including representatives from retail outlets and farmers markets, major food service providers, anchor institutions, non-profit agencies, local food entrepreneurs and public officials/policy makers.

- Maggie Reynolds – *Wholesome Wave*
- Cristina Sandolo – *Green Village Initiative*
- Michelle McCabe – *Bridgeport United Council of Churches*
- David Kooris – *Bridgeport Office of Planning and Economic Development*
- Kim Morque – *Spinnaker Real Estate*
- Kristin duBay Horton – *Bridgeport Department of Public Health*
- Jonathan James – *Center for Disease Control*
- Phil Kuchma – *Kuchma Corporation*
- Steve Montello – *Barnum Publick House / Toni's Tuscan Table*
- Michelle Margo – *DSSD / Black Rock Farmers Market*
- Chris Bassette – *Killam and Bassette Farm*
- Jordan Rabidou – *The Bananaland*

On August 4th, Carmody Consulting and New Venture Advisors led an in-person session with Bridgeport community leaders to gather their feedback on the research conducted, insights that have emerged, and potential development strategies identified.

The event engaged over 50 attendees from all sectors, of which 35 remained for breakout discussions on three key core components of food district development:
- Establishing a strong, unique and cohesive narrative for downtown Bridgeport's food culture
- Identifying the most promising and needed food commerce enterprises for downtown Bridgeport
- Assessing the local food value chain in and around Bridgeport and identifying gaps in this supply chain that should be addressed

Almost 30 attendees completed closing reflection worksheets, through which they shared their individual feedback on enterprise ideas and development strategies that they believe would help in establishing a thriving food district in downtown Bridgeport.

Research Synthesis and Prioritized Strategies
Based on the above research steps, Carmody Consulting and New Venture Advisors identified over 30 different potential strategies for consideration by the Bridgeport DSSD. Input from the in-person session helped the core team develop a framework for evaluating and prioritizing these different strategies. A call conducted on Thursday, August 13th led the core team to identify three strategies that warranted in-depth research.

The following attendees participated in this call and weighed in on this decision: Mike Moore, Michelle Margo, Erin McDonough, Cristina Sandolo, Michelle McCabe, Dan Carmody, Kathy Nyquist, Saloni Doshi and Megan Bucknum.

In-depth research on key ideas

New Venture Advisors conducted additional research on the three strategies prioritized as part of the above step. This research included an assessment of insights gathered from national case studies and best practices, input from relevant local and national stakeholders, and a baseline evaluation of forecasted financials.

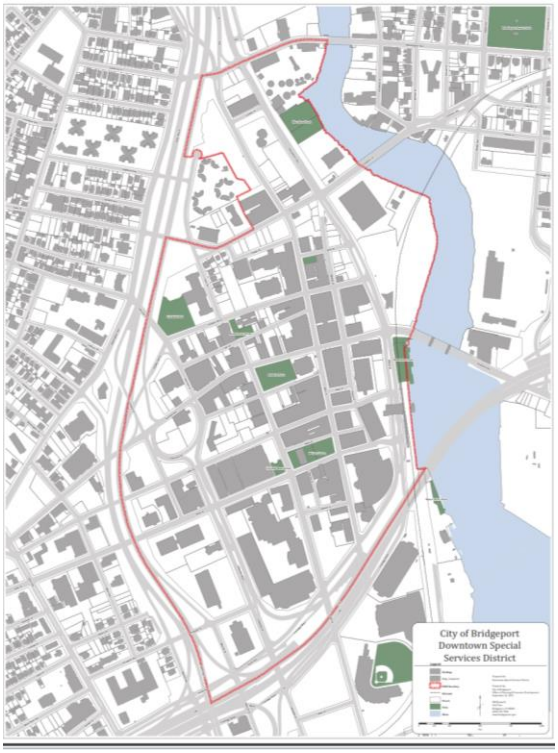
Recommendations and next steps

Recommended next steps are described, including guidance on the optimal sequence with which to pursue these recommendations and ideal partners to engage in execution.

BACKGROUND SECONDARY RESEARCH

Downtown Bridgeport is located in the larger city of Bridgeport, which extends north to the town of Trumbull, and is bounded to the east and west by Stratford and Fairfield. Bridgeport lies within Fairfield County in Connecticut, the most southwestern county in the state, bounded to the west by New York. Fairfield County is one of the richest counties in the U.S.

Bridgeport is the most populous city in Connecticut with over 144,000 residents.[1] Like many towns throughout the northeast, Bridgeport suffered from deindustrialization in the 1970's and 1980's, resulting in many vacant commercial buildings and a depressed economy.[2] During this period, many wealthier residents left the city for suburban developments.[3]



For the purposes of the study, downtown Bridgeport encompasses the roughly five by twelve block area between the Pequannock River, Interstate 95 and Route 25.

Downtown Bridgeport has a population of approximately 1,500 residents. The neighborhood is bordered to the east by East Side, north by Enterprise Zone, west by The Hollow and West End, and south by South End.

The current estimate for unemployment in Bridgeport is nearly 8.7%, 2.4 basis points higher than the state's average of 6.3%.[4]

Though historically Bridgeport has relied heavily on manufacturing, recent estimates show that over 25% of residents work in educational and health care services, 13% in retail trade, and almost 10% in manufacturing.[5] The three top employers in Bridgeport are the Peoples United Bank (750 employees), Sikorsky Support Services Inc. (500 employees), and Prime Line Manufacturing (400).[6]

Median household income in Bridgeport has decreased since 2009 by 7.2% and is estimated at $41,000 per year, which is less than half of the

[1] ACS 2013
[2] (Wald 1982)
[3] (Rierden 1990)
[4] (Connecticut Department of Labor 2015)
[5] (ACS 2013)
[6] (CT Economic Development 2015)

median income of Fairfield County overall.[7] Likewise, the total percent of residents with a bachelor's degree or more is less than half of the county average of 45%.

Bridgeport is ethnically and racially diverse. 38% of the population is White, 36% is African-American, 18% self classifies as "Other", 5% is multi-racial, and 4% is Asian. Separately, considering the city's ethnic breakdown, 41% of the population is Hispanic.[8] Estimates suggest that over 60 languages are spoken in the city of Bridgeport.[9]

Bridgeport is centrally connected to the greater northeast region of the U.S. through both train and bus services. Located on the Metro North commuter line, daily train service to New York City and other regional stops in Connecticut are possible. The Metro North station in downtown Bridgeport also functions as the central hub for both ferry and inter-city bus transportation.

Demand and Food Commerce Landscape

Local Food Demand

Statewide, consumers in Connecticut spent approximately $4.6 billion on (non-grain) farm products in 2013.[10] Expenditures among Fairfield County residents accounted for 12% of these expenditures, at $550 million.

2012 EXPENDITURES	DAIRY	MEAT	POULTRY & EGGS	FRUIT & VEGGIES
Fairfield County	$126,177,429	$142,388,239	$60,708,164	$218,314,465
Hartford County	$131,934,184	$148,884,600	$63,477,930	$228,274,906
Middlesex County	$25,270,457	$28,517,112	$12,158,459	$43,723,401
New Haven County	$125,785,222	$141,945,643	$60,519,460	$217,635,862
New London County	$40,257,423	$45,429,548	$19,369,187	$69,654,120
Tolland County	$20,485,383	$23,117,269	$9,856,200	$35,444,179
Windham County	$16,850,231	$19,015,086	$8,107,207	$29,154,573
Litchfield County	$28,819,497	$32,522,120	$13,866,020	$49,864,014
Connecticut (2013)	**$1,031,154,606**	**$1,169,534,661**	**$580,303,458**	**$1,827,955,892**

If national statistics with respect to consumer demand for local held true, total unmet demand for local farm products would have been $1.9 billion in Connecticut (in 2012 wholesale dollars) and $470 million in Fairfield County.[11] Unmet demand is highest for local fruits and vegetables followed by meat.

Fairfield County, Connecticut (2012)				
	DAIRY	MEAT	POULTRY & EGGS	FRUIT & VEGGIES
Local Quotient[12]	25%	5%	23%	13%
Local Food Demand	$126,177,429	$142,388,239	$60,708,164	$218,314,465
Local Food Supply	$31,938,264	$6,485,722	$14,259,605	$27,742,975

[7] (ACS 2013)

[8] (US Census 2012) [According to the Census, race and ethnicity are considered two separate and distinct identities. Hispanic or Latino origin is asked as a separate question and categorized under ethnicity. People of Hispanic origin, were those who indicated that their origin was Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or some other Hispanic origin. It should be noted that people of Hispanic origin may be of any race.]

[9] (Bridgeport Public Library 2015)

[10] (ACS 2015)(BLS 2013)

[11] (MarketSizer 2015)

[12] Local Quotient is the percentage of category food sales produced within the area. It is calculated at the state level and is overstated if production is shipped to other states. A result of greater than 100% indicates that local demand could be met entirely with local production if it were directed to these markets through a local food system.

Unmet Demand for Local Food (in wholesale dollars)	**$94,239,165**	**$135,902,517**	**$46,448,559**	**$190,571,490**

According to Locavore Index metrics, consumers in Connecticut exhibit a preference and demand for local that is aligned with, or even above, the national averages. The state is ranked 10th in the nation as one of the most "locavore-oriented" by Strolling of the Heifer's Locavore Index, which considers per-capita sales by farmers directly to consumers, the number of farmers markets, CSAs and food hubs, and the percentage of school districts with farm to school programs. This represents a dramatic improvement from the state's ranking of 20th in 2014.[13]

Connecticut Locavore Index Key Indicators [14]

CONNECTICUT	2015	2014	2013	2012
Farmers Markets	156	157	154	146
CSAs	119	111	96	102
*Farm to School %	46%	46%		
Food Hubs	2	2	2	
Direct Sales per capita	$8.46			

* Percentage of school districts with Farm-to-School programs

Downtown Bridgeport food landscape

According to the Bridgeport DSSD, there are currently 26 restaurants in downtown Bridgeport.

- Amici Miei Café
- Bagel King of Bridgeport
- Barnum Publick House
- Café 1000
- Dunkin Donuts
- El Pueblito
- Fruta Juice
- Funchal Cafe
- J. Galt Cafe
- Jimmy & Maria's Corporate Deli
- Joseph's Steakhouse
- Leisha's Bakeria
- Martini Bar
- McDonalds
- Metric Bar & Grill
- Miss Thelma's
- Moe's Burger Joint
- Murphy's Law
- Panda Chinese Restaurant
- Ralph 'n' Rich's
- Star Istanbul
- Subway
- Tiago's Bar & Grill
- Toni's Tuscan Table
- Trattoria 'A Vucchella
- Two Boots of Bridgeport

Four of these are fast food chains (Dunkin Donuts, Bagel King, Subway and McDonalds).[15] Established restaurants cover a variety of culinary cuisines; however, Italian and American dominate the food landscape.[16]

Other neighborhoods in Bridgeport have an emerging restaurant scene as well. Most notably, Black Rock – located in the southwestern corner of the city – is home to over 40 restaurants, several of which have become destinations for visitors outside the neighborhood and the city of Bridgeport.

Grocery stores in downtown Bridgeport are essentially non-existent. There is one convenience store downtown (Downtown Corner). Within several blocks of downtown, there are five convenience stores (Conchitas, Laziza's, Sapioas, George Hilltop, K&J) as well as a local market between downtown and the waterfront (Captain's Food Mart). Ethnic markets are popular in nearby neighborhoods as well. These are largely Hispanic, with a few Asian and West Indian markets as well.

[13] (Ibid) (Index 2015)
[14] (Locavore Index 2015)
[15] (InfoBpt)
[16] https://www.google.com/maps/search/restaurants+bridgeport+ct/@41.1776384,-73.1906418,16.94z

Neighboring districts in Bridgeport also have larger, more popular grocery stores such as Compare Foods, PriceRite, and City Super Market, while neighboring cities have more upscale retailers such as Whole Foods, The Food Bazaar, and Stop & Shop.

There are six farmers markets operating in Bridgeport, one of which is downtown.

- Downtown Bridgeport's Farmers Market
- Black Rock Farmers Market
- East End Market
- Bridgeport South End Fresh Market
- St. Vincent's Farm Stand
- East Side Market

Wholesome Wave, a nonprofit organization that creates partnership-based programs that enable underserved consumers to make healthier food choices by increasing affordable access to healthy, locally and regionally grown foods, is headquartered in Bridgeport. The organization has driven many of the city's farmers market efforts, and has focused on ensuring that these markets are effectively serving low income populations by supporting them in accepting SNAP (supplemental nutritional assistance program) benefits and offering SNAP customers the opportunity to double the value of these reimbursement funds when they spent at farmers markets.

No Community Support Agriculture (CSA) or grocery delivery services have been identified that serve downtown Bridgeport. Over 30 farms are in operation within 10 miles of the city of Bridgeport that are selling direct to consumers or to wholesale buyers. Additionally, there are eight community supported agriculture programs (CSAs) in the county; however, none of these appear to be servicing downtown Bridgeport. [17]

Agricultural Production

The state of Connecticut produced over $200 million in agricultural products (based on farm gate sales) in 2012. Across the state, the top six agricultural crops by sales are: nursery/greenhouse (49%), milk/dairy (13%), tobacco (10%), poultry/eggs (8%), fruits (8%), and vegetables (6%).[18] The total number of farms in Connecticut increased 22% from 2007 to 2012, and the total farm acreage in the state grew 7.6% during this same time.[19] Connecticut's agricultural commissioner attributes this growth largely to an increased demand for local foods, and the resulting trend of younger, new farmers entering into the market.[20]

Fairfield County produces a small percentage of the county's total sales, as land in this county is predominantly dedicated to residential and commercial activity. In 2012, there were 439 farms in Fairfield County (compared to the total of 6,000 farms in the state of Connecticut).

Market value of relevant agricultural products

COUNTY	VEGETABLES	FRUITS & NUTS	GRAINS	CATTLE/ CALVE	DAIRY*	POULTRY/ EGGS	TOTAL
Fairfield	$2,041,000	$1,365,000	(D)	$88,000	$377,000	$81,000	$3,952,000
Hartford	$14,100,000	$9,579,000	(D)	$748,000	$3,102,000	$238,000	$27,767,000
Litchfield	$2,750,000	$2,717,000	(D)	$2,151,000	$15,348,000	$549,000	$23,515,000
Middlesex	$1,581,000	$2,196,000	$188,000	$304,000	$819,000	$56,000	$5,144,000
New Haven	$8,989,000	$3,774,000	(D)	$514,000	$2,585,000	$317,000	$16,179,000
New London	$2,153,000	$3,074,000	$3,298,000	$2,378,000	$15,217,000	$46,223,000	$72,343,000

[17] (USDA Local Food Directory 2015)
[18] (Ibid.)
[19] (Farmland Information Center)
[20] (Grant 2014)

Tolland	$3,359,000	$1,934,000	$2,297,000	$1,630,000	$14,614,000	$108,000	$23,942,000
Windham	$1,413,000	$2,711,000	(D)	$1,937,000	$20,276,000	$1,287,000	$27,624,000
2012 TOTAL	**$36,386**	**$27,350**	**$5,783**	**$9,750**	**$72,338**	**$48,859**	**$200,466**
($1,000)			*Most recent available data is from 2007				Source: USDA NASS 2012

According to the USDA, no food hubs exist in the county and the closest hub is 50 miles away.[21] The state of Connecticut is home to seven food hubs (one of which is still in its launch phase) identified by the USDA and National Good Food Network. There are at least two additional feasibility studies underway within the state, in New London County and Litchfield County. The majority of CT food hubs are either direct to consumer, or have very small wholesale businesses that serve restaurants, cooperative retailers and other independent, specialty buyers. Hartford Regional Market is both a direct-to-consumer farmers market and a wholesale food hub with locally, nationally and internationally grown farm products available. The market has secured USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant money to add additional vendor capacity and extend the market's season to year round. Currently, it's the largest produce distribution center between Boston and New York City. In 2009, the town of New Milford was awarded a SARE Sustainable Community Innovation grant to gather data about supply and demand capacity for local farm products throughout the Greater New Milford food shed. The goal of this project was to establish a brick and mortar produce distribution center in Southern Litchfield County. After 16 months of research and outreach, the study found that the area's supply is so limited, due to factors ranging from high costs to labor constraints to an overdependence on commodity crops, that a food hub was not yet warranted.

This suggests that local food related efforts in downtown Bridgeport will likely rely not only on Fairfield County production, but on agricultural producers and distributors / food hubs across the state. Statewide production levels cannot necessarily support the purchasing and distribution of food by large wholesalers; however, grassroots, restaurant and consumer-focused local food efforts can likely be supported by Connecticut's current agricultural production.

While no traditional farms exist in the city of Bridgeport, recent years have seen an increase in urban agriculture and related initiatives within the city. The following are short summaries of these initiatives:

- *MetroCrops* - Uses LED lights in a hydroponic setting to grow leafy greens in a 2,200 sq ft. two story facility located in an old factory in Bridgeport. Sells produce into farmers markets in New Canaan, Milford and Trumbull. The organization's intent is to replicate across the state.
- *Boot Camp Farms* - Sustainable hydroponic agriculture focused on employing veterans and improving the flow of local, fresh produce into Bridgeport. Launched in 2013, but construction has not yet started.
- *Reservoir Community Farm* - Community farm program within the Green Village Initiative. The farm has a greenhouse and a farm stand.
- *Bridgeport Regional Aquaculture Science and Technology Education Center* - A branch of Bridgeport Public Schools. Their mission is to provide a rigorous educational program that ensures students are able to examine problems and make informed decisions concerning society's relationship with the aquatic environment.
- *Angie's Aqua Seafood Market*, a farm to market experience where seafood products are produced by students and are sold to the public. This market helps students learn production, processing, safe handling, and customer interface skills.

[21] (Ibid)

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

INTERVIEW INPUT

New Venture Advisors interviewed 12 stakeholders prior to the in-person session conducted on August 4, 2015. These food systems leaders were identified by the core team, and represented many different sectors.

The following table summarizes key feedback and input gathered from interviews with nine of these interviewees.

NAME	ORGANIZATION	BARRIERS TO FOOD COMMERCE	UNSUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	DEVELOPMENT IDEAS	NOTES
Phil Kuchma	Kuchma Corporation	Downtown resident market size is and always will be too small and unstable to justify a large grocer.	Farmers markets are successful, but neglect downtown residents and commuters. Market hours target retirees and those in subsidized housing.	Restaurants are key. Followed closely by a green grocer downtown that targets residents. Year round/extended season farmers market may have potential.	Emphasized importance of selecting strategies that can be successful and don't reach too far. Phased development may be appropriate.
Maggie Reynolds	Wholesome Wave		Ripka's Supermarket did a lot, but nothing well. Was over-priced and did not accept EBT. Wholesome Wave farm stands are more successful, and are operated by farmers.		Feels most initiatives around farmers markets, urban/community gardening have been successful. Downtown market is doing well - it piggybacks live music on Thursdays.
Cristina Sandolo	Green Village Initiative	Transportation, education and affordability are particularly relevant healthy food access barriers for lower income residents.	Healthy corner store initiatives stalled because interested operators could not be identified. Owners perceived low consumer demand, did not have the skills/infrastructure, and were not motivated to evolve operations.	Would like to see Bridgeport become a destination for its vibrant/diverse food system. Sees old industrial era buildings as assets for food commerce development.	Very difficult for new enterprises and nonprofits to build trust among community members. Farmers markets have "taken off" in recent years, demonstrates people's desire for local, healthy food.
Michelle McCabe	BP United Council of Churches			Integrate food landscape development with job training and entrepreneurship for low-income residents.	Interview contained information on United Council of Churches efforts to create jobs, improve food related training and distribution.
David Kooris	BP Office of Planning and Economic Development	Low population downtown. Neighborhoods surrounding downtown are inaccessible, cut off by river or highway.	Healthy corner store initiatives failed because operators did not want to give up floor space, did not think consumer demand existed, and felt that costs would be too high.	Strategies that connect downtown to waterfront, through walkable mixed-use development. Attract employees / commuters to venture out for meals.	Believes farmers market could survive year round, but concerned that residents may not adopt mindset of parsing out shopping to smaller venues (produce, bakery etc.).
Kim Morque	Spinnaker Real Estate	Downtown resident population is too small.	Ripka's price point was wrong, too upscale.	Unique mix of green grocer/coffee house, local brew/bike shop. Wants DT BP to be an anchor for wealthy neighboring communities.	

NAME	ORGANIZATION	BARRIERS TO FOOD COMMERCE	UNSUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES	DEVELOPMENT IDEAS	NOTES
Kristin duBay Horton	BP Department of Public Health	Price of fresh produce and education are particularly relevant healthy food access barriers for low income residents.	Tried to get restaurant/corner stores to buy local, but buyers are very price sensitive, not interested in local. Also, lack of collaboration between corner stores, viewed introducing produce as introducing new competition, did not share information.	Establish a space for local producers to retail at reasonable prices (including growers, roasters, bakers) that would be accessible for lower income residents, perhaps through EBT and volunteer service. Space could also house restaurants and other wholesale buyers who can use "last days" produce.	Noted lots of turnover in downtown restaurants, due to lack of clientele. Perception of farmers markets improving amongst lower socio-economic classes. Downtown farmers market is most popular according to survey data.
Jonathan James	Center for Disease Control	Price of fresh produce and education are particularly relevant healthy food access barriers for low income residents.		Downtown needs a store that supplies daily staples for residents, but does not need to supply all groceries.	
Michelle Margo	DSSD/ Black Rock Farmers Market	Perception that region is dangerous leads commuters to stay in their office buildings for lunch and go straight home after work.		Small format grocer and mix of food related commerce (coffee shops/bakers/cheese etc.) are needed. Create a unique downtown (sans chain stores) to attract wealthy weekenders from nearby towns that have lost their quaint downtowns (i.e. Westport).	Emphasized importance of "baby-steps". Solution will not come from one enterprise, but many. Hesitant about a year round market, especially regarding funding. Currently, most markets are generating low revenue as they do not charge vendors, and some are “begging" vendors to come.

Interviews with three stakeholders followed a different line of questioning, and are summarized below:

Steven Montello: Real Estate Developer and Restaurateur; Barnum Publick House, Toni’s Tuscan Kitchen

- *Events:* Founded alive@5 concert series, which – along with Webster Bank Arena – drove high customer bases in the first two years. Events have dwindled, leading to lower sales across restaurants. Believes additional events should be encouraged, and thinks one event per month at Webster could pay his rent.
- *Food culture and perception:* Bridgeport suffers from a long-lasting negative perception, and visitors at restaurants are surprised by the quality of food in the region, service, ease of parking, etc. The city should build a unique and varied culinary scene, and could do so by sponsoring pub crawls, restaurant weeks, tasting events, etc.
- *Clientele:* Lawyers and occasionally jurors are large part of lunch crowd, young professionals at night, Webster Arena visitors when they have events. Generally, People’s Bank employees eat at subsidized cafeteria (though Barnum offers them 20% discounts). Health care institutions have large employee bases and large foundations that they often entertain, but these groups generally take their business outside of downtown. This is a huge opportunity, as tax exempt groups should have a particular focus on investing in the local community. Have not successfully engaged college students or downtown residents.

- *Turnover trends:* Does not believe restaurant turnover is higher than normal in the area. Strong private market support helps, with landlords putting forth deals such as rent concessions, capital investment partnering, etc.
- *Local sourcing:* Have tried it, but found it to be a serious hassle. Had to do pickups himself, growers were unreliable for both quantity and quality.
- *Additional ideas:* Believes there needs to be a city led effort to improve image and encourage downtown patronage, with strategic plans to increase events and brand.

Chris Bassette: Agricultural Producer; Killam and Bassette in Glastonbury, CT and participant in DSSD's Farmers Market at McLevy Green

- *Farmers market:* First year was tenuous, but year over year sales have improved. Seems the McLevy Green market is one of the more successful ones (only one or two are more successful). Food vendors may be a helpful addition to the McLevy Green market.
- *Clientele:* 40-60% of sales through SNAP/WIC (mostly through SNAP). SNAP education and Department of Ag provide free farmers market promotion. Hospitals have previously stated policy that prevented markets from soliciting sales on their premises. Seem to be attracting downtown employees. Unclear if residents are engaging.
- *Community supported agriculture:* Previously had a pickup in Bridgeport, but eliminated this, and are more successful in other areas.
- *Local food culture:* Seems very limited in Bridgeport in terms of wholesale buyers. Have had no interactions with convenience or grocery stores.

Marcella Kovac and Jordan Rabidou: The Bananaland, graphic design firm located in downtown Bridgeport

- *Emerging creative economy:* As co-owners of the B-Hive in Bridgeport (a downtown coworking space), have a strong commitment to supporting and growing the new team of creative economy workers that can help catalyze change and growth in downtown Bridgeport. B-Hive has been successful and is steadily expanding and attracting new tenants.
- *Events:* Believes that events have been very successful in strengthening downtown's reputation and have found new faces coming to these events. Grand opening for B-Hive was very well attended, through social media based promotions.
- *Fairfield Ave / Bijou Square:* This area is an asset for downtown Bridgeport, and more should be done to develop and promote the restaurants and events on this street.
- *Size and atmosphere of food enterprises:* Restaurants are outdated and way too big in downtown Bridgeport. Over abundance of basic Italian cuisine. Would like to see more that are like Trattoria 'A Vucchella, a new, intimate and authentic Italian restaurant. Believe a new restaurant will be opened soon that is a small, French / Vietnamese establishment. Restaurants need help with face lifts, redesign and establishing great atmosphere. Similarly, the neighborhood needs a food market of some sort, but not one as big and overwhelming as Ripkas. Downtown Bridgeport needs a smaller, more intimate market that appeals to workers and residents.
- *Local food culture:* Local food says "quality" and is an important component of any food revitalization effort. However, residents don't seem to require local food as a starting point, so efforts should be made on diverse initiatives – some that are focused on local while others are focused more on innovative cuisine and business ventures.

EVENT INPUT

Breakout group #1: Narrative for downtown Bridgeport's food culture

The following insights and ideas emerged from the breakout discussion regarding potential focal points and themes for a Bridgeport food culture.

Bridgeport's ethnic diversity: Many attendees highlighted the city of Bridgeport's ethnic diversity, and the opportunity to develop a food culture in downtown Bridgeport that reflects on and celebrates the unique cultural enclaves in the city. Additionally, the growing Asian population – arriving in Bridgeport largely to attend University of Bridgeport or as employees within the city's expanding technology space – could serve as an important potential customer base. For example, several attendees highlighted the potential for restaurants, grocery stores and specialty markets to be developed that specifically appeal to Asian communities.

Industrial roots: Bridgeport residents take pride in Bridgeport's industrial roots and "gritty" reputation. Bridgeport is the poorest city in Fairfield County, one of the wealthiest counties in the nation. Many highlighted how important it is that downtown Bridgeport's food culture reflects this working class, lower income foundation and not try to model itself after a food culture of wealthier, suburban towns such as South Norwalk. More tangibly, attendees highlighted the potential for reuse of industrial space and the redesign of existing food establishments to better reflect this foundation. One relevant consideration in the development of a food culture is to ensure that strategies support economic development, but don't over-promote commercial gentrification in a way that hinders the region's baseline cultural assets.

Waterfront: Many attendees highlighted Bridgeport's beautiful waterfront as a critical asset to take advantage of in the development of a thriving food culture. Bridgeport's waterfront represents the city's history as an important port and trade center that once brought agricultural goods from Long Island to Connecticut.

Breakout group #2: Enterprise ideation

Appropriate customer base: Downtown is a small radius of just a few blocks. The resident population alone is not a large enough market size to support a myriad of new stores or initiatives, or a single large format store. Developing commerce ideas that are appealing to a very wide range of customers – including residents, employees, visitors, students and others – is critical. University of Bridgeport students, particularly those from other ethnic backgrounds, and jurors visiting the courthouse on Maine Street were identified by attendees as potential customer bases to attract. This point led to a robust discussion about the objectives of these efforts, and whether or not they should be focused on creating a livable community or a destination. A dimension of this is also a disconnect between those stakeholders focused on healthy food access for lower income populations versus those who are most focused on downtown revitalization and development. That said, the food access folks seem to recognize that development is critical.

Food and produce delivery: Attendees highlighted the lack of grocery delivery services in downtown Bridgeport. One suggested that they would like to see a CSA service (community supported agriculture) offered with drop off locations in downtown Bridgeport. One indicated his interest in seeing grocery stores in and around downtown Bridgeport that delivered directly to homes or offices. Existing services to explore include Fresh Nation (order and delivery from farmers markets), Mike's Organics and Door to Door Organics. Finally, one attendee also suggested that a service like this could be executed by an "Uber" like concept.

Transient retail models: The need for a retail model that provides grocery items and other staple goods was highlighted by many attendees. Several attendees suggested that downtown Bridgeport could benefit from transient, less conventional retail models, such as produce carts or mobile grocery units. Additionally, a discussion on the potential viability of food trucks emerged, as a way to promote a food scene with fairly minimal investment, such as an event

similar to Brooklyn's Smorgasburg food event. Finally, one attendee suggested that restaurants and cafes might become a retail venue for fresh fruits and vegetables.

Employers: There are over 8,000 employees in downtown Bridgeport; however, very few of them venture out of the office for services or food. Many attendees highlighted the importance of determining what this group needs and how to better draw them out of the office buildings. The downtown farmers market, for example, is not currently appealing to employees. The time (late morning / early afternoon) is not conducive and does not allow workers to shop for home staples, which would need to be stored until the evening hours. Establishing closer relationships with leadership teams at the three largest employers is critical to ensure that initiatives focused on drawing employees into the community are well marketed and successful. Running programs that specifically appeal to employers seems critical. This might include $5 happy hour Fridays or free parking after work hours.

Farmers markets: The timing of the downtown farmers market is poorly scheduled to meet the needs of both employees and residents. Currently, the market seems most focused on serving the needs of lower income consumers. Farmers are hesitant to sell at the farmers market because of the limited traffic. One producer in attendance highlighted the great success of other markets, including a North Park Market that sells sweet corn to commuters leaving the city and the Trumbull farmers market that is now managed by a professional event planner.

Marketing and branding: Attendees highlighted the importance of improved marketing and branding of downtown Bridgeport and the initiatives and events that are taking place in the area. Many suggested that they find out about great initiatives only after the events have passed. Partnerships with employers, transit authorities and residential buildings can help ensure that as many people as possible know about great programs being planned in downtown Bridgeport.

Restaurant scene deficiencies: The group felt strongly that downtown Bridgeport's current restaurant scene is lacking. They felt that restaurants are old, with poor interior facades, and lacking in trendiness. This led to a discussion on the need for an association to support restaurant face lifts and promote the development of new, innovative restaurants. A restaurant incubator may be valuable for the community, as would collective restaurant initiatives, such as a restaurant week or a "Taste of Bridgeport."

Breakout group #3: Local food value chain

The food value chain breakout session started with attendees describing and listing the key players in the food value chain. The following players emerged during this discussion. These players are not necessarily located within downtown Bridgeport, given that a food system should often be defined more broadly than a narrow trading radius might be.

FOOD PRODUCERS	FOOD PROCESSORS	FOOD DISTRIBUTORS	POINTS OF CONSUMPTION
• MetroCrops • Green Village Initiatives • Aquaculture School • Chestnut Hollow • Bridgeport Lobster • Two-Roads Brewing Co. • Patty Poppets • Ceccarelli Farms (further upstate) • Gulliver's • Shearwater Coffee Roasters (organic) • Gazy Brothers (Oxford)	• Primo Sausages • Jane's Good Food • Eloquently Casual • Cook • Uncle Wiley's Seasonings (Wylie Mullins) • Sarah Galluzo (Organic Salsa) • Chave's Bakery	• Wholesome Wave • Bridgeport Rescue • Mobile Kitchens (serving hot meals) • Bishop Gene Williams Pantry • CT Food Bank • Creative Wholesale Meats • Berkshire Foods • Farmer's Truck • Fresh Point	• Trattoria 'A Vucchella • Farmer's Markets • Funchal's • Harborview Market in Black Rock • CSAs • Columbian Restaurant • Barnum Publick House • Two Boots • Whole Foods (Fairfield) • Stop-n-Shop (Fairfield Ave) • Family Dollar • Dollar General • University of Bridgeport • HCC

The group highlighted a small and informal set of connections and networks that exist between these players.

- Shearwater Coffee has co-branded with the Black Rock Farmers Market to have a Farmers Market coffee that the market organizers sell at this weekly market
- Jane's Good Food (food artisan of pickles and preserved foods) buys from Patty Poppets from Squirrel Hill
- Cook (food artisan pickles and pesto) uses products from MetroCrops
- Bishop Gene Williams Pantry may be using some product from Chestnut Hollow Farms
- The Stop-n-Shop on Fairfield Ave is highly community oriented
- Trattoria 'A Vucchella buys from many urban farms
- A lemonade vendor at the Black Rock Farmers Market is using local honey from another vendor at the market
- The Council of Churches and UCONN Extension are working on an assessment of area kitchens

Overall, attendees highlighted the fact that networking efforts seem to be most actively happening among nonprofits in Bridgeport. Interaction between for-profit entities (or between nonprofit and for-profit entities) is fairly limited and must be strengthened.

Attendees emphasized the importance of creating a restaurant district, similar to Little Asia. There may be an opportunity for the food scene to work alongside the Arts Trail efforts or to connect local restaurants with other, unique vending opportunities such as Harbor Yard, Webster Arena and ChowdaFest.

There are a small, limited number of outlets for consumers and buyers to access in order to learn more about local food suppliers, retailers and restaurants in the state. This includes the Connecticut Grown list, DSSD's website, the national farm to plate website and the Connecticut restaurant association. A more organized effort to market buyer and restaurant local sourcing efforts is needed in the region.

Efforts to leverage kitchens in public schools to process, preserve and store locally sourced food for use in institutional settings could be important to pursue.

Individual attendee input

Attendees were asked to complete a closing worksheet at the end of the in-person session. In that worksheet, attendees were asked to share their personal reflection on downtown Bridgeport's core assets and the food related development initiatives and enterprises they would be most interested in seeing established in the city.

DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S TOP ASSETS	PROPOSED FOOD-RELATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT	DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S MAIN CHALLENGES
1) Cool architecture including McLevy Green **2) Walkability** **3) The hip & creative businesses and restaurants that exist**	1) Farm to table restaurants 2) Cool bar with interesting cocktails, craft beer and good music 3) Training schools in butchery, artisanal cheese, with a retail component.	N/A	N/A
1) Restaurants **2) City Government** **3) Growing Arts Culture**	1) Food Hub - Place for local restaurants to source local produce 2) How to tie in entrepreneurship to support services for poor - eg. rent commercial kitchens as incubator space when not used @ soup kitchen.	Live in North End Chose Bridgeport because of diversity.	Don't live downtown
1) Webster Bank Arena/Harbor Yard **2) Farmers Market on McLevy Green** **3) Awesome architecture/vacant factory building could be used as creative space**	1) Something like a single destination open air market like Chelsea Market in NY 2) Better restaurants 3) Highlight local artisans	I live in Black Rock N/A	N/A
1) Tapping into a thriving maker/crafting culture that is drawn to the downtown **2) Celebrating the incredibly diverse food cultures available in the city and supporting these to compete with the embedded fast food culture** **3) Supporting/networking the nonprofit structure in place - branding their efforts - a cohesive front**	1) Solid brand to advertise initiatives 2) A market space that connotes the brand (repurpose Arcade Mall) 3) While it may be putting the horse before the cart, a brand, a logo can ignite excitement and attract creative changemakers - we have them in spades in Bridgeport, but need to catalyze the movement and make it young and fresh.	I live in the West Side - I was attracted to my home for its proximity to downtown. Having lived in Black Rock, I experienced quite a bit of miscommunication/lack of advertising for downtown events. Though 2 exits away, Black Rock residents live in what feels to be a separate town at times. On the West Side, my neighbors and friends spread information about downtown events by word of mouth.	
Potential Market **1) 8,000+ employees, residents, students** **2) All the users of multi-modal transportation center** **3) All the people driving through downtown on 95 & 225**	Urban Farms - brings vacant land to life, counteracts food desert Develop authentic cultural food niches, differentiate from "rich neighbors" & serve many current residents of various ethnicities	Need to learn these potential markets' needs & wants & then aggressively develop & market the right food-related products/services (fully utilize e-commerce/marketing)	Got to grow current markets before will attract new markets
1) People's Bank Corporate **2) Ethnic Population** **3) Access to I-95 & Fairfield County**	1) Restaurants 2) Farmers Market - Bigger	Not	Not

DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S TOP ASSETS	PROPOSED FOOD-RELATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT	DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S MAIN CHALLENGES
1) Small site of downtown - walkability that this affords **2) Waterfront "attractiveness" - ability to activate the waterside**	1) CSA - fresh, healthy food offering 2) Food delivery	N/A	N/A
Diversity/Cultures	Food Training Facility & opportunity for low income parents to gain job skills - Bidwell Training Center in Pittsburgh	N/A	N/A
1) Vacant historic properties **- Palace/Majestic Theater** **- Davidson Fabric Building (Girls/Boys Club)** **2) Existing renovated historic property -** **The Arcade - an existing market space**	1) Brew pub 2) Coffee Roaster Local 3) Ethnic restaurant off shoots	1) Diversity of people, arts, waterfront, young vibe 2) Live in Black Rock - walkability, restaurants, park, waterfront, new train station 3) On the way up - Bijou is great	N/A
1) Compact, Walkable **2) Historic** **3) Educational; Infrastructure**	1) CSA 2) Pop-ups 3) Coordination/communication of existing org's	Not a resident Culture: Interesting, diverse, unique, hopeful	Not a resident Want more amenities
1) Immigrant Population **2) Walkability** **3) Historical/Industrial relevance**	1) Pop-up markets 2) Food events 3) Destination driven initiatives		
1) Ethnic Diversity **2) Geography (95 Beltway, etc)** **3) Emerging cultural economy**	1) Expanding Farmers Market - connection to local farming 2) Community (urban) gardens - educational/teaching opportunities 3) Vacant properties - Land...Land...Land	N/A… Struggling cultural network with great potential	Silo thinking / lines inconsistent / support of cultural assets Lack of trust/accountability
1) Passionate advocates: residents, developers, current business owners and loyal customers **2) Beautiful, often under-used, spaces for businesses/events** **3) A Fairfield County food culture always looking for something new**	1) Fresh food access 2) Collaboration between current restaurants 3) Opportunities for people to come together and meet their neighbors	Bridgeport is the most welcoming and neighborly city I've lived in while in CT. It's a city with great assets and excited new residents downtown.	1) Missing some key businesses: pharmacy, grocery store, etc. 2) Fatigue/skepticism not allowing people to fully celebrate and expand upon successes 3) Needs more resources devoted to identifying and supporting entrepreneurs
1) Growing resident community to support a growing food district **2) Great number of daytime visitors to downtown that could patronize growing food districts** **3) Good number of restaurant options and growing**	1) More year-round growing options 2) Connecting restaurants to local growers 3) Something that ties other community activities with food enterprises	N/A	N/A

DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S TOP ASSETS	PROPOSED FOOD-RELATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT	DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S MAIN CHALLENGES
1) Transit network **2) Small Geography** **3) Infrastructure**	1) Restaurant Association 2) Produce Market 3) Delivery System		
1) New residential units coming on line adding 350-400 units **2) New corporate businesses opening in downtown** **3) New additional green space to take advantage of open markets**	1) Small corner fruit/vegetable food store 2) Pharmacy that can attract to a food store to help support rent 3) Close down People's Bank cafeteria		
1) Access to high disposable income within a 10 - 20 mile radius **2) Cultural and ethnic diversity that is NOT Stamford or Norwalk** **3) Potential for organic, bottom-up growth**	1) Processed food purveyors - retail/restaurants 2) Close-by regional fresh food "terminal" to supply regional restaurants and producers - bringing the best of CT to lower Fairfield County 3) Local, existing food training at HCC & University of Bridgeport 4) Foreign students at University of Bridgeport	Live in Black Rock, but don't get downtown much!	Worked here for 2 years unattractive, not enough people
1) Art Culture **2) Food Culture** **3) Young population/college**	1) Mobile CSA food truck 2) Student involvement based on specialties: Marketing, Nutrition/Health, Cooking, Hospitality, Communications, English/writing/journalism 3) Resource, new innovative ideas, tons of energy		
1) History **2) Excellent layout/accessibility** **3) People want BPT to succeed** **Marketing: need a cohesive brand/idea around the area**	1) "Cool" restaurants - trendy/cache that drive traffic to BPT 2) Incubator style fostering of small business initiatives - foster economic development grassroots style to support local entrepreneurs 3) Cultural/ethnic foods - capitalize on BPT's culture and communities and don't run from it.	N/A	N/A
1) Strong existing farmers markets **2) Many nonprofits waiting on food systems issues** **3) SEAFOOD: Amazing potential to capitalize on this food niche**	I don't live in downtown Bridgeport, so I think it would be important to ask residents in particular. Based on my knowledge: 1) Support local restaurants (biz development & connection for local goods) 2) Capitalize on commuters 3) Support food access for local residents (few grocery stores)		
1) International food **2) Entrepreneurs** **3) Community**	1) Local, small food store in Arcade that wasn't terrible like Ripka's	1) Sense of community 2) Events 3) Affordability	None - I have a car

DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S TOP ASSETS	PROPOSED FOOD-RELATED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	BEST CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT	DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT'S MAIN CHALLENGES
1) Vegetables **2) Grocery**	1) Better choices 2) of food 3) More store fronts	1) Retail Stores 2) Food 3) The transportation	No retail stores - need more of them
1) Restaurant (culturally based - hispanic) **2) Catered to 147,000 Bridgeports that already live here** **3) Affordable price points**	1) Grocery Store - no local store less than mile 2) Full year farmers market 3) Culturally based restaurants	Downtown Thursdays Could have more cultural events	Lack of produce, restaurants
1) Good relaxing brew pub with big wooden tables, good beer, good food and good fancy cocktails (think Walrus & Carpenter) **2) A good brew pub that builds off of the BPT image (Smokestack)** **3) Fun place to hang with really good food & good beer (think W & C)**	There are so many of us doing good work, we need a place (big wooden tables & beer & really good food) to convene & keep coming up with great social entertainment ideas!	No fresh food; no warm place to hang for a long time I drive to Whole Foods and to Walrus & Carpenter	
Historic city - beautiful gathering spaces	1) Affordable groceries 2) Restaurants with dependable hours/menus 3) Something other than Italian		

RESEARCH SYNTHESIS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section summarizes key research insights that emerged from the background research, interviews, and the in-person event. Implications of these insights on potential strategies and enterprises to support food related commerce and economic development in downtown Bridgeport are described after each insight in bold.

Downtown Bridgeport resident population: The small resident base in downtown Bridgeport is a major limitation to the development of new food ventures. There is an open question as to whether the resident base must grow first to ensure viability of new food commerce efforts or if food commerce must be established downtown to attract residents. Real estate developers engaged throughout the study noted that a number of developers are currently renovating buildings to attract new residents downtown. One interviewee explained that there are currently 100 apartment units downtown, with 200 more coming in the next year, of which 25% will be subsidized for low income residents.

Unique challenges of low-income residents: There are no venues downtown to purchase healthy food (including fruits and vegetables) and every day staples. Downtown residents travel a minimum of 1-2 miles and often more to reach a grocery store. This is particularly challenging for low income residents, who do not have cars and rely on the city's limited public transportation to reach food venues outside downtown. Adding this significant logistical burden to the constraints low income residents face with respect to income and education and awareness about healthy eating makes it extremely difficult for these communities to adopt healthy food habits. Stakeholders vary in the level of importance they believe should be placed on meeting the needs of low income residents and consumers at this stage in downtown development work. However, all interviewees and event attendees recognized that the unique needs of this consumer base should be considered when developing new business ventures.

Importance of nonresidents – commuters, students and neighboring community members: Non-resident employees working in downtown Bridgeport are not currently being effectively engaged, and are not participating in downtown food commerce. Three of the largest office buildings in downtown Bridgeport (People's United Bank, RBS Financial and CT DRS) all have in-house food service options that are more appealing to employees, due to their subsidized prices, convenience and the misperception that Bridgeport is dangerous to venture into. Downtown Bridgeport efforts are not likely being marketed effectively to these employers. Students of both University of Bridgeport and Housatonic Community College can be served by new food ventures in downtown Bridgeport, with many event attendees suggesting that shops should be developed that uniquely serve the growing ethnic populations within the student base.

Many interviewees expressed interest in improving the perception of downtown and establishing strategies that would better attract clientele from neighboring towns in Fairfield County, particularly those that may have lost their downtown areas.

Implications: As suggested by the above three insights, food development efforts in Bridgeport should strategically consider four different customer groups:

- ***Mid-income residents in downtown Bridgeport***
- ***Low / fixed-income residents in downtown Bridgeport***
- ***Commuters into downtown Bridgeport***
- ***Visitors to downtown Bridgeport, who are coming in for events, farmers markets or other Bridgeport attractions***

Each customer group is relatively small, at least currently, so food commerce efforts may have to be designed in a way that appeal to different groups. Each customer group is unique in their motivations, buying habits, preferences, and willingness to pay. Effectively targeting multiple customer bases within one model will require innovation that considers their unique characteristics.

Image and perception: Downtown Bridgeport suffers from the misperception that it is a high crime, dangerous and dirty place, with a low quality food scene. Residents, developers and restaurateurs interviewed all suggested that in reality, Bridgeport has evolved significantly in the past fifteen years, and is now cleaner, safe, and has a modest dining scene of

over 25 restaurants. An important component of developing Bridgeport into a vibrant downtown food system would be improving the commonly held image that Bridgeport is a dangerous place to visit.

Narrative: Bridgeport food systems leaders and residents have strong pride in Bridgeport's industrial roots and "gritty" history. A narrative promoting Bridgeport as a place where "Connecticut meets the Bronx", or "Connecticut reconnects with its historic roots" may be successful. One agricultural producer emphasized the success he has had in branding his products as "Made in Bridgeport." Additionally, many event attendees suggested that Fairfield County and Connecticut residents more broadly have a desire to "see Bridgeport succeed."

Implication: Policy tools, city-led initiatives and private efforts should work collaboratively to develop and promote a unique, vibrant downtown Bridgeport food scene whose baseline narrative builds on the city's rich, industrial heritage. It is particularly important that these branding and marketing efforts be executed in partnership with organizations that can promote the message to the key customer groups – residential building management teams, employers, Fairfield County tourism agencies, and transit authorities.

Farmers markets: There are six farmers markets in Bridgeport, with combined operating days during the summer months from Tuesday through Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. While interviewees suggested that these are successful markets, input from event attendees indicated that there is significant room for improvement in the design and structure of most of these markets. In particular, the farmers markets can be improved to better attract and serve residents, employees, students and visitors – currently, they are effectively serving lower income customers (with high rates of utilization of SNAP double bucks programs). All but one market charges no vendor fees, and are therefore unlikely to be generating revenue for themselves. Despite this, most still have a difficult time attracting vendors, and one producer indicated lack of interest in the downtown farmers market in particular, because it was not busy enough for him to make money.

Implications: There are many low effort strategies to pursue that will improve the relevance and popularity of the downtown Bridgeport farmers market (and all other farmers markets across Bridgeport). In particular, improvement efforts should focus on making these markets more relevant to residents, employees, students and visitors, without making them inaccessible to low income community members. Strong collaboration between the farmers markets may be valuable, as might initiatives that occasionally consolidate these markets into a single venue.

Year-round retail venues: Bridgeport farmers markets can be improved; however, the seasonality and hours of these markets will likely always be limited. Demand for healthy products and every day essentials among downtown residents does not end with the typical summer market months, nor is it limited to market days or operating hours, which are not well suited for employed residents. Many interviewees and event attendees emphasized the need for downtown access to healthy food and every day staples. This type of effort would improve the livability of the area for all downtown residents and may give employees a reason to venture out of the office during the work day. In its report *Bridgeport 2020: A Vision for The Future,* the city of Bridgeport recognized this need and states one of its medium term goals is to "Promote small food stores, a green market and public markets to serve new residents."[22]

Delivery models: A small, but vocal group of event attendees highlighted the need for delivery options of grocery staples and fresh fruits and vegetables, either through a CSA or delivery being offered as a service of more traditional grocery retailers.

Implication: Proposed food commerce improvements should acknowledge the need for a more consistent, year-round retailer for every day groceries and fresh produce. Examples of relevant food commerce ideas include small format green grocers, year-round markets with more accessible hours and egrocery models with flexible delivery schedules.

[22] (Bridgeport 2020: A vision for the future)

Importance of starting at the right scale: The most commonly described unsuccessful downtown Bridgeport food venture was the Ripka's Supermarket. Most stakeholders agreed that the market was too large, did not cater well to downtown residents, neglected low-income customers' needs, and attempted to be too many different things – a grocery, bakery, deli, café, etc. Additionally, many event attendees and interviewees described downtown Bridgeport's restaurants as being outdated, and too large, and therefore lacking in the intimacy and atmosphere that has become common for trendier, high-end restaurants.

Non-traditional formats of food commerce: Event attendees were intrigued by the potential success of nontraditional, transient store formats. This might include food trucks, grocery carts or stands, pop-up restaurants and retail venues, and public markets. Attendees suggested that these venues could be attractive to all customer segments of interest, and would require significantly less startup capital than a traditional storefront.

Implication: Focus on small efforts that require relatively low upfront and ongoing capital investments, and that allow for incremental growth. These are likely to have a higher potential for success and financial viability. Current and potential residents would see these incremental improvements, which would bolster their confidence in living and spending money downtown. As important, these efforts may have more potential to attract customers, as they are perceived as more trendy and innovative.

Importance of finding the right champion: Another initiative that was unsuccessful was the healthy corner store initiative in Bridgeport, which aimed at increasing availability of fresh produce through corner stores by offering operators assistance for infrastructure improvements and access to local produce. The initiative never resulted in any converted corner stores, as no interested operators were identified due to their perception that demand and willingness to pay a premium for healthy and fresh products was limited. These assumptions were reinforced in a study by the Bridgeport Food Policy Council that reported low pricing as the most important determinant for where residents shop. Operators were, therefore, not interested in giving up floor space for these products and making the required investments in infrastructure and food handling expertise. It is important to note that Urbane Development in Newark, NJ (along with organizations nationwide in cities that do not share as many similarities with Bridgeport) appears to have more successfully pursued healthy corner store initiatives, indicating that the strategy itself may have merit, despite execution challenges in Bridgeport.

Implication: This failed initiative suggests the importance of both understanding the motivations and needs of entrepreneurs and operators who will take on the risk and responsibility of any new ventures suggested, and the importance of finding project champions and funders who are committed to DSSD's broad vision and have a relatively long-term view of success and financial returns.

Importance of events: Almost universally, stakeholders engaged in this study felt that events to date had been successful in attracting new individuals to visit downtown Bridgeport, and in helping to change the perceptions that these visitors have of the area. One restaurateur remarked on the positive impact events at Webster Bank Arena has on his restaurants and that even one event per month generated enough clientele to "pay [his restaurant's] rent for the month". He mentioned that a decline in events at the arena over the last two years has drastically lowered his restaurants' clientele, especially among non-residents. Farmers markets are benefiting greatly from events. Interviewees suggested that the downtown market's success to date has been driven in part by the Thursday summer concert, which is backed by the city. Similarly, the city's most successful market, Black Rock, includes monthly events in conjunction with the market.

Implication: Establishing a larger and more diverse set of events, and effectively promoting these events within and outside of downtown Bridgeport can significantly bolster the potential of new food enterprises that are launched in the city.

Small business and entrepreneurship: Nearly all of the food related innovations that are playing a role in economic revitalization of the six comparable cities reviewed focused on the incubation and promotion of food related innovation.

Economic activity was often created by promoting an environment where food entrepreneurs could pursue opportunities they identified, with reduced risk to the entrepreneur.

Independence and local ownership: Stakeholders suggested the importance of promoting entrepreneurship and local ownership. They cautioned against bringing in any national chain stores, and instead encouraged incentivizing local ownership in order to develop a unique, eclectic and vibrant food culture with boutique style restaurants, breweries, coffee shops and roasters.

Specialty retailers and innovative restaurateurs: Universally, stakeholders felt that improving the restaurant scene and attracting unique, specialty food retailers to open doors in Bridgeport would be critical first steps towards catalyzing the revitalization of the neighborhood. Restaurant scene improvements would be driven by improved programming (such as Restaurant Weeks), improving the restaurant experience through technical assistance and financing, and diversifying and expanding the portfolio of food options downtown.

Implication: Strategies that attract, train and support food entrepreneurs and restaurateurs in downtown Bridgeport (such as university partnerships, establishment of incubator kitchens, etc) could have strong potential. These strategies would ideally help minimize the risk that food entrepreneurs face, particularly in a city like Bridgeport with potential demand limitations at least in the short-term, and encourage innovation and creativity in order to foster the development of an authentic, independent and appealing food culture.

Local food: Encouraging the purchasing of local farm products can be an important element in the development of a strong food culture, as exemplified by the revitalization of Providence, Rhode Island's food scene. Local food in Bridgeport appears to be gaining traction, with six established farmers markets in the city, one of which is downtown, and an increase in community gardening and urban agricultural developments. However, restaurants and corner stores seem to be highly price sensitive, and thus hesitant to stock higher priced local products for which they cannot pass on a "local" premium to their customers. This represents a large barrier to establishing wholesale markets for local food.

Regional food supply chain: While agricultural production levels in Fairfield County are fairly low, there is an increasing focus on building local food supply chains across the state of Connecticut and ample production across the state to support new "purchase local" efforts in downtown Bridgeport. Initial steps are already being taken in downtown Bridgeport to better connect producers with specialty food businesses and other buyers – these are a strong foundation from which to build a better connected and better marketed local food supply chain.

Implications: Branding and educational campaigns that promote the merits and value of local food consumption may help spur demand for local among all four identified customer groups, and set the stage for a Bridgeport food scene that is in part driven by local farm products. Additionally, subsidies or other incentives for wholesale buyers and consumers may help absorb some of the perceived risks buyers face in carrying local food. Finally, establishing strategies and enterprises that better connect local producers with Bridgeport consumers and buyers may help reduce the price premium for local, making it an even more viable option.

Infrastructure and assets across the city: Interviewees identified vacant and valuable real estate as well as community assets across downtown, including:

- *Metro North Station:* Could be leveraged to market to attract visitors and commuters to food businesses, and potentially house some food related commerce.
- *Redevelopment of 3-4 parks*, with McLevy Green as one of the key parks, are core assets to be leveraged in attracting visitors and as potential locations for certain food related enterprises. One interviewee mentioned connecting downtown with Seaside Park (where there is "lots of activity during the summer").
- *University of Bridgeport and Housatonic Community College* are central and near downtown, and have students who could be potential customers for food businesses and educational resources that could be leveraged.
- *Webster Bank Arena and Bridgeport Bluefish Stadium* are existing venues that attract visitors who could be potential customers of food businesses.

Human capital: The turnout and energy that leaders and residents across downtown Bridgeport demonstrated for this study are tremendous assets upon which to build food commerce development efforts. It is important to note the generational gap within this set of leaders, a trend that was noted by several event attendees. There is a strong contingent of young, dedicated professionals in downtown Bridgeport who are passionate about building a culture and food scene that addresses their interests and needs. On the other hand, political and economic forces in Bridgeport tend to have a long-standing presence in the city, and may not fully share or understand the desires of this young, energized group.

Implications: These physical and intangible assets should be considered and incorporated into downtown revitalization efforts as appropriate, ensuring that recommendations build on Bridgeport's existing strengths and opportunities. Efforts should be made to engage stakeholders across downtown Bridgeport who represent different perspectives, backgrounds and age groups – to ensure that development efforts are successful.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Dozens of potential food enterprises and development strategies emerged from this research. The core team considered the following questions in identifying the most promising strategies and developing a concrete set of recommendations for the Bridgeport DSSD.

1) How effectively does the strategy meet the primary goal of the project of building a thriving food district in downtown Bridgeport?

2) To what degree does the strategy support the two secondary goals – establishing outlets for fresh fruits and vegetables and attracting young professionals to downtown Bridgeport?

3) How well does the strategy align with the implications that emerged through the study's research and to what extent does it address clear gaps and needs that were identified?

4) What evidence exists, within Bridgeport or nationwide, that supports the hypotheses that this strategy can successfully address DSSD's goals?

5) Does there appear to be baseline enthusiasm for the strategy, and potential partners, leaders or even operators who are interested in helping make the idea a reality?

The core team recommends that the DSSD pursue a variety of interdependent strategies to establish a unique, robust food eco system in downtown Bridgeport.

> Phase I – described here as *Programmatic Recommendations* - focuses on action steps that can be taken immediately, require fairly low investment, and whose goals are primarily to improve food enterprises and initiatives that are already in place downtown. It is essential that DSSD pursue these Phase I steps first, before major investments are made in support of Phase II recommendations. By successfully executing these programmatic recommendations, DSSD will ensure that entrepreneurs and operators who have already invested in downtown Bridgeport are supported and rewarded, while also establishing a strong baseline foundation for the success of any new enterprise ideas that are implemented long-term.
>
> Phase II – described here as *Enterprise Recommendations* – focuses on the development of fairly large scale, tangible enterprises or markets that do not currently exist in downtown Bridgeport. It is recommended that these be executed after several Phase I recommendations have been pursued, establishing a larger overall market size for food ventures in downtown Bridgeport and enabling any new initiatives and enterprises to be more broadly and successfully marketed.

It is important that recommendations are not considered in isolation, as the interrelated nature of these recommendations cannot be overstated. Cities with strong food cultures generally have not just one agency or business focused on food commerce development, but have a myriad of entities focused on various aspects of a food supply chain. Some are committed to the launch and support of food entrepreneurs, others on expanding and strengthening a city's restaurant scene, others on promoting healthy food access to low income populations, and others on agricultural production in and around a city. Ideally, these entities are well networked both informally and formally (through associations, working groups and joint ventures) so opportunities to collaborate are proactively identified and pursued.

PHASE I: PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Develop a strong brand for downtown Bridgeport and execute an innovative marketing campaign

Develop an authentic and cohesive brand and story for downtown Bridgeport that emphasizes the city's industrial roots and historically gritty reputation.

The foundations of a brand are driven by core brand attributes (or characteristics that define and differentiate a brand), and are defined by a logo, tagline, color palette and brand standards.

The team recommends that DSSD hire an experienced firm to execute the brand development for the district, and form a comprehensive marketing campaign that has a goal of promoting the brand to downtown residents, employees, Bridgeport students, and Bridgeport and Fairfield County residents, encouraging these groups to participate in city events, programs and initiatives. A well executed marketing campaign should leverage residential building management companies, transit authorities, and downtown employers.

Additionally, DSSD might consider engaging student groups from University of Bridgeport and Housatonic Community College who can help develop marketing strategies and efforts, ultimately attracting more students as downtown visitors.

Recommendation 2: Programmatic improvements to the Downtown Bridgeport Farmer's Market

The core team strongly recommends that shifts and improvements are made to the downtown farmers market, shifting the market's focus away from serving predominantly subsidized customers, and making it more accessible and appealing to downtown residents, employees and visitors and, in turn, attracting a larger set of vendors.

The market can continue to be owned and operated by DSSD or be managed by another nonprofit or a newly established nonprofit entity. Regardless of the ownership structure, this entity should hire a dedicated full-time market manager who recruits vendors, promotes the market, and manages day-to-day operations (vendor fees, location, managing vendor committees, etc).

Several immediate next steps can include:

- Adjust market hours to better serve professionals. By shifting the market to 3PM-7:30PM on Thursdays (rather than 10AM-2PM), employees and residents can visit and purchase goods after work, and incorporate the market into post work outings and happy hours.
- To make it an appealing post-work venue, the market should add unique entertainment and programming, such as live music, art displays, and cooking demonstrations, and might encourage local restaurants to engage as vendors.
- As traffic picks up at the market, the manager should work to attract more farmers and unique specialty product companies. Finally, suggestions have been made to include a pre-order / pickup and delivery service from the market.

These recommendations should be executed in advance of the 2016 farmer's market season. Before the season begins, the marketing efforts outlined in Recommendation 1 should be pursued, so residents, employees and visitors are fully aware of the new and improved market experience.

As outlined above, the city of Bridgeport is home to six farmers markets that operate collaboratively, but are run independently. Though many of these markets are successfully serving low income, subsidized consumers, most are not generating revenue and fail to attract and retain vendors. If the downtown market achieves success next summer implementing these and other strategies, organizers might consider more dramatic overhauls, including:

- Consolidating all Bridgeport markets into a venture, with satellite markets in other neighborhoods, whose main focus is on serving low income populations.
- Extending the market to a second day per week, and even expanding the season and eventually considering the development of a year-round market.
- Semi-regularly hosting a more unique pop-up wholesale and retail venue to showcase new, emerging food entrepreneurs (see Phase II, Recommendation 2 for more detail).

Recommendation 3: Establish an independent food policy council

The council would bring together food systems leaders at least once per quarter and have a mission to improve collaboration and strengthen networks within the food system in downtown Bridgeport. Specific council goals might include:

- Sharing updates on member's different efforts, enterprises and strategies
- Identifying opportunities for better collaboration between Bridgeport food systems stakeholders
- Minimizing duplication of efforts that might be going on across different stakeholders.

The DSSD could lead the effort of coordinating this council as a working group of independent entities. Once the group is established and is cohesive, the council would elect several individuals to collectively organize and lead sessions.

Note that an alternative approach is that a food policy council be established through municipal legislation approach, operating under the mayor's office, with members serving on appointed terms.

Recommendation 4: Establish a cohesive and strategic restaurant association

With almost 30 restaurants, and more on the way, downtown Bridgeport can benefit from the establishment of a restaurant association whose mission is to cultivate a thriving, innovative and progressive dining culture in the district.

The association should include restaurant owners, chefs, municipal leaders, community leaders, branding and marketing experts, event planners, and educators at nearby culinary schools. A very important role the association can play is to connect restaurants with technical and financial assistance, with the goal of enabling restaurateurs to improve the design and aesthetics of their venues, making interiors and exteriors trendier, potentially smaller, and more in line with the newly developed Bridgeport brand.

Additionally, the restaurant association would organize events such as a Bridgeport restaurant week, a "Taste of Bridgeport" festival, and the execution of charitable giving initiatives that resonate with Bridgeport residents and community members.

Finally, the association might establish a farm-to-table initiative. The initiative would support restaurants in sourcing local farm products, by facilitating connections between farmers and buyers. The association would help restaurateurs market their local sourcing efforts to consumers, and may execute a broader marketing campaign to promote downtown Bridgeport's "source local" efforts.

Typically, restaurant associations are independent nonprofit entities that are funded through a combination of membership fees and corporate sponsorships. The National Restaurant Association is often an important partner for state, local and regional associations. DSSD's role in this may be to support organizing efforts among restaurants in downtown Bridgeport, and help guide them through the process of establishing and operating an association.

Recommendation 5: Execute events and after-work promotions, with strategic partners

The core team recommends that DSSD first forge strong relationships with the area's largest employers and residential building management companies, in order to set the stage for the promotion of events.

Once these relationships are in place, the core team recommends that DSSD organize and execute a series of post (and pre) work events, promotions and organized initiatives.

These can range in effort, and several may, over time, become regular occurrences in the city. Some ideas include:

- Half price discounts on restaurant happy hours and/or dinners
- Dining al fresco with musical acts or movie screenings on Fairfield Ave
- Free breakfast or coffee, outside office buildings, residences and at public transit stops
- Festivals on McLevy Green
- Free train tickets and/or parking for commuters who attend events

PHASE II: ENTERPRISE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following three Phase II recommendations should be pursued after the core group of Phase I initiatives are pursued, and a larger overall market size for food ventures in downtown Bridgeport has been established. These recommendations are in-depth, with high resource investments required upfront. This section describes each of the three recommendations, highlights national case studies and implications of these examples on similar efforts in downtown Bridgeport, proposes a basic business model for how the enterprise could be structured, and describes high level financial benchmarks for each.

- **Recommendation 1: Establish a culinary and restaurant incubator program and shared-use kitchen**
  The incubator would catalyze food innovation in the district, and ideally result in myriad of new restaurants and specialty food businesses in and around downtown Bridgeport. Initial steps in launching this incubator are already in motion, under the leadership of Michelle McCabe and the Council of Churches, as well as Michelle Margo and Cristina Sandolo.

- **Recommendation 2: Establish a pop-up market in downtown Bridgeport**
  The pop-up venue would have a core mission of both attracting residents, employees and visitors into downtown and simultaneously supporting new entrepreneurs and restaurateurs by providing them with a venue to showcase their brand and products.

- **Recommendation 3: Establish a small format, neighborhood green grocer in downtown Bridgeport**
  The green grocer would carry an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, along with other product categories. Its mission would center on both making healthy food accessible to both Bridgeport's low and high income populations, while also recognizing the role it can play in promoting local food production.

CULINARY INCUBATOR AND SHARED USE KITCHEN SPACE

An ever-expanding demand for specialty, local and artisanal food products, coupled with the success of grocery stores such as Whole Foods that have become showcases for small batch specialty food items, has led to an unprecedented emergence of aspiring food entrepreneurs. An April 2013 New York Times article indicated that in that year, venture capital firms funneled about $350 million into food projects, and investment deals in the sector were 37% higher than the previous year.[23]

Despite this booming market, new food businesses continue to be fragile endeavors. 60% of restaurants fail in their first year, and 80% fail within five years – and the estimated failure rate of small food businesses is even higher.[24] This is due to a number of different factors. Food businesses are notoriously low margin for an entrepreneur, with profits being squeezed by buyers, distributors, promotional giveaways and the high cost of goods and labor. Additionally, the complexities of launching and managing a food business can be overwhelming – getting the right license, ensuring a production facility is inspected and appropriately certified, getting the right liability insurance coverage, managing an effective sales and marketing strategy, achieving and maintaining distribution and shelf space, etc. Many who get into the specialty food business are either agricultural producers who are very new to the consumer products space, or individuals with a great recipe, but very little business experience.

Culinary incubators have emerged to help these fledgling food businesses find their footing, and improve their chances of stabilizing and achieving profitability.

Note: The term shared-use kitchen, commercial kitchen, incubator and accelerator are often used interchangeably. For the purposes of this report, a "culinary incubator" provides entrepreneurs with both access to certified production space and business support services.

There are estimated to be over 150 culinary incubators across the country, the vast majority of which have opened their doors after 2008. Depending on their goals, these incubators can serve different purposes and take on very distinct forms.

- *Type of business they are focused on:* Some kitchen incubators (such as Food Fort in Columbus, OH and Kitchen Chicago in Chicago, IL) are heavily focused on serving as a food truck commissary. Some, particularly those in rural communities, are focused on allowing agricultural producers process surplus crops into shelf stable, value added products. Others serve any specialty food business, while others are focused on a specific type of business such as a brewery (such as Forage Kitchen in San Francisco, CA or Bake, Boil and Brew in San Antonio, TX).
- *Production space:* Most incubators have a single kitchen or production area which entrepreneurs rent by the hour or day for their production needs. Some emerging incubators take a different approach of providing more established entrepreneurs with a permanent or semi-permanent space to grow in. These incubators rent out space on a monthly or annual basis to entrepreneurs, and entrepreneurs invest and bring in the equipment for their own needs. ICNC and The Plant in Chicago are both examples of this model.
- *Mission orientation:* Many incubators have emerged with a mission to help low income and/or minority entrepreneurs create more formal and scalable businesses. La Cocina in San Francisco is one of the most famous and longest standing examples of this, and Detroit Eastern Market's incubator is also focused on this type of mission. These incubators stem from the recognition that many food businesses are launched by minorities, often women, as part of the informal economy (such as a women producing ethnic food in her home kitchen and selling it to community members through word of mouth). Incubators can help these entrepreneurs formalize their business, access support services, and grow their ventures to become much more profitable. Additionally, some

[23] (New York Times 2013)
[24] (303 Magazine 2015)

incubators combine their support for food entrepreneurs with a culinary workforce development program. Hot Bread Kitchen (Harlem, NY) is a prime example of this model.

- *Legal entity:* A survey of 40 culinary incubators, conducted by Econsult, suggested that 61% of incubators are for-profit, and 39% are non-profit. Union Kitchen (Washington, DC) is a prime example of a for-profit culinary incubator that provides in-depth business support services, and is confident in its long-term profitability potential, because of the caliber and stability of the tenants they are working with. Baltimore Food Hub, a new incubator still in its planning and development phases, is a nonprofit incubator offering similar services as Union Kitchen and is focused both on supporting Baltimore food entrepreneurs and revitalizing a specific neighborhood in Baltimore. 31% of respondents to Econsult's survey indicated that they are profitable, 53% are breaking even, and 16% are losing money.[25] The legal entity of incubators is generally based on their mission, the level of business support services that are provided to entrepreneurs, and the operator and funders who launched the incubator.

- *Partnerships:* Many incubators, particularly those that are nonprofits, have a strong partnership with a university. The Rutgers Food Innovation Center (Bridgeton, NJ) is a great example of this. Other partnerships might include chambers of commerce, local CDFIs, and local nonprofits seeking to support local and healthy food activity. Occasionally, incubators are connected with or even house their own markets of some sort, allowing them to provide their tenants with a direct venue for sales and product testing. Watertown Farm Market Kitchen (Watertown, WI), Avanti (Denver, CO) and YorKitchen (York, PA) are three examples of this model.

Enterprise Goal

The overarching goals of a Bridgeport Culinary Incubator would be to catalyze culinary innovation in downtown Bridgeport and launch successful food-related businesses throughout downtown and the entire city. To achieve this goal, the culinary incubator would:

- Attract innovative, unique and promising food entrepreneurs and restaurateurs from across Bridgeport, Fairfield County and Connecticut.

- Enable these food entrepreneurs to launch and grow their businesses, by providing access to a shared-use kitchen and ongoing business services.

- Aim to help these businesses become permanent, profitable ventures, ideally setting up their venues within downtown Bridgeport.

Relevant Case Studies

Greensgrow Farms: Greensgrow Farms is an urban farm and nonprofit organization in Philadelphia, PA. Six years ago, Greensgrow entered into a partnership with a neighboring church, St. Michaels, to build a kitchen for canning and creating value-added products made from surplus crops from their urban farm and CSA. Greensgrow renovated St. Michael's kitchen to include a convection oven, industrial mixers, cooling racks, mixing bowls, a griddle, and more, and to get it certified as a commercial kitchen facility. Greensgrow and St. Michael's also worked together to create a "clean room" sterilized space for wholesale canning and pickling. These renovations were funded through Greensgrow's existing revenue streams – their farmstand, CSA and grants secured by the nonprofit. Greensgrow does not intend for the culinary incubator to be a profitable or even financial self-sustaining venture, and funds the operation through private and public grants.

The kitchen now supports Greensgrow itself as an outlet for excess products from its other programs and hosts several specialty food entrepreneurs from across the city. The kitchen provides these entrepreneurs with both certified commercial production space, and support navigating proper food safety requirements.

[25] (Econsult Solutions 2013)

The relationship between Greensgrow and St. Michaels is unique and innovative. Greensgrow invested (unknown figure) in the church's kitchen renovations. In return, St. Michaels charges Greensgrow just $4,500 per year for unlimited access to the kitchen. St. Michaels now works around the schedule of Greensgrow and its food entrepreneur tenants to gain access to their kitchen. Greensgrow charges tenants $30/hour for kitchen rental and $30/month per storage "cage" and typically generates approximately $18,000 across the six months the kitchen is most active.

Implications: This partnership demonstrates one successful approach to the development of culinary incubators housed out of churches. Through an interview with the Greensgrow team, the following strategic and operational lessons were shared.

- Work with the health department from the very beginning on kitchen design.
- Engage high potential tenants early on to ensure the kitchen configuration, storage space and equipment meets their needs.
- Determine the key focus area, goals and success metrics from the very beginning.
- Budget appropriately for cleaning, as this has been Greensgrow's biggest operational challenge.

Note that an interview with Greg Heller, of Act Impact and the Baltimore Food Hub, suggested that church partnerships for incubator kitchens can be very challenging, as they lead to a dispersed and difficult to manage set of facilities. He strongly recommended a single, centralized kitchen facility.

ACEnet: Located in Athens, Ohio, the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) is a nonprofit small business incubator that opened in 1990, with the aim of giving start-up businesses a head start by providing below market rates for spaces and services.

ACEnet's Food Manufacturing & Commercial Kitchen Facility was created soon after the organization's launch. This is a shared-use facility that houses a commercial kitchen, a packing room, a warehouse for dry, cold and frozen storage and a thermal processing room. ACEnet also has a 94,800 square foot warehouse and office space in their Nelsonville Business Center and Food Hub in Nelsonville, OH. ACEnet provides in-depth business services to its food entrepreneurs, and assists its tenants in connecting with sales and distribution opportunities into larger retail markets. They created an umbrella brand, "Food We Love," that qualifying tenants may use to promote their products, and this brand has been promoted by Kroger, especially in their stores that have an "Ohio only" aisle. Additionally, their sister agency, ACEnet Ventures, provides qualified applicants with access to capital, in order to financially support the launch and growth of these business concepts.

The center is rented to clients at an hourly rate, with a 50% preferred rate for tenants who live within ACEnet's primary geographic service area (Appalachian Ohio counties). In 2009, the Athens facility alone hosted 25 artisan businesses, with an additional 150 food-manufacturing businesses using its facility. Director of programming, Leslie Schaller, estimates that its current tenants contribute as much as $8M to the regional economy in annual product sales, as well as 129 full time and 87 part time jobs. Since opening in 1996, the center has supported 260 kitchen tenants that have made products ranging from breads and noodles to salsa and sauces.

The rent and client fees cover the operations of the business incubation center and also contribute to the kitchen facility's annual equipment and maintenance expenses.

Implications: Bridgeport is the "poorest town in the richest county in the country," and has a goal of economically revitalizing its downtown area through a commercial kitchen. Given this goal, that is similar to ACEnet's core mission, it is critical that a Bridgeport incubator provide robust business development services, including financing, sales and distribution support, and a shared production facility, in order to ensure its tenants are set up for success and scale.

Union Kitchen: For-profit culinary incubator with a mission to support and grow food businesses in Washington, DC. Union Kitchen provides entrepreneurs with kitchen space, distribution services, catering opportunities and access to partnered businesses, discounted vendors, marketing and facility maintenance. The two cofounders, Jonas Singer and Cullen Gilchrist, are co-owners of the Blind Dog Cafe and Bakery, and were initially looking for production space to produce their cafe's baked goods. When they found the current site of Union Kitchen, they secured it to meet their own production needs and then launched the kitchen incubator to help cover the rest of the rent.

The kitchen is a 7,300 square foot production facility, across two floors, where roughly 60 food startups currently produce their products. Beyond the actual kitchen incubator component, the facility also offers business spaces, like a conference room and mailboxes for businesses. Union Kitchen also develops relationships with partners to help bring their members' products to market. For example, they work with stores to hold tastings to showcase their members' products, and they even offer distribution services to help transport product from the facility to these partners.

A February 2015 news article quotes one of the Union Kitchen cofounders as saying that the "membership businesses collectively generated $40M in revenue and have created 350 jobs since launch."[26] The facility is currently operating at maximum capacity and Union Kitchen is opening up another kitchen, Union Kitchen Ivy City in Northeast Washington DC. This will be a 15,000 sq ft warehouse to help service larger and more established clients, as well as a grocery/cafe space, storage space and eventually co-packing space.

Implications: A for-profit model can be viable for an incubator, provided tenant interest is strong and there is a robust market to support the long-term success of these tenants. An anchor tenant, or even a founder or operator who will be consistently producing products at the facility, is critical as it will ensure the facility launches with reliable cash flow. Partnerships, especially with potential buyers and distributors, may be critical to maximizing the incubator's value to entrepreneurs and ensuring their long-term success.

Structure and business model

In addition to the feedback gathered throughout this study, additional, more targeted feedback was sought from Michelle McCabe on the Council of Churches' existing initiatives to develop commercial kitchen space leveraging church kitchens. This concept is similar to the Greensgrow case study outlined above, and the research conducted by Partnership for Sacred Places.[27]

The following recommendation emerged from study research, general secondary research, case studies explored, several discussions with Michelle McCabe and input from DSSD, Michelle Margo and Cristina Sandolo.

COMPONENT	RECOMMENDATION
Ownership model	Initial efforts can be owned and operated by the Council of Churches. Long-term, the incubator may continue to be owned by Council of Churches, or be run as a separate nonprofit or for-profit entity.
Core business	Establish a culinary incubator that provides aspiring food entrepreneurs and restaurateurs with both (1) access to a shared-use certified commercial space for production and (2) technical assistance and business services.

[26] (Elevation DC Media 2015)
[27] (Heller/Flaherty/Hartley/Harris 2012)

Facility	The Council of Churches is exploring the concept of building a network of shared-use kitchens in churches across the city of Bridgeport. Feedback from Greensgrow and Greg Heller suggests that it is very important for the program to (1) successfully operate out of a single kitchen before expanding to an entire network, and (2) centralize operations in some way long-term. After one successful church model is established, the best approach to expansion might be to set up additional kitchens at other churches across the city with a centralized entity coordinating matchmaking between entrepreneurs and church kitchens, or maybe to establish a larger scale, single central facility as a shared-use kitchen. Based on this feedback, the Bridgeport culinary incubator should launch using a single church kitchen that has been renovated to meet the needs of its food entrepreneur tenants. This launch would be an efficient method of testing the concept of a culinary incubator, before making larger scale investments in a network of church kitchens and/or a dedicated incubator facility. The Council of Churches is currently undergoing an assessment of the applicable 82 church kitchens within their network to identify which church(es) may be positioned well for a shared use kitchen. Technical assistance can be provided within that same church facility, or at other spaces across the city such as local restaurants that are willing to host sessions and the B:Hive, a collaborative coworking space.
Tenants	Current or aspiring restaurateurs and food entrepreneurs that have found initial, small scale success with a product concept are prime tenants. These entrepreneurs should have a solid, initially tested product concept, initial sales (if that is feasible), a baseline business plan and be led by entrepreneurs who can demonstrate strong potential for success. These tenants should also be committed to downtown Bridgeport's revitalization efforts, and be eager to engage in a broader food community across downtown and the entire city. The incubator should accept tenant applications and conduct interviews to assess these characteristics. 59% of surveyed incubators nationwide require a tenant application. Tenants will be required to have appropriate local and state licenses in place, have their own product liability insurance (naming the kitchen as a covered entity under their plan), and ensure that all production staff have successfully completed ServSafe training. Additionally, the incubator could host workshops or business development counseling for individuals whose business concepts are still in formation. This service would help continue to build a pool of tenants, but would be dependent upon securing a fiscal sponsor for this service.
Equipment and production accommodated	The production facility would likely be one station where tenants would prep, cook, and package their products. While approximately one-third of incubators nationwide have some separate space for prepping and a separate area for packaging, operating out of a church kitchen will make this type of setup challenging. The facility will be designed to accommodate fairly standard production processes, such as baking, prep and cooking for food trucks, prepared meal production, soup production, and canning. Equipment that the kitchen would need includes: ovens, stove top / ranges (including one or two large ranges to accommodate very large pots as well as a griddle area), tilt skillets, fryers, kettles, standing mixers, mid-scale food processors and microwaves. Additionally, the kitchen should have dry storage and refrigerated storage space, and might consider freezer space as well.

	The kitchen would not initially invest in equipment designed for highly specialized processes (such as brewing or distilling, or meat processing). The kitchen also would not be USDA certified, which will prevent it from serving entrepreneurs who are producing meat products for wholesale buyers. Food trucks and restaurateurs who are producing meat-based products for direct to consumer sales could produce through this facility. It's imperative that the initial construction, or retrofit, of the kitchen meet the needs of a group of interested initial tenants, but not become too specialized that the kitchen will no longer be appropriate for future, unidentified tenants.
Technical assistance services	The program would offer structured support to its entrepreneurs on key food business concepts, such as product or menu development, staffing and hiring, branding and marketing, fundraising, storefront design, and operations management. Additionally, the incubator would provide entrepreneurs with direct sales support, connecting them with local buyers, as well as potential suppliers or distributors who can provide business services at reasonable costs. If staff and/or funding support is available, the program could even host a market or dinner that features all of the tenants products. If positioned well, this could even serve as a fundraiser for the kitchen.
Revenue stream(s)	• The incubator's primary source of earned income will be through hourly kitchen rental fees, which should be set at $22-32 per hour. This is based on Ecoconsult's nationwide study, as well as the assumption (see below) that this entity be structured as a nonprofit, with a mission to support entrepreneurs as its primary focus. • The incubator will also earn revenue through monthly storage rental fees. These are generally offered for both cold and dry storage, and should be set at $30/cage/month. • Finally, the incubator will generate revenue through public and private grants and subsidies, to help cover the cost of programs and ongoing kitchen operating and maintenance costs.
Entity type	The incubator should be established as a nonprofit entity. Approximately 40% of surveyed incubators are structured as nonprofit entities (the rest are for-profit models).[28] However, many existing culinary incubators, including for-profit entities, are not generating healthy profits and are either losing money or just breaking even annually. Given the overarching objective this incubator would have of catalyzing a thriving food scene in downtown Bridgeport by launching successful food entrepreneurs and restaurants, it is most strategic to structure it as a nonprofit, allowing it to more easily access grants and establish university and nonprofit partnerships, in order to successfully serve its purpose.
Partners	• Michelle McCabe, Hunger Outreach Coordinator for the Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc. • Max Perize, Senior Economic Development Specialist for Economic Development for Bridgeport • Kristin duBay Horton, Director of Health and Social Services for Bridgeport, CT Health and Social Services Department • Erin McDonough, Special Projects Coordinator for Bridgeport, CT Chief Administrative Office • CTech IncUBator at University of Bridgeport (similar model, albeit a different industry)

[28] (Econsult Solutions 2013)

Financial assessment

Based on comparable entities, the following are estimated financial benchmarks for this enterprise. These are initial estimates only, and are driven by New Venture Advisors. Actuals will be based on the business model developed, the physical facility identified, financial incentives leveraged and entity type established.

COMPONENT	INITIAL ESTIMATES
Initial funding needed	**It is assumed that the Bridgeport culinary incubator would operate out of a church. With this assumption, estimated costs include:** • $5,000 - $50,000 for facility renovations (including HVAC, plumbing etc) • $50,000 - $100,000 for kitchen equipment, depending on existing equipment already in the facility that can be utilized by the incubator and the equipment needed. **If the incubator were to establish a single, standalone facility, initial costs would include:** • $50 - $200 per square foot for facility renovations, depending on the previous use case of the facility. An old restaurant or food production facility would be on the lower end while a facility requiring major renovations to set up a ventilation hood, plumbing and a sprinkler system would be at the high end. • $50,000 - $100,000 for kitchen equipment, depending on existing equipment already in the facility that can be utilized by the incubator and the equipment needed.
Revenue structure	• The incubator's primary source of earned income will be through hourly kitchen rental fees, which should be set at $22-32 per hour. • The incubator will also earn revenue through monthly storage rental fees. These are generally offered for both cold and dry storage, in quarter or half pallet increments, and should be set at $30/cage/month. • Finally, the incubator will generate revenue through public and private grants and subsidies, to help cover the cost of programs and ongoing kitchen operating and maintenance costs.
Revenue generated	• A culinary incubator in Bridgeport, operating out of a single facility can likely serve 5-15 tenants, depending on the seasonality of tenants' production and the regularity with which they would need the kitchen space. • Many incubators are active only for ~6 months of the year, if they predominantly serve agricultural producers and businesses that rely on local farm products. Given that the Bridgeport incubator would serve a variety of businesses, including restaurants and year-round specialty food producers, it is assumed that the incubator would be most active for the prime six months of harvest season, but would continue to have strong utilization in the off season. • The incubators' revenue can vary drastically based on the number of stations, how often the tenants can access the kitchen (versus the church), how successfully it can attract tenants, etc. assuming: ▸ the incubator sees 40 hours of kitchen rental hours per week during the peak 6 months, and 20 hours of kitchen rental hours per week during the off season 6 months, ▸ the incubator charges $25.00/hour, and ▸ the incubator successfully rents out 20 cages of storage space at $30/month all year long Total revenue would be estimated at $46,000.
Cost structure and profitability	• Key operational costs for this incubator include: ▸ Staff members, including one staff person to manage the kitchen, food safety certifications, church relationship, etc., and one staff person to find and attract tenants and oversee all aspects of technical assistance services ▸ Occupancy costs, including any payments the incubator makes to the church for its kitchen space, utilities (including heat, electricity, trash removal, snow removal, etc) and facilities maintenance ▸ Equipment maintenance and replacement as needed ▸ Weekly and monthly facility cleanings ▸ Technology and website development / maintenance (if applicable) ▸ Licenses, inspections and liability insurance • These costs are likely to range from $40,000 to $150,000. The incubator may therefore breakeven (or make a small amount of income in a given year), or require up to $100,000 in grant funding to maintain its operations.

Key financial and operational metrics to track	• Number of tenants • Longevity and success of tenants; with "success" being defined by the programming staff and tenants prior to incubator launch • Kitchen utilization rate • Percent of tenants who set up operations long-term in downtown Bridgeport • Fixed costs

POP-UP RETAIL VENUE

A pop-up is a shop, a restaurant, a collection of shops, or an event that opens quickly in a temporary location and is intended to operate for a short period of time.[29] Benefits of a pop-up shop include immediate sales, brand awareness, customer education and market research.[30] The Lionesque Group estimates that the average pop-up that they work with sees a 35% increase in sales from doors open to 6 months after doors close. Additionally, 50% off these pop-ups see an average increase of 30% on social media engagement over the lifespan of their pop-up shop.
There is no standard definition for how a pop-up can and should be structured and executed. Their common thread is that they are becoming far more innovative, and are increasingly being utilized as tools for startup businesses with moderate to low marketing budgets to make a splash and get their product to market. Additionally, they are becoming a tool for entities ranging from corporations to municipalities to break through marketing clutter, and attract new customers or visitors who might otherwise not be interested. Pop-ups have also become a tool for owners of vacant buildings to use to entice new tenants to consider leasing space. One vacant building in Boston became the home to pop-up retail events during the holiday season that were hosted by Pop-up Republic, and this building eventually became the permanent home for these same tenants.

Some pop-up retail characteristics to consider include:

- ***Format:*** Some pop-up retail events are organized and hosted by a single entity – a restaurant, an online retailer looking for a face-to-face sales opportunity with their consumers, or even a massive company looking to make a splash. For example, eBay, Target and Samsung are just three large corporations that have leveraged the pop-up concept successfully for their marketing and publicity. Other pop-ups are organized by public planning groups, tourism organizations, real estate developers, economic development groups, trade associations, nonprofits and even just organized community members. These pop-ups bring together a myriad of different vendors, and aim to help these vendors promote their product and brand, bring buzz to a specific space or neighborhood or spur broader economic development.

- ***Facility:*** Pop-ups can be housed in vacant buildings, in occupied buildings, in open spaces, in parking lots, etc. Technically, farmers markets, farm stands, and product fairs and events should be categorized as pop-ups, so this is not a new concept. Pop-ups that occur in vacant buildings or open spaces may require very little investment in physical infrastructure, or a large temporary or permanent infrastructure investment (including tents, stands, simple storefronts, making water or electricity accessible to an area, bringing toilets in, etc).

- ***Permanence and consistency:*** Some pop-up retail events are truly single time events, others happen at consistent days/times each week or month (such a flea market or farmers market), others happen periodically, but not according to a specific schedule and finally others are semi-permanent (i.e. all day for a certain period of time).

[29] (PopUp Republic 2015)
[30] (Melissa Gonzalez "The Pop-Up Paradigm" 2014)

- ***Vendors engaged:*** Vendors range from food trucks to restaurateurs to farmers to specialty food producers to distillers or microbrewers. Pop-ups might be exclusively focused on a single type of vendor (such as Avanti in Denver) while others are much broader in terms of the vendors they invite or engage (such as Bridgeton in NJ).

- ***Customers engaged:*** The majority of pop-ups are focused on serving end consumers. However, the same concept can be used to market to and attract small scale wholesale buyers as well, including cafes, restaurants, specialty stores and progressive institutional buyers.

Enterprise Goal

A pop-up retail effort in downtown Bridgeport should focus on (1) supporting food entrepreneurs and restaurateurs participating in the Bridgeport culinary incubator described in the above section, by making their brands better known and connecting them with potential buyers and distributors, and (2) serving as a splashy and appealing experience for downtown Bridgeport residents, employees working downtown, and visitors from across Bridgeport and Fairfield County.

Because of this dual purpose, the pop-up retail effort should be organized in a way that attracts both wholesale buyers (such as specialty grocers, restaurants and cafes, and local institutions) and end consumers.

Relevant Case Studies

Because no two pop-up efforts are structured exactly the same way, the following case studies highlight very distinct pop-up retail models that serve as strong examples for Bridgeport's DSSD to learn from.

Bridgeton Culinary District: Bridgeton, NJ is a historic town in South Jersey located about 1 mile away from the Rutgers Food Innovation Center (a leading culinary incubator associated with Rutgers University). As part of their Main Street renovation plans, they are building a culinary district, centered on celebrating the area's rich food and agricultural history. The city has created a food-business zone in the North Park to support this culinary district, dedicating 12 acres of previously zoned industrial land for food-related or agri-businesses that seek the benefits of co-location with Rutgers Food Innovation Center (eligible for the 5-year tax abatement). The South Park will house small to mid-size companies which require four acres or less. Both business park locations are part of the Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) and the Federal Empowerment Zone incentive programs. Additionally, the culinary district will have green space and indoor venues to host pop-up events like the annual crabfest and a Taste of Bridgeton event. While the town is still in planning and initial execution mode, there is a lot of buzz around their efforts and cities can learn from their initiatives over time.

Smorgasburg: Open Saturdays during the summer in two locations in Brooklyn, the pop-up venue operates like a flea market, but for food. Packaged and prepared foods, beverages, and specialty items are available from over 75 vendors and over 25 food trucks are typically present. The New York Times has referred to Smorgasburg as "The Woodstock of Eating." Smorgasburg also oversees a pop-up beer garden at the Seaport District in NYC.

Avanti: A combination restaurant incubator, culinary think tank and permanent food festival for consumers. This venue opened in July of 2015, and has multiple test kitchens where local chefs can test out their newest concepts (including entire restaurant concepts, as well as new dishes and twists on existing cuisines) on the general public before taking their restaurant, project or menu to full scale. Avanti itself is a permanent venue, though the tenants are cycled through. In its first two months, Avanti has seen a steady flow of high traffic, and is generating constant buzz. The long-term success is yet to be seen.

Implications: Little data is available to evaluate the success of these pop-up retail efforts, in part because the entities that run them are often informal, private or brand new and therefore not in a position to share financial information. Additionally, the goals of these venues vary drastically. Some exist to make a profit, while others are focused on the creation or strengthening of a food culture in a neighborhood, or on supporting the launch and growth of local entrepreneurs. Some broad takeaways are (1) the importance of innovation and creativity in structuring the pop-up venues, ensuring that the attendee experience is unique and memorable; (2) the role that social media, PR and creative marketing plays in ensuring a large turnout for these events, and (3) ensuring that vendors are on board with and excited about the venue's core mission and purpose.

Structure and business model

There are no clear, direct comparables to the envisioned Bridgeport pop-up retail venue concept. Based on feedback received from interviewees, in-person event attendees, and best practices gleaned from national case studies, the team recommends the following model for Bridgeport's pop-up venue.

COMPONENT	RECOMMENDATION
Ownership model	The pop-up venue may be best owned and operated by either the entity that eventually runs the downtown farmers market or the entity that runs the culinary incubator.
Core business	In partnership with developers and pop-up retail experts such as "The Pop-Up Republic" in Boston or "Handmade Events" in Brooklyn, the owner / operator would organize a monthly pop-up venue, held year-round, focused on bringing locally produced food products to both end consumers and wholesale buyers. During its first 1-2 hours, each pop-up would be open only to wholesale buyers as a "vendor fair"; after which it would be opened to the public more broadly. In addition to food and beverage vendors, the pop-up venue may also have live music, games and competitions, culinary demonstrations, art displays, and/or other components that are appealing and generate buzz for downtown Bridgeport. Depending on popularity, the pop-up might increase its frequency over time, become a weekend or weeklong event each summer, and/or may consider decreasing its frequency during off-season months.
Vendors	Highest priority should be given to entrepreneurs and restaurateurs participating in the Bridgeport culinary incubator (described in the above section), as these pop-ups would be a venue for tenants to get their brand out, to both end consumers and wholesale buyers. Restaurateurs in the culinary incubator may have stands or a mini-restaurant experience established to introduce consumers to their concept. Note that restaurants are less likely to be involved during the wholesale component of these pop-ups, as they are far more focused on building a strong brand and reputation with end consumers. Additionally, other food entrepreneurs, retailers, cafes and restaurants in and around downtown Bridgeport should also be invited as vendors. Popular coffee roasters, distilleries, breweries and specialty product manufacturers across Fairfield County will be invited, and select, popular farms would ideally be engaged during the summer months.

Customers served	Wholesale buyers: This includes mainstream and specialty grocers and co-ops, cafes, restaurants, institutions and distributors in Bridgeport and across Fairfield County. Generating a strong buzz among wholesale buyers is critical to the success of the pop-up, and to building this initiative as one that truly supports the launch and growth of local food entrepreneurs. End consumers: The pop-up should be marketed very broadly, and should appeal to downtown residents, residents of other Bridgeport neighborhoods, employees working downtown, and Fairfield County residents – making it a gathering place for people who are already deeply invested in the neighborhoods alongside those who have not visited in quite some time.
Location	Popups could be held in outdoor spaces, including McLevy Green and Baldwin Plaza, as well as indoor spaces such as the Arcade Mall. Large art galleries and other empty loft spaces are also potential options. There are benefits to keeping the location consistent, but also an upside in housing pop-ups at new places each month, particularly early on when the pop-ups are striving to generate relevance, buzz and excitement.
Revenue stream(s)	• Vendors will be charged a small fee to the pop-up's organizing agency • Over time, wholesale buyers might also be charged a nominal fee for the opportunity to preview and engage directly with potential vendors. Early on, as a pop-up is seeking to become well known, attract wholesale buyers and bring in larger crowds, charging wholesalers for admissions is counterproductive. • It is important to note that pop-up vendors and the organizers of pop-up initiatives are often not prioritizing immediate profitability. Organizers of pop-up initiatives might be seeking longer-term gains, such as the sale or lease of a building, attracting new tenants to local properties, or spurring economic development or local tourism. Vendors are often looking to break even or make a modest profit from these events, but to simultaneously build their customer list, establish a stronger brand and following, test new products and concepts, and learn what other companies in their space are focused on.
Entity type	• The pop-up should be organized by an existing or newly established 501(c)3, and would receive sponsorships from corporations and institutions in the area for funding. This is a common format for pop-ups that are organized in support of neighborhood revitalization and supporting small local businesses. Delaware River Waterfront, a Philadelphia based 501(c)3 is a great example. They organize the RiverRink Summerfest, a pop-up entertainment venue that runs all summer long, which is sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield and a number of other local companies.
Partners	• Local real estate development groups • Branding agencies (such as The Bananaland) • Architecture firms (such as Fletcher Thompson) • Top local employers • Universities and hospitals

Financial assessment

Based on comparable entities, the following are estimated financial benchmarks for this enterprise. These are initial estimates only, and are driven by New Venture Advisors. Actuals will be based on the business model developed, the physical facility identified, financial incentives leveraged and entity type established.

COMPONENT	INITIAL ESTIMATES
Cost structure	The cost of running the first pop-up can vary drastically, based in large part on the space utilized (and whether or not it is donated or paid for), the number of vendors engaged, and the infrastructure required. For example, if it is a series of vendors at tables and tents this would be at the low end of the cost range. If more complex and sophisticated infrastructure is needed, such as a large tent or a stage for live music, then it would be at the higher end of the cost range. Estimated costs range from $10,000 - $150,000. Key cost components include: • Venue: This could be full price, a nominal fee or could be free. • Basic infrastructure: Including toilets, water, electricity, weather protection, fencing, etc. • Advanced infrastructure: Including any big setup for activities or entertainment, more advanced weather protection, technology such as interactive screens, etc. • Tents and tables for vendors • Branding and marketing: An agency may be engaged to create the theme for the pop-up and help promote it. This can be done fairly inexpensively, and should effectively utilize social media. • Staff: These events often leverage volunteers, though some paid staff will be required for planning, setup, execution and cleanup.
Revenue structure	The pop-up itself can make money through several revenue streams: • Vendor fees, which can range from nominal ($50-$100) to higher end ($500-$2000, similar to a trade show). This pop-up will likely charge vendors a nominal fee, given its focus on working with startups, and the mission of this venue to help promote and support these ventures. • Food and drinks sales, including beer and wine. These can be sold by the organizing entity (with the revenue flowing to this entity) and/or by restaurants and cafes that are set up as vendors. • Advertising opportunities for employers, retailers and service providers in the area. • Admission fees. These are not recommended for either consumers or wholesalers in the first year or so of executing a Bridgeport pop-up food event. However; over time, this revenue stream might be worth considering, if interest and demand – particularly among wholesalers – is sufficient.
Profitability	The pop-up's aim is not to be a profitable venture, but to ensure it generates enough funds through fees, sales and sponsorships to cover its costs. The organizing entity of the pop-up may generate ~$3,000-$15,000 in revenue, from vendor fees and centralized food and beverage sales. Funding from sponsors and advertisers will be needed to cover the rest of the budget.
Key financial and operational metrics to track	• Number of vendors • Number of wholesale buyers in attendance • Number of consumers in attendance, and breakdown of attendee types (residents, visitors, etc) • Social media buzz and followers for the pop-up • Average vendor sales, sign ups and new followers • Qualitative input from attendees on their experience, likelihood to return and impressions of downtown Bridgeport

GREEN GROCER

Officially, the term "greengrocery" is mainly used in Europe and Australia, and refers to retailers of plant-based products (fruit and vegetables). They were once commonplace, when storefronts specialized in different products – meats, spices, fruits and vegetables, etc. The rise of the large format grocery store has led to a decline in the need and desire for green grocers in the US; however, recent consumer attention to local, farm fresh and health as well as urbanization trends that have brought young people back to cities and far from massive food retailers has led to a rebirth of the green grocer.

While there is no strict definition of a green grocer in the US, for the purposes of this report, we use the term to refer to a small format store, under 7,500 square feet in size (compared to an average grocery store size of 45,000 square feet) that has a limited, but very high quality selection of every day and specialty products, and a large focus on providing high quality, fresh produce and other farm products.[31] The trend towards smaller format, green grocers is widespread, being pursued by new grocery operators, regional supermarkets and national chains alike. Supermarket Guru Phil Lembert suggests that reduction in size and increase in quality will be one of the top five biggest trends in the grocery industry in the coming five years.[32]

There are several important considerations when bringing a green grocer into a neighborhood:

- ***Chain or independent:*** Trader Joes, Aldi, Whole Foods, Hy-Vee and Hannaford are all regional or national grocery chains that have recently invested in the development of a new, smaller format store, appropriate for urban settings. The benefits that these chains bring is reduced operating costs through their purchasing power and centralized business services and marketing efforts. Independent grocers, on the other hand, can often more successfully bring in a unique experience that feels authentic and specific to a community, and can become a business that residents take great pride in supporting.
- ***Ownership model and legal entity:*** These stores can be set up as for-profits, cooperatives, and even nonprofits – Trader Joe's former president recently opened the Daily Table outside of Boston, a nonprofit grocer that largely sells surplus items. The ownership model and legal entity will drive the store's fundraising efforts and financial goals, and could differentiate it from other grocery stores that are accessible via car from downtown Bridgeport.
- ***Size:*** Stores can range from tiny (Stockbox Grocers in Seattle originally launched as a store run out of an old shipping container and Fresh Moves is a mobile grocery store in Chicago housed on a former CTA bus) to up to 7,500 square feet. The common thread is the significantly smaller format than large grocery stores that have become commonplace across the country.
- ***Product set:*** Some of these stores sell mainly produce, others sell produce and a variety of staples, others focus predominantly on specialty goods and prepared foods, while others stock a decent selection of non-food necessities such as toilet paper and toothpaste. The product variety and selection set is dictated by the store's location and clientele, and what products will motivate them to return on a regular basis.
- ***Foodservice:*** Some stores have a deli or hot goods section, while others have prepared, ready-to-heat meals available, and others do not have any prepared foods for customers.

[31] (Money Magazine 2014)
[32] (the salt 2015)

Enterprise Goal

Numerous, sometimes consistent and sometimes diverging opinions have been shared as to why Ripkas was not a successful effort. Given the recent development and failure of this large format supermarket in downtown Bridgeport, it is critical that any new grocery development effort is effectively meeting the needs of consumers, efficiently developed and operated, and set up to be a financially sustaining venture.

Recognizing that the resident population in downtown Bridgeport is limited, a green grocer in the area should:

- Appeal to residents and employees, by providing both household staples and items that might be needed in the middle of the day (including lunch and snacks), and by offering very unique and/or high quality products that draw in consumers who have other more standard grocery options at home.
- Maintain relatively low occupancy and operating costs, by keeping the size as small as possible, staffing efficiently, incorporating energy efficiency strategies throughout, and leveraging tax credits and subsidies where feasible.
- Be differentiated, offering unique, profitable and cost efficient services such as catering, meals and coffee to go, and grocery delivery.
- Create a loyal and connected base of consumers, through marketing, events and fundraising.

Relevant Case Studies

Green Zebra Grocery: Healthy and convenient neighborhood store on a mission to increase access to delicious, high-quality food by making it easy and fun for all eaters to find healthy, delicious food. Located in North Portland, Oregon, this for-profit venture used crowdsourced funds to open its store and has just closed a $2.5 million round through CircleUp to fund their second location in the Southeast section of the city.[33] The North Portland store is 5,600 sq ft and the new store will be 6,400 sq ft. The stores are focused on opening in economically diverse neighborhoods where good food options don't currently exist and that give them access to a diverse range of consumers. The North Portland store reported $4.1M in sales in 2014 and is on track for $5M this year. They have successfully partnered with Instacart, which has helped increase their sales 10%. Founder, Lisa Sedlar is interested in expanding the concept to West Coast markets where it can find space in walkable neighborhoods.[34]

Implications: Crowdfunding may be an excellent way to support fundraising efforts, as it not only generates startup financing, but also serves as both an indicator of interest and a strategy to market the store and establish loyalty among potential customers. Green Zebra's location in diverse neighborhoods that have a mix of low and high income clientele is a promising parallel for downtown Bridgeport.

Green Grocer: A grocery, café and juice bar focused on locally grown, GMO-free and organic items in Dallas' Lower Greenville neighborhood opened in 2012 and has hit some recent challenges. Co-owner Cassie Green made a public plea to existing customers and community members, asking them to stop in more often and to increase their spending by 30% to help keep the store in business. After an initial two years of success and growth, but still not achieving profitability, Green Grocer increased their staff, added indoor seating, and expanded their selection. At the same time, customer spending stagnated and even declined. Interviews with

[33] (CSP Daily News 2015)
[34] (Ibid (Fund 2011))

customers suggested that they got busy, and often skipped their Green Grocer stop, opting for single stop grocery shopping instead. Cassie Green also indicated that her marketing efforts may have lagged even as investments in the store were increased. The store sources from 30-50 local producers, and has established a passionate customer base. Recent interviews suggest that owners and customers are confident in the store's ability to weather the recent setbacks and regain profitability in the coming years.

Implications: Investing in marketing and community engagement efforts is critical; high quality food and a stellar customer experience alone is not enough. Investing in additional infrastructure and services, as Green Grocer did several years ago, may have been better preceded by a robust investment in branding, marketing and customer engagement. Green Grocer's desire to be a fairly full service grocery store, a café and a juice bar may be making it too operationally expensive to easily achieve profitability.

Policy and funding initiatives

Across the country there are municipal initiatives to promote the development of healthy, small format grocery stores. New York City's Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) program is open to grocery store operators who are renovating their retail space or developers seeking to construct or renovate retail space that will be leased by a full-line grocery store operator. These are incentives, and not direct funding opportunities for business. Incentives might include zoning benefits (additional development rights, reduction in required parking, larger stores in light manufacturing districts), financial incentives (real estate tax reductions, sales tax exemption, mortgage recording tax deferral) as well as other incentives like being eligible for the NY Healthy Food and Healthy Communities Fund (pre-development grants and loans, acquisition loans, equipment financing and construction and permanent loans) and Energy Efficiency Benefits. NYC created a Supermarket Need Index (SNI) to determine the areas in the city with the highest levels of diet-related diseases and largest populations with limited opportunities to purchase fresh foods. Showing the need for a supermarket is definitely the first step in convincing legislators to try and push through a similar policy.

Detroit's Green Grocer Project has helped create competitive sustainable grocery offerings in Detroit while improving fresh food offerings for residents. The program includes: (1) Grocer Clearinghouse for existing store operators and those operators interested in making new investments in Detroit; (2) TA to assist participating grocers in addressing operational and store development needs that they encounter on a daily basis, in order to ensure the highest quality provision of fresh foods at the store; (3) loan funding for store improvements ($500,000 in CDBG-R funds for a revolving loan fund) and staff that will assist grocers in assessing financing sources; and (4) a Facade Improvement Program with 50/50 matching grants up to $50,000.

Finally, the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative (CED-HFFI) supports projects that increase access to healthy, affordable food in communities that currently lack these options. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Community Services (OCS) will award up to $9.5M in discretionary grant funds to CDCs for community-based efforts to improve the economic and physical health of people in areas designated as food deserts. The CED-HFFI program will provide technical and financial assistance for healthy food ventures, including green grocers, that are designed to: (1) improve access to, and increase the purchase and consumption of healthy, affordable foods; and (2) address the economic needs of low-income individuals and families through the creation of employment and business opportunities in low-income communities. This funding can support non-construction or construction projects.

Bridgeport would be well served to pursue the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative, and might consider developing municipal policies that encourage and financially support the development of healthy, green grocers across the entire city.

Structure and business model

Many interviewees and in-person event attendees were extremely supportive of any efforts to establish a small format, green grocer that does not run into the same challenges that Ripka's faced. The following initial recommendations are based on both feedback received throughout the study, and lessons learned from evaluating other green grocer initiatives nationwide.

COMPONENT	RECOMMENDATION
Owner / operator	Grocery should be privately owned and operated, distinct from any existing organization in downtown Bridgeport. Likely, this would be an independent owner and operator, though a national chain such as Whole Foods or Trader Joe's may be explored. No potential operator has yet emerged from this research.
Core business	Establish a small format, green grocer that provides high quality produce, household staples, and basic food service items, catering to residents, employees and visitors who are in the city for specific events or outings. Feedback from interviewees suggests a preference for an independently owned green grocery; however, discussions with Trader Joe's and Whole Foods should be conducted to understand the viability of bringing in one of their new small format stores into downtown.
Supporting initiatives	Work with policy makers to establish necessary initiatives in Bridgeport that set a downtown green grocer (and other healthy grocery store efforts across the city) up for success.
Product set	Extensive market research should be conducted to establish the right product set. Initial feedback suggests that the following are important: • A large, prominent produce section, featuring local and regional items when appropriate • High quality prepared meal items for all meals • A small and basic selection of household staples and pantry items • Curated selection of specialty goods, with stories and marketing around them • Partnership with the culinary incubator, with a retail area dedicated to showcasing products from these entrepreneurs
Revenue stream(s)	• Product sales will be the largest revenue stream • Prepared meal sales and coffee will be an important and higher margin revenue • Over time, the grocer may invest in licenses to sell locally produced liquor and microbrews • Finally, the grocery store should access grant funding and tax credits to help offset costs where possible
Entity type	A preference for a cooperative versus a for-profit or nonprofit model was not gleaned from research to date. However, co-ops thrive in communities where the majority of customers would be local residents. Given the likelihood that a downtown Bridgeport grocer would have to rely heavily on sales from nonresidents, a co-op model may face challenges.

Financial assessment

Based on comparable entities, the following are estimated financial benchmarks for this enterprise. These are initial estimates only, and are driven by comparable examples and research conducted by New Venture Advisors. Additionally, the CDFI Fund published a report on grocery stores in 2011, whose data was utilized to validate input gathered from comparables.[35] Actuals will be based on the business model developed, the physical facility identified, financial incentives leveraged and entity type established.

COMPONENT	INITIAL ESTIMATES
Initial funding needed	Small format grocery stores may require $100-$200 per square foot in renovations and upfitting costs. The range is driven by the existing condition of the building, services and products that will be offered and implications for the need for various coolers, kitchen equipment and serving equipment. Additional startup costs might range from $500,000-$2M and will include: • Product inventory • Outdoor and indoor signage • Marketing and branding • Retail and grocery design consultants • Point of sale equipment • Shopping carts and baskets
Revenue generated	• Small format grocery stores might generate $6-10 per square foot per week.[36] The range is driven by the store's overarching pricing strategy, the diversity of products offered (alcohol and prepared meals may increase the revenue per square foot) and the hours of operation. • Another metric often used to forecast revenue is sales per employee. Smaller format stores generate $100,000-$140,000 per employee.[37]
Profitability	• Gross margins hover around 20-25% for grocery stores.[38] Grocery stores tend to make the lowest margins on produce items (except for cut, ready to eat items); but generate higher margins on lower volume specialty items. A green grocer's unique mix of focusing on large volumes of high quality produce and offering unique specialty goods (and often, prepared meals) which tend to secure a high gross margin, lead most to achieve margins that are close to industry standards. • Traditionally, grocery stores generate a 1-2% net profit margin. Small format grocery stores that often do not benefit from economies of scale (within their store, and because they are not part of a regional or national chain) must be diligent to achieve these same margins. For example, while large chains offer deep discounts on products throughout their store to attract customers and increase sales, small format stores generally avoid these strategies.
Key metrics	• Revenue per square foot, revenue per employee • Average customer order size • Number of customer visits per month • Number of SKUs • Gross and net margins

[35] (CDFI Fund 2011)
[36] (CDFI Fund 2011)
[37] (Walter Johnson)
[38] (CSI Market 2015)

WORKS CITED

303 Magazine. "Culinary Culture: In-Depth Look at Avanti, Denver's Restaurant Incubator - Opening July 13." *303 Magazine*, June 25, 2015.

Bridgeport 2020: A vision for the future. "Bridgeport 2020: A vision for the future." 102.

Bridgeport Public Library. 2015.

—. "Understanding Grocery Industry for 20 fund." *CDFI Fund.* 2011. http://www.cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/resources/Understanding%20Grocery%Industry_for%20fund_102411.pdf.

CSP Daily News. "Small-Format Grocery a-Go-Go." *CSPnet.com*, 6 12, 2015.

Econsult Solutions, Inc. *U.S. Kitchen Incubators: An Industry Snapshot.* Industry, Philadelphia, PA: Econsult Solutions, Inc., 2013.

Elevation DC Media. *Behind the success of DC's unstoppable food incubator, Union Kitchen.* article, DC: Elevation DC Media, 2015.

Farmland Information Center. http://www.farmlandinfo.org/statistics/connecticut.

Heller/Flaherty/Hartley/Harris. *Community Kitchens: Making Food, Entrepreneurs, and Jobs Downtown.* Report, Baltimore: Heller, Flaherty, Hartley, Harris, 2012.

Melissa Gonzalez "The Pop-Up Paradigm". *The Pop-Up Paradigm: How Brands Build Human Connections in a Digital Age.* Lioncrest Publishing, 2014.

Money Magazine. "Your Grocery Store May Soon Be Cut in Half." *Money Magazine*, June 2, 2014.

New York Times. "Venture Capitalists Are Making Bigger Bets on Food Start-Ups." *New York Times*, April 28, 2013.

PopUp Republic. *What is a Pop-Up?* Website, PopUp Republic, 2015.

The salt. *Grocery Stores Are Losing You. Here's How They Plan To Win You Back.* March 30, 2015. www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/03/30/395774725/grocery-stores-are-losing-you-heres-how-they-plan-to-win-you-back.

US Census. 2012.

USDA Local Food Directory. "USDA." 2015.

Walter Johnson, Demand Media. "Industry Standard for Gross Margin in Groceries." *Houston Chronicle.*