

common market



**Your trusted source
for local farm food.**

Concept Paper for a Proven Model of
Local Food Distribution in Atlanta

A Social Impact Opportunity

Lack of access to healthy food in American cities has led the nation into a public health crisis—diet-related illnesses have increased dramatically while healthy food has disappeared from our communities. In adjacent rural areas, family farms that produce sustainable food are disappearing at an alarming rate, which levies an immensurable toll on the environment, food security, and culture of the region. Many of these farms are close to large consumer markets yet struggle to earn a sustainable income due to the mainstream distribution system that favors product from large global food chains. This is a national challenge.

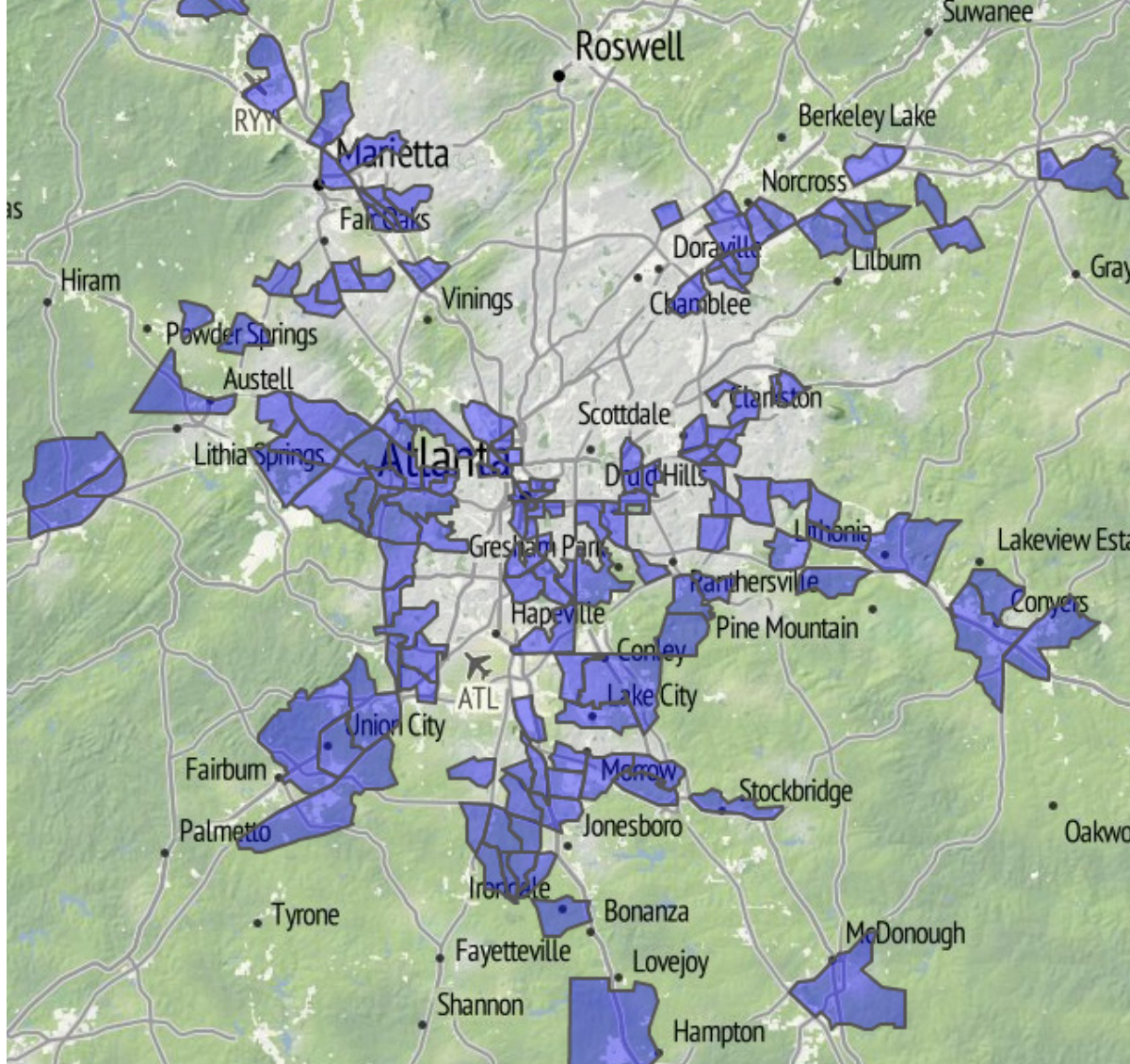
Over the past 7 years, Common Market Philadelphia has developed a self-sustain-

ing non-profit enterprise that solves these deep problems in the food system by creating a mutually beneficial link between urban communities and local family farmers. Year-round, food from 90 farms arrives at our warehouse, where we pack orders to be delivered to the loading docks of over 250 schools, hospitals, universities, retailers, and restaurants in the Philadelphia metro. Since 2008, we have sold over \$8 million worth of our region's fresh and healthy food. Every day, thousands of pounds of produce, meat, and dairy products moved by Common Market arrive on the plates of our region's students, workers, patients, and families—our model has proven to be financially self-sustaining and is rapidly growing as we play a larger role in the Mid-Atlantic.



Low-income communities at least one mile from the nearest supermarket in Atlanta metro

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Local Farms - National Network

The American food system is at a pivotal moment. After a decade of growing awareness about local food, we are poised to truly transform the food system by scaling our successful work linking family farms and anchor institutions. Common Market's experience over the past 7 years working with decision-makers at hospitals, schools, and food service companies taught us that systemic change requires local food systems to reach a national presence that matches the needs of institutional kitchens. We are nationally recognized for our impact in the Mid-Atlantic and for creating a viable and

scalable model for local food distribution, and we are ready to leverage our work and model in cities across the country.

In Atlanta, we are taking the first step to build a national network of food hubs that share consistent standards for food safety, quality service, and administration. Through this network, we can accelerate the reach of local, sustainable food into institutional kitchens and open up a new market for small and mid-sized farms. Our ultimate goal is to democratize access to good food for all, one local region at a time.



Strategy: Democratizing Access to Good Local Food

Anchor Institutions

Hospitals, schools, and universities are the “anchors” of towns and cities by driving economic development, creating jobs, and facilitating community engagement. These “anchor institutions” make intentional and targeted investments in community development and enrichment. Increasingly, institutions are changing procurement practices to align their cafeteria purchases with their missions to support community health, regional economies, and the environment. Providing locally sourced and sustainably produced food to these institutions is integral to both bolstering local family farms and to democratizing access to good food for vulnerable populations. Since our inception, Common Market has recognized the critical role that anchor institutions hold in rebuilding regional food systems.

Our model of local food distribution is an innovation that successfully brings healthy, fresh food beyond farmers markets and into public schools, hospitals, and workplaces. These institutions serve the very people who have been disproportionately harmed by changes to America’s food systems in recent decades. For example, children from low-income families consume the majority

of their daily calories from school meals that lack nutrient-rich fresh fruits and vegetables. Similarly, hospitals are cornerstones of their communities; they provide more than medical care and expertise. They are large employers, community educators, and drivers of the local economy. Preventative care is a prominent way in which hospitals foster a healthy community. Food that is fresh, healthy, and environmentally sustainable is central to preventative care.





Challenges in Serving Anchor Institutions

Providing good food to anchor institutions is challenging in every market nationally. There are many barriers that make it difficult for local food to reach the loading dock at a school or hospital, including requirements for food safety certification, substantial insurance policies, sophisticated order and delivery systems and frequently navigating complicated contracts including bidding processes and prolonged payment terms.



Further, many institutions outsource their food service to third party contractors—companies with an international footprint like Aramark, Compass, or Sodexo—which adds another layer of complexity. In our experience working with these food service companies we have found that they are open to local procurement and many are getting pressure from *their* clients to procure local food but they do not want to take the time to vet dozens of different food hubs in all of the markets that they operate. And they would love it if there was one trusted network they could turn to for all of their local and sustainable food needs.

Of the 240 USDA-identified food hubs, only a handful serves the institutional market. As a result, food from local family farms is still largely missing from our nation's schools, hospitals, and workplaces. This is not only indicative of how challenging it is to reach this segment of customers (reflecting the broader disconnect in local food supply and demand), but also an opportunity to leverage their purchasing power for greater good.

Common Market Georgia - Why Pilot in Atlanta?

Demand

In Atlanta, each area resident spent \$2,548 on food away from home in 2013. While it is unclear how much of that is spent at institutions, there are many institutions with food service operations that are poised to activate demand for local, healthy food. There are 334 schools feeding approximately 250,000 students in the Dekalb County, Fulton County, and Atlanta public school systems alone. The Atlanta Association of Independent Schools includes 58 private schools. There are 57 colleges and universities serving 176,000 students in the Metro region, as well as 40 hospitals. Several of these institutions have adopted policies to increase the percentage of sustainably grown or locally sourced foods in their cafeterias, though most struggle with sourcing. Common Market Georgia will help create a food system that can facilitate farm-to-institution connections. This will not only provide healthier meals to institutional food service customers, but will also present major economic benefits to farmers and the regional economy at large.

Opportunity

Georgia has a large agricultural economy—sales of agricultural products exceeded \$9.25 billion in 2012, the 15th highest in the nation—but the vast majority of farmland is dedicated to industrial agriculture. Cotton, peanuts, corn, and poultry predominate but are grown and raised for export. The focus on these commodity crops has weakened the connections between the small farms that still grow real food and Georgia's urban markets. Despite the fact that most farmland is owned by large farms, there are thousands of small farms operated by farmers who have more to gain by selling produce more directly to consumers, but who have joined the only game in town, industrial agriculture. There is great opportunity for such farmers, however, if they transition to growing produce – or expand produce production – as integrated participants in emerging regional food systems. As of 2012, there were only 8 USDA-identified food hub operations in Georgia. All were privately owned and were not mission driven, unlike Common Market. Others that did not meet the USDA food hub definition focused on direct to consumer sales and have not successfully expanded into the wholesale markets. The USDA has identified the institutional sector as that the biggest market for growing operations in Georgia, due to its size and consistent demand.



Implementation

Phase One: Pilot Food Hub (June 2015-June 2017)

We will start by partnering with local food advocates in Atlanta to replicate a Common Market food hub that serves the Atlanta metro area: building its operations, procurement, and institutional sales capacity in order to put it on the path towards reaching financial self-sufficiency.

Phase Two: Creating a Strategic Plan (June 2017-December 2017)

Based on our experience developing Common Market Georgia, Common Market will complete a Strategic Plan for replication and development of a national network.

Phase Three: Building the Network (January 2018-January 2023)

Common Market will build and lead a network of local food distributors serving America's institutions. By expanding our work, we aim to replicate our success in Philadelphia, opening new market opportunities for America's sustainable family farmers while democratizing access to good food in cities across the country. Our ultimate goal is the total transformation of the country's food system to be fair to farmers, customers, and the environment.



“ Food Hubs, including Common Market, are aggregators, distributors, and/or marketers of source-identified products grown primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand. ”

Leadership and Team

Haile Johnston

Co-Executive Director, Common Market

Along with his wife Tatiana, Haile is the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Common Market Philadelphia. A nationally renown advocate for local food systems and social enterprise, Haile leads development for Common Market GA and future partners of Common Market's network of food hubs. Haile is a graduate of University of



Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business and a recent Food and Community Fellow with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

Tatiana Garcia-Granados

Co-Executive Director, Common Market

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business MBA program, Tatiana uses her formal training for social good. Under her leadership Common Market's operations, volume, and impact have grown tre-

mendously. She manages Common Market's operations, leading the organization's implementation of more efficient operations, sales systems and stronger food safety practices in Philadelphia and Georgia.

Susan Pavlin

Director, Common Market Georgia

Leading our work in Atlanta, Susan has built the foundation for a strong local hub while serving as a leading local food advocate and as the founder and director of Global Growers Network. This local non-profit focuses on local, fresh food access by creating agricultural spaces, farmer training and market opportunities in metro-Atlanta for hundreds of families. As Director of Common Market Georgia, Susan manages the food hub's development, implementation, and daily operations. She is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the University of Illinois College of Law.



Common Market is a nonprofit distributor of local foods who's mission is to strengthen regional farms while making the local bounty accessible to communities and the institutions that serve them. For more information, contact Susan Pavlin at smpavlin@gmail.com, 678-343-9525.