



Shopper at EPA Farmers' Market

Using the Farmers' Market as a Health Intervention: A community-based model for integrating food system change and health services provision in low income urban communities

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Mung Family Farmers at EPA Farmers' Market



Background

- East Palo Alto (pop. 32,000) is located in San Mateo County and is one of the lowest income communities in the Bay Area.
- Although half of East Palo Alto's residents were African Americans in 1990, Latinos now constitute more than 70% of the total population, while the proportion of African Americans has decreased to less than 20%. A significant minority (8%) of Pacific Islanders also reside in East Palo Alto, mostly Tongans with some Samoans and Fijians.

About Collective Roots



MISSION:

To engage youth and communities in food system change through sustainable programs that impact public and environmental health.

PROGRAMS:

Garden Based Learning, Food System Change, Environmental Action, Youth Development

Food System Change initiative began in 2007 with support from the California Endowment.

Key Goals of the Initiative

1. Establish Community Based Farmers' Market
2. Promote dietary change, complementing locally grown, seasonally available organic food
3. Promote health, fitness, and environmental awareness, outreach at FM

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to evaluate community perspectives regarding the East Palo Alto Community Farmers' Market, primarily through collection of English and Spanish surveys of individuals at the market, and several other locations in the community.

The 2008 survey process is ongoing; fishbowl sessions and interviews with key stakeholders will be held to interpret the results and provide feedback that will be used to guide the future development of the market.

*Data Source:
<http://www.collectiveroots.org/epafarmersmarket/survey>



Selected Accomplishments

- Formation of community based board to guide the direction of the market
- East Palo Alto Certified Farmers Market established June 1, 2008
- More than 5,000 customers served
- Promotion of health services/activities at market
- Implemented summer concert series, youth produced video "You Are The Food System"
- Donation of more than \$10,000 of fresh produce to Senior Center and local food bank
- Funding secured, enabling hire of 2 year position: (*Food System Change Coordinator*)
- Development of logo and EPA-CFM Website
- Partnerships--widespread support and involvement with key stakeholders: health, government, education, social services, arts & culture, etc.



Selected Challenges

- Weekly number of shoppers is relatively low (average: 250) compared to other markets
- Shifting shopping patterns in a city that has lacked a major source of fresh fruits & vegetables for more than two decades
- Farmers' markets in lower income communities face distinct challenges not evident in upper income communities
- East Palo Alto community is under siege from multiple stressors: unemployment, gentrification, *profound health disparities*, mortgage crisis, etc.

*Selected Survey Results (10-22-08)

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| Leading source of information about the market: | <i>Word of mouth</i> |
| Leading reason that prevents respondents from shopping at the farmers' market: | <i>Budget won't allow</i> |
| Percentage of respondents that agree they eat more fruits and vegetables as a result of shopping at the farmers' market: | 56.9% |
| Percentage of respondents that believe that participating in the farmers' market has improved their overall health: | 61.5% |
| Percentage of respondents that feel more connected to the East Palo Alto Community as a result of attending the farmers' market: | 55.4% |
| Percentage of respondents that shop for fresh fruits and vegetables outside of East Palo Alto: | 58.4% |
| Percentage of respondents that grow their own fruits and vegetables: | 35.2% |

Top five reasons that people shop at the East Palo Alto Community Farmers' Market (**Survey process ongoing.*)

1. Customer service
2. Quality of produce
3. Support of family farmers
4. Sense of community
5. Prices / Support the local economy (tied).

Recommendations

- Increase outreach to populations that have limited access to healthy foods and physical activity
- Clarify roles of committee chairs, project staff, and Task Force members
- Explore additional ways to measure access to healthy foods and physical activity

Acknowledgements

East Palo Alto Community Farmers' Market Board, San Mateo County Board of Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson, San Mateo County Health Department, San Mateo County Agricultural Commissioner, East Palo Alto City Council Members Ruben Abrica & Pat Foster, East Palo Alto City Planning Department, Get Fit EPA, EPA Health Roundtable, Tides Foundation, Kaiser Permanente Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Palo Alto Community Fund, Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund, Brin Foundation, Stanford University (Law Clinic, School of Business, Pediatric Advocacy Program, Center for Healthy Weight), and more...visit www.collectiveroots.org/epafarmersmarket/supporters for more information.

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