

Jeter Community Garden and Farmer's Market Project

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ABSTRACT

The Jeter Community Garden and Farmer's Market Project is a program designed for the Opelika's Jeter Community for residents of all ages living in Opelika Alabama. The purpose of this project is to provide residents with gardening-related skills, financial resources and entrepreneurship development that will enable them to advance closer to self-employment and personal goals to give them an opportunity to become active participants in the social, political and economic richness of American life. The main purpose is to empower the Jeter community with knowledge; skills and development that they need to gain self employment and better economic opportunities in order to tackle poverty. This project is implemented in partnership with the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation of Opelika AL, for an initial period of one year. The Greater Peace Community Development Corporation (GPCDC) was setup as a public nonprofit 501(c) (3) that was created in 2000 to provide services and programs to promote financial and economic stability and improve the quality of citizens. The mission of Greater Peace CDC is to provide effective programs in community economic development that will facilitate community members with empowerment thus leading to revitalized neighborhoods in the east Alabama region. Over the years, Greater Peace CDC has shown great leadership and has demonstrated a steadfast and unyielding history of providing their professional experience to develop vital services that promote change, and our partnership to develop the Jeter Community Garden and Framer's market will yield an abundance of fruit.

CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY CONTEXT

1. A Community Profile

The belief of the CDC is that this proposed project will have a significant positive impact on the Jeter community and improve the quality of life for its residents. The JCGM will address several critical community issues and will help to install the entrepreneurial spirit among the citizens, making the Jeter community a more prosperous and desirable environment for all to enjoy. The proposed Jeter Community Garden and Market (JCGM) project site is located in the city of Opelika in east central Alabama. Opelika is a medium-sized municipality (city population was 26,477 in 2010). In 2010 the city population was about 51 percent white and 43 percent black. The median family income for Opelika residents in 2009 was \$35,243, compared with the state average of \$40,547 and the U.S. average of \$49,777. About 22 percent of Opelika's residents had incomes below poverty level in 2009 (compared with about 14 percent of U.S. residents and 17 percent of Alabama residents), with female-headed households having the highest poverty rates at 41 percent. In 2009, about 78 percent of Opelika residents aged 25 or older had completed high school. By comparison, 81 percent of Alabama residents had a high school diploma or equivalent and 85 percent of U.S. residents had graduated from high school.

1. B Community Needs Assessment

Throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the Jeter Community was known locally as "Vietnam" because of the high level of criminal activity in the area. The Jeter Community is at the heart of the city's violent crime activity. This tract contains Opelika's largest low-income population concentration and is located adjacent to the city's greatest concentration of public housing. Both of these factors are traditionally associated with heightened criminal activity.

Additionally, tract 416 residents have the lowest education levels of all tracts in the city, another demographic factor connected to high incidence of crime.

Economic and access issues. Other indicators of need for the JCGM project center on economic and access issues. For instance, Opelika's Jeter community residents are much more likely to be home renters instead of homeowners in comparison with the state's white residents. According to the U.S. Census estimates for 2008-09, Alabama had 2,182,343 occupied housing units. About 71 percent of these units were owner-occupied housing units, while the remaining 29 percent of units were renter-occupied units. Black residents owned only 24 percent of the owner-occupied units, while 70 percent of the state's black residents lived in rental housing units. This indicates a significant gap in the ability of Alabama's black residents to live in a home their own compared with the state's white population. Lack of homeownership inhibits the ability of black residents to secure funding for business/entrepreneurial ventures and other opportunities. If individuals lack a strong credit history or the necessary collateral, it will be quite difficult to receive a business start-up loan from a bank. In addition to the blacks that do not own their homes, the blacks that are home-owners have limited financial options as well. According to a statistical brief on the housing by the Census Bureau, black-owned homes had a median value of \$55,500- nearly 40 percent lower than that of homes owned by whites (\$91,700). Value is determined by the estimate of how much a property would sell for if it were on the market. Therefore, a black-owned home would sell for much less than a white-owned home. The lack of black home-based wealth can certainly serve as a barrier to securing enough capital to effectively start and operate a small business. According to the U.S. Small business administration, 50 percent of all new businesses fail within five years. The failure rate for black-owned establishment from 2002 to 2006 was 39.3 percent compared with 29.2 percent for those owned by whites.

1. C: Target community for the Project

The Jeter community in Opelika is the target area for the project. The community is located almost entirely within census tract 416, so there is reliable census data available to describe the project community. The tract contains 80 percent black residents and 18 percent white residents, compared with the overall city breakdown of 43 percent black residents and 51 percent white residents. The median family income in tract 416 is \$17,636, compared with \$35,243 for the city and \$49,777 for the U.S. Thirty-seven percent of the tract's residents had income below the poverty level, compared with 22 percent of Opelika's population and 14 percent of the US population. Only 56 percent of the tract's residents aged 25 or over completed high school, compared to 78 percent for the city population and 81 percent for Alabama. About 22 percent of Opelika's residents earned a bachelor's degree, compared with 13 percent for tract 416 and 24 percent for the nation. The August 2011 unemployment rate for Lee County was 8.2 percent (not seasonally adjusted). However, based on a September 2, 2011 article from CNN Money and the conditions (demographics) in the Jeter community (educational levels, crime, etc.), it is safe to assume that the unemployment rate for this area is at least 16.7 percent, much higher than 8.2 percent for Lee County.

CHAPTER 2: Problem Analysis

1. A: Problem Statement

Several minority neighborhoods across the United States share similar issues and concerns. Some of the most major concerns today are the growing rate of health disparities and poverty. Alabama ranks third in the nation for the rate of hypertension, and number two in obesity. Furthermore, Alabama leads the nation in the rate of diabetes. Reviewing published reports and articles suggest that a high fat diet can increase your risk of health disparities, while other

studies show that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, are protective and necessary for your overall health. The Jeter Community, located in Opelika AL., reflects a community whose residents lack personal or public transportation to gain access to nutritious food sources, and affordable healthy food options. The Jeter community also has a high level of unemployment. In terms of our proposed project, we strongly believe that a community garden and farmers market will provide this community with the proper nutrition to combat health disparities and poverty respectively. A major reason of despair is the limited and or lack of education. A key goal of this project will be to educate the residents on gardening. The efforts of our project will offer people in this area access to affordable and healthy foods, opportunities to build wealth, increase the education and awareness, while also creating an environment of entrepreneurship.

2. B: "CED-ness" of the Project

The principal beneficiaries of this project involve the residents who will live inside and near the Jeter community, and also people who utilize the community garden as a means to access affordable healthy food options. The garden will also provide them with education and classes on gardening and cooking that will allow for healthy eating trends that are positive. The community as a whole will also benefit from this by fostering an environment of entrepreneurship. As more people are involved in the community garden and farmers market, the unemployment rate will decrease, the amount of overall income in the community will increase, and the spending power of the community will strengthen. This change in condition will have a positive impact on the Jeter community and improve the quality of life for its residents. In addition, this project will address several critical community issues and help to instill the

entrepreneurial spirit among the citizen, making the Jeter community a more prosperous and desirable environment.

2. C Stakeholders

Stakeholders in this project include unemployed and underemployed residents of The Jeter Community; all other residents of Jeter Community, the businesses located the Opelika, AL, the GPCDC leaders and the local city government

CHAPTER 3: Literature Review

Food is quickly becoming a powerful symbol in the struggle to transition to a more sustainable pathway, and interest surrounding food has been increasing steadily. This is in part due to the growing recognition that the choices citizens make around food have deep environmental and social impacts within their communities and around the world. (Kerton & Sinclair, 2010). The state of rural communities in America is gradually changing. Many southern parts of the United States were once driven by a healthy agricultural economy. Agriculture and farming in the rural south became a useful tool to alleviate many decreasing economies. However, insufficient income and low educational levels combined, ensures a perpetual cycle of poverty. Fewer opportunities for quality education, has left citizens across America in a condition that reflects apathy. With the declining efforts of rural agriculture, rural communities seem to be left unemployed, uneducated and untrained for new development. I have observed during my research, there seem to be no one factor that causes these poor conditions; more so there are many combining factor that contribute. Experts from the field of public health and medicine have recognized chronic diseases in the US are closely linked to proper consumption levels and types

of food people eat, along with social class like race and poverty that result in chronic disease and high health disparities. The United States Department of Agriculture recognizes the importance of the role of farmer's market urban/farm linkage and in 2011 saw an increase (9.6 %) in the number of farmers who are participating in farmer's markets nationwide (USDA, 2011). The building of social capital is a positive externality of the presence of Community Gardens; "benefits to psychological health, social cohesion, crime reduction, and even adjacent property value..." (Mees & Stone 2012 pg. 1)

This document seeks to use community gardens and farmers markets as a means to community economic development, below you will find the definition of the following

- ***Community gardens were defined as gardens with a group of gardeners working for the benefit of the community (in contrast to benefiting a single household or a business) and that had an active garden year-round.***
- ***Farmers markets were defined as a location where a vendor or multiple vendors were selling their products directly to the community without an intermediary.***

Literature on Problem, Causes and Effect: Living in northeast Portland is like living in a *desert*. Locals must travel hours round-trip on public transportation just to find affordable groceries, (Vigilante, 2012). These creates a server problem for family who have one vehicle per household or a family with a below average median family income. In many of the underserved communities across America, endless cycles of poverty and a host of other social and community issues starve the residents. The target populations low education levels, family income, lack of

good employment and high health disparities, will leave many residents with means to little access to build wealth or afford healthy food. Many areas with this combination, including the Jeter Community, food deserts are present. Food desert, are an impoverished area where residents lack access to healthy foods (Food desert -- britannica online encyclopedia.).

Coordinator at the Franklin Park Conservatory, Bill Dawson said "Community gardens bring healthy, nutritious foods to people with limited access to fresh produce." Growing to Green coordinator also stated that "These programs are essential to the health of our communities."(Vigilante,2012). In fact, the term food desert was introduced in the early 1990s in western Scotland, where it was used to describe the poor access to nutritious foods experienced by residents of a public housing development.(Food desert -- britannica online encyclopedia.)

Fresh produce is just one of many advantages gardening will bring to a community. Community gardens also promote environmental awareness, encourage healthy lifestyles, and create better social cohesion (Vigilante, 2012). Farmers markets play an integral role in increasing access to fresh produce making it and major focus and goal for most community gardens, backyard gardens, chicken coops, and urban farms.(McIntosh, 2013)

Learning From Past Experiences: Several alternative solutions have been found to be successful in the fight for underserved communities with chronic health disparities and poverty. For example in Canada, organic food has become the fastest growing agricultural sector and is being recognized for its potential to revitalize communities, boost rural economies, save family farms, and simultaneously protect the environment, creating diverse, resilient ecosystems (Sumner 2005; Shreck et al. 2007). Research presented at the 2nd National Australian Farmers' Markets Conference, held at Albury–Wodonga in August 2005 showed that farmers markets are

now producing more than \$80 million worth of economic benefit across the host communities in Australia (Organic Gardener, 2005/2006). The Global trade watch website (2006) highlights the benefits of farmers' markets in Australia suggesting that they are: a real alternative to export markets which force Australian farmers to over produce, overuse chemical inputs and which pay them lower and lower prices. At a farmers' market, farmers from a local area sell their food direct to the public. Buying food from a farmers market means that is locally produced, and the money goes straight to the person who grew it. It also guarantees farmers a decent income, encourages face to face interaction, creates communities and avoids destructive efforts of the global trading system. (Global Trade Watch—Farmers Markets in Australia (www.tradewatchoz.org/localfood/)).

CHAPTER 4: Project Design and Logic Model

4. A: Logic Model

The Jeter Community Garden and Farmer’s Market project will establish a successful platform and act as a viable foundation for opportunities and change for area residents and their families.

The project hopes to help residents to achieve economic relicense and healthier lives by the full development of the project. The intent is on low- income families between the ages of teenage years to the oldest adult. The Greater Peace Community Development Corporation will be the host organization to facilitate all programs and provide garden space and materials.

Table # 1

Logic Model	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Inter-mediate Outcome	Long-term Outcome
<p>Description of challenges:</p> <p>1.Lack of business or entrepreneurial ventures</p> <p>2.Lack of realistic asset-building opportunities</p> <p>3.Limited economic growth and financial options in the community</p> <p>4. Limited ability among target population to establish and maintain healthier food options.</p>	<p>1. Partnership with Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Programs.</p> <p>2. Conduct workshops and field training and gardening demonstrations</p> <p>3. Partnership with Alabama Cooperative Extension System</p> <p>4. Conduct cooking demonstrations</p> <p>5. Provide one-on-one entrepreneurship counseling</p> <p>6. Establish partnership with Auburn University’s Small Business Development Center</p> <p>7. Individualized entrepreneurship assessment</p>	<p>Output 1: Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Programs Publications</p> <p>Output 2: Alabama Cooperative Extension systems Publications</p> <p>Output 3: One (1) Master’s Thesis</p>	<p>STO 1: Knowledge of gardening techniques</p> <p>STO 2: Awareness of healthy living benefits</p> <p>STO 3: Skills of small business practices</p>	<p>Improved gardening and business management practices</p>	<p>Improve quality of life for residents in the community</p>
<p>Assumption: 1) Community garden will increase access of fresh fruits and vegetables 2) Participant will sale produce at local market and sale arts and crafts product</p>			<p>Environment: 1) Harsh weather conditions will affect all outdoor events 2) Supplemental income vs. replacement of household income</p>		

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5. A: Participants. The program will have residents from the Jeter community of Opelika, Alabama, The targeted population will be low -income groups between ages of teenage to the oldest adult.

5. B: Host Organization. The Jeter Community Garden and Farmer's Market project is hosted by the Greater Peace Community Development Corporation of Opelika; which is located at 650 Jeter AVE, Opelika, AL 36801.

5. C: Project Staff. The garden project has 2 full time and 2 volunteer staff. The main work load for this project will be spearheaded by the project director, under him the project assistant followed by the project active volunteers. Others as followed

1. Garden Manager
3. Garden's Live Demonstration facilitator
4. Trainers
5. Instructors
6. Consultants and counselors

5. D: Project roles and responsibilities

Key personnel for the JCGM project include the Project Director, Project Assistant, board members, and community volunteers. These individuals are responsible for making sure the grant purposes are accomplished.

- **Project Director-** The executive director of the CDC will serve as the Project Director for this project. The main responsibility of the project director is to coordinate and manage the proposed project.
- **Project Assistant-** The Project Assistant will assist the Project Director with the implementation of this program as well as marketing and recruiting participants for the program.
- **Project Controller:** Efficiently works with garden project, communicate proficiently with all staff members, community residents and any other organization.
- **Garden Manger:** Manages all of the Jeter Community Garden activities and actions

Additionally, the Board President, the Founder of the CDC and other volunteers will assist in the direction and development of the program. The president is an experienced community developer and the founder is a retired agricultural specialist with many years of excellent service.

5. F: Implementation Schedule/Timeframe

Below is the schedule of activities, timeframe and work plan for the implementation of the Jeter Community Garden Farmer Market project.

Table # 2

Project Activities	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
Research													
Gathering of reflective information													
Stakeholders meetings													
Focus Group, Interviews, Surveys													
Project Program													
Establishment of partner: Meeting													
Begin gardening													
Evaluation of program elements													
Final Presentation													

**Jeter Community Garden & Farmers Market
Budget**

Our plans for funds during the initial start up will be mainly to secure sponsors that will agree to administer funding and donations of materials. In-kind services will be used to facilitate any general labor work, while Making plans to partner with local community businesses for assistance. A donation letter will circulate the air- waves, telling partners about our project and why it will benefit the community. Any additional money, needed to purchase items not donated, will come through creative means by community fundraisers such as car washes and yard sales.

F. Budget Table # 3

Description	Expense	Amount
Project Staff	Salaries	\$37,500
Farmer’s Market Tents	Supplies	\$8,000
Farmer’s Market Signage and Promo Brochures	Supplies	\$1,000
Community Garden Landing clearing	Supplies	\$1,000
Community Garden Tools	Supplies	\$3,000
Community Garden Fencing	Supplies	\$5,000
Community Garden Signage and Benches	Supplies	\$1,000
Community Garden Irrigation Equipment	Supplies	\$3,500
Other cost	Bills	\$10,000
Total		\$70,000

CHAPTER 7: Evaluation PLAN

We understand the importance of project effectiveness, and our project evaluation plan has been developed in two parts. The first part has plans to account for the development of the plan short-term outcomes; furthermore the second part was developed and plans to address the intermediate/ long-term outcomes. Due to time constraints, our program evaluation will only be focused on the first part. The evaluation team will conduct detail interviews among participants to find out what was achieve and un-achieved, also any un-met target goals. In order to get the best results our evaluation team will include the garden manger, trainer, and project coordinator, whose task collectively would be to track all progress of the project. The evaluation team main target is to verify whether garden program was able to meets its determined goals or failed to do so. For this purpose, a series of evaluation methods and technique data gathering practices of the project progress has been collected and analyzed by the evaluation team. The final report that includes the methodology of data collection and the results will be written by the evaluation team to be submitted to funders, the host organization, and stakeholders.

Table # Evaluation

Outcomes	Indicators	Gathering	Sources	Timeframe
Long Term Outcomes: Improve quality of life for residents in the community	# of participants with new business and increased fresh produce intake	Interviews	Participants	Three (3) to Five (5) years
Intermediate Outcomes: Improved gardening and business management practices	# of participant receiving income supplement from project	Interviews	Participants	Two (2) to Three (3) years
Short Term Outcomes: 1. Knowledge of gardening techniques 2. Awareness of healthy living benefits 3. Skills of small business practices	1. #Number of successfully harvested crops 2. #Number of participants that purchase produce from the community garden 3. Pre/Post test results	Interviews	Participants	Six (6) to Eight (8) months

As mentioned above, this method was considered to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Jeter Community Garden and Farmer Market project, so as to help the garden project management in formulating the best decision that would enhance and improve the performance of the garden project the data of this method was mainly collected from the hosting organization gardens project documents such as registration, attendances. The following are the performance indicators for the short-term outcomes that have been adopted by the program management for this purpose:

- Number of participant's join for the garden project
- Number of the attending participants completed training
- Number of participants receive tools and seeds
- Number of participant's .successfully harvest
- Number of participant's had access of awareness of trade

The following table illustrates the overall evaluation plan of the program outcomes including the long term and intermediate term.

SUSTAINABILITY

Our current project endeavors to assist the facilitation of the residents of the Jeter Community in the historic Opelika Alabama, with a sustainable community garden and market project. Our aim is to enhance and increase residents toward building wealth, assets and family income. The project conception and current community acceptance was only possible with the involvement of our project managers, volunteers and other stakeholders. Like any new thing that tries to bring about change will always face difficulties, with us we have overcame challenges and adversity, the project is steadily on track to be successfully and met all intend goals. All participants were

able to complete training, gain gardening education and become entrepreneurs. We intend to be aggressive with the gardening project and we feel our sustainability plans reflects that and the long-term goals to sustain the income in the Jeter community. It is our hope that is project will be a catalyst and a model to America and encourages other similar projects that partner together with stakeholders, volunteers and community leaders. The major goal of our sustainability plan is to maintain the project gains, and to guarantee sustainable income programs for the community population, by building the following requests available.

- Achieve the State and federal financial support.
- Increase the Opelika's AL underserved community support.
- Approach other donors in the State level and nationwide.
- Gain State's community support.
- Receive in-kind services and technical support from other organizations, and networks to conduct collaborative interventions.
- Build a strong volunteer base from Alabama's community members.
- Create well-established partnerships / collaboration with public and private agencies.
- Stakeholders' encouragement meetings for the project cause and contact the local mass media to publicize the need of this type of projects.
- Increase capacity at all levels

Results

The results of our project will be based on several factors, one being the Holiday Farmer's Market. All information was derived from the participation from the community. Twenty –five (25) community members participated in the project. Ages ranging from teenagers to the oldest

adult and we estimate these participants to have a low to moderate income. According to direct engagement with the residents, most of them concluded that the one reason for their involvement was it can be a good source for supplemental income and gives them choices for their families. Individual's motivations were high, seeing ways to possibly increase their family income; from this we feel that the full development of the Jeter Community Garden and Farmer's Market project will be a great asset and tool for change in the community. A good portion of participants also, commented on the fact that gaining the necessary gardening knowledge, skills and techniques was a fundamental tool for change. We expect by the end of the project, that participant will have gained valuable education through learning, developed skills and training for future success with our project. Moreover, we are making strategic plans going forward to:

- Increase residents participation
- Increase awareness of all Jeter community related project or topics
- Continue all classes, training
- Increase live demo series events at the gardening site.
- Further development on the farmer's market as a mean to full replacement income
- Recruitment of new active project team members

Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall purpose of the project was logically successful, but with any challenges. The project period was originally planned for a time of one year. The project encountered different obstacles, such as the following:

- The community at large was at first in the beginning stages resistances to change and any new program or project.
- Residents with little knowledge and experience in business or agriculture had very little formal experience.
- Several of the residents needed additional knowledge on cooking healthier foods.
- At large, families with disadvantages and low confidence due to financial hardships and unemployment. These characteristics and negative experiences have affected many residents.

Generally, the project did an excellent job in its contribution of impacting the Jeter Community through improving their healthy food choices, their mental attitudes and ultimately their financial conditions, leaving them useful for their families and the whole community. Moreover the project achieved a fantastic progress on their skills.

Personal thoughts:

Our garden project was mainly based on contributions from the community, the host organization and volunteers. Continuing monitoring of the impacts of the project and its residents in the Jeter community, their skills learned can help ensure that the project was relevant and useful. It is our hope that the many things learned will have sufficient practice and will be integrated in daily life.

Appendices

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B. Pictures of Jeter Community Garden Site

