



UIUC Grad Student Research Catalyzes Peoria Food Hub

University of Illinois Extension, Fulton–Mason–Peoria–Tazewell Unit staff worked to facilitate University of Illinois Urbana Champaign School of Architecture’s engagement with City of Peoria and community leaders during two separate semester–long courses. During the Spring 2017 semester, graduate students Michael Osterloo and Drew Nuding completed a research study overseen by Professor Lynne Dearborn. The project built on work completed in the Spring 2016 graduate design studio: Realizing a Healthy “Heart of



Peoria.” The project identified the relationship of public health to the growth of an urban farming community in the South Side Peoria Neighborhood.

A system of supports across the stages of urban farming production will enable vibrant agricultural economic development through education, training, and marketing assistance while simultaneously building on three of the South Side Neighborhood’s greatest assets: vacant land, under-utilized property, and human resources.

The final report consists of case study analyses of multiple facilities in the Midwest region to investigate the variety of business models and programming requirements seen in the industries of small-scale urban farming, commissary kitchens, and agricultural incubators. The second phase of this study explores renovation opportunities of existing structures in Peoria and proposes a phased conceptual design solution that accommodates the programmatic goals of a facility for agricultural business incubation.

UIUC School of Architecture students worked with City of Peoria, community leaders, and U of I Extension staff to research and provide concept designs of business models of small-scale urban farming, commissary kitchens, and agriculture incubators focused in the South Side of Peoria.

This agricultural incubation service primarily aims to enhance social interaction within the local community and to help build social capital that will contribute to successful small business development. This work aligns with current work efforts by the City of Peoria Innovation Team, Invest Health, Regional Food Policy Council, and Gifts in the Moment. Key goals for development include:

- Expand markets (e.g. Community Supported Agriculture, farmer’s markets, and wholesale) for beginning urban growers
- Increase financial viability through value added product line development for small family and urban growers with availability of a licensed commissary kitchen
- Improve the livability of the community through green infrastructure and reduced crime in areas adjacent to agricultural centers.
- Create a teaching kitchen that could provide hands-on training for culinary medicine classes for students and neighborhood residents.

The report and conceptual design serve as a catalyst for an urban food hub in the Peoria Region. The report is available online at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/downloads/70987.pdf>

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