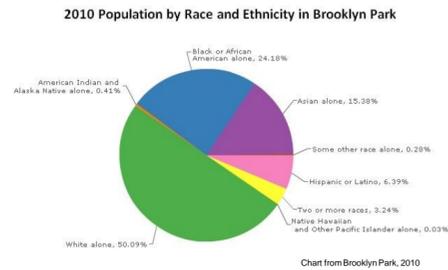


Feasibility Study of a Commercial Kitchen in Brooklyn Park



Background

The City of Brooklyn Park is a suburb of the Twin Cities that has grown to become the 6th largest city in Minnesota. Half of its population consists of people of color and 20% were born outside of the U.S., making it one of Minnesota's most culturally diverse cities.



Problem statement

Prior to our partnership, the City of Brooklyn Park struggled with risks associated with home-based food businesses. These risks consisted of fire safety issues and the use of unlicensed or unapproved food sources. Many of those operating these home-based food businesses were new immigrants in the community. Additionally, many residents, small business owners, and community leaders have discussed the necessity of a community space in Brooklyn Park that will foster small business incubation, and include a commercial kitchen.

Overall goal

The City of Brooklyn Park created a new vision for 2025 to celebrate cultural diversity, and increase sustainability within the city. The vision includes 6 primary goals for the future of Brooklyn Park, three of which pertain to our project and are listed below.

1. Supporting strong neighborhoods that are welcoming, by providing spaces and activities that support cultural diversity
2. Creating partnerships that increase racial and economic equity and empower residents and neighborhoods to prosper
3. Providing beautiful spaces and quality infrastructure that make Brooklyn Park a unique destination

The City of Brooklyn Park has partnered with the University of Minnesota to participate in the Resilient Communities Project through a year-long partnership to facilitate projects that meet the sustainable goals of the city. With the help of Code Enforcement and Public Health Manager Jason Newby, and involvement of this partnership, our team set out to conduct a needs assessment and feasibility study to address the community interest in building a community-oriented, commercially licensed food hub.

Research Questions

1. What are the community goals, funding, and organizations involved in the community kitchen concepts in the metro area?
2. What were the major obstacles new commercial kitchens have encountered?
3. Is a stand-alone commercial kitchen economically viable, or does it need to be associated with a larger food hub concept? Can Brooklyn Park support a community kitchen?
4. What tools would be needed to promote the growth and success of the community members that use the kitchen for their private enterprises?
5. Would a community kitchen/food-hub support the City of Brooklyn Park's community engagement goals and strengthen neighborhoods?
6. Which key stakeholders would support and utilize a community kitchen facility or food-hub in Brooklyn Park? If so, in what capacity?
7. Are there other services/amenities this project could support similar to other small business incubator models? Examples: classrooms, meeting spaces, technology and office space rental, etc.

Approach

1. **Commercial Kitchen Review:** interview The Good Acre, Foxtail Farms, and the Kindred Kitchen.
2. **Survey:** a variety of stakeholders and residents regarding interest in food hub/commercial kitchen concept
3. **Focus Groups:** focused meetings involving community stakeholders at Brooklyn Park City Hall, regarding an interest in a commercial kitchen/food hub



Photo taken by Sam Birkholz: Food operators at The Kindred Kitchen



Photo taken by Melissa Trent: First focus group sticky wall activity



Photo taken by Sam Birkholz: Second focus group sticky wall activity

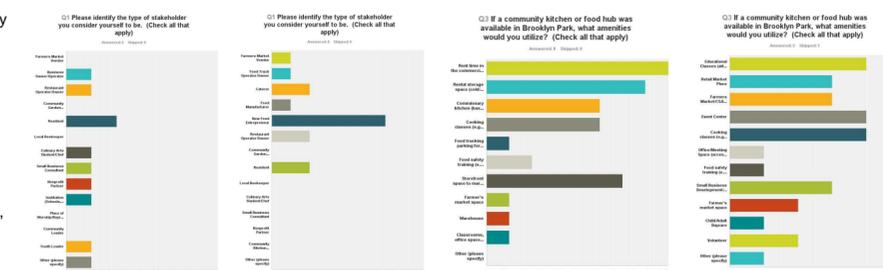
Findings

Tours: From our tours we learned that no two kitchen models are built and managed in the same way, but if done correctly, a commercial community kitchen can become a sustainable business model.

Commercial Kitchen Tour Findings:

- **Funding Strategies:** grants, loans, community funding, city partnerships, philanthropy, co-op, diversify business
- **Challenges:** scheduling, cost of space when not in use, staffing, volunteers, storage space, layout
- **Size:** 750-2200 Sq. ft, dependent on demand, kitchen and storage space, and goals of organization
- **Partnerships:** HAFA, NEON, CSA members, chefs, volunteers
- **Business use:** CSA, farmer's market, food incubator, cafe, storage, food truck facility, small business consultation, cooking/nutrition classes

Surveys:



Focus Groups:

- Met residents from the city to understand struggles starting food businesses
- Focused in on what an ideal community food hub model might look like
- Gained an understanding of amenities and services that would support business entrepreneurship and community engagement



Word cloud created by Jason Newby to represent the community needs and interests in a commercial kitchen/food hub space in Brooklyn Park. Information provided by resident participation in focus groups.

Conclusion

There is support in the community for a food hub type business, however, for a commercial kitchen to be successful in Brooklyn Park it must be unique and embrace its cultural diversity. Our advice is to hire an experienced resident of Brooklyn Park to manage the food hub/commercial kitchen if it is built.



Sam, focus group #2 round table



Melissa, focus group #2 healthy snacks



This project was completed as a part of the Food Systems Capstone Class, Holistic Approaches to Improving Food Systems Sustainability, FDSY 4101, a course at the University of Minnesota offered in the Spring of 2017, with support from the Resilient Communities Project (RCP). RCP is a program of the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA). To learn more, visit rcp.umn.edu

Project and Poster Design by: Sam Birkholz & Melissa Trent
Course instructor: Dr. Julie Grossman
Project lead: Jason Newby, Code Enforcement & Public Health Manager, Brooklyn Park