

Georgia Farmers' Market Provides Low-Income Residents Affordable, Fresh Produce

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At A Glance

As of September 2016, more than 93,000 residents in or near Lithonia, Georgia, can now shop for affordable, fresh fruits and vegetables where they live. Once labeled a food desert, an area lacking access to fresh fruits and vegetables, the city of Lithonia partnered with the DeKalb County Board of Health (DCBH) and the Georgia Farmers' Market Association to launch the Lithonia Farmers' Market—the first farmers' market in its area. Eight vendors took part in the market that serves mostly low-income, African American communities.



Public Health Challenge

A 2013 CDC report showed residents in mostly minority communities continue to have lower socioeconomic status and be at greater risks for obesity and other chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease compared with the general population. Lithonia, in DeKalb County, is 84% African American and 29% of people live below the poverty level, according to 2011–2015 Census estimates. Obesity rates for low-income and African American adults were some

of the highest in Georgia in 2015. Poverty and poor nutrition due to a lack of access to healthy, affordable foods may contribute to those high rates. Some evidence indicates areas with limited healthy food, or food deserts, may be in low-income or minority neighborhoods. Residents may have limited access to full-service grocery stores with fresh fruits and vegetables and may rely on nearby corner stores that usually offer fewer healthy options.

Find Out More

This project is supported by CDC's Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health cooperative agreement. Learn how Georgia Fresh for Less increases access to fresh, healthy, locally grown food for all Georgians visit <http://www.wholesomewavegeorgia.org/>. For more on CDC's work to identify and address health disparities among racial, ethnic, geographic, socioeconomic, and other groups visit the CDC Health Disparities & Inequalities Website <https://www.cdc.gov/minorityhealth/chdireport.html>.

We're excited about partnering with the DeKalb County Board of Health and creating our new farmers' market. Children and families' lives are improving with these healthier food options and greater access.

- Mayor Deborah Jackson,
City of Lithonia

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Approach

With support from CDC, DeKalb County Board of Health, Georgia's Farmers' Market Association, and Lithonia created its first farmers' market in the southeast region of the county. The market provides residents easier access to affordable, locally grown, organic produce and a forum to deliver nutrition and wellness education that includes weekly food demonstrations and fitness classes. The market also accepts Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, a federal nutrition program that helps low-income residents buy affordable, healthy foods with the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. The farmers' market is open from June through September.

Results

Since the Lithonia Farmers' Market opening in June 2016, more than 4,000 residents have visited to buy items from eight local vendors. All booths were attended by farmer-operators of either small farms or collections of small, urban farms. At launch, the market was slow to start, but by securing community buy-in and creating a partnership with the nonprofit Georgia Farmers' Market Association, the market gained momentum. The partnership allowed Lithonia to boost outreach efforts and hire an experienced market manager. The manager oversees daily operations and market promotions to community members. Also, through education and promotion efforts in neighboring communities, the market has the potential to serve more than 93,000 residents who live in or near Lithonia.