



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE



38TH AND SHERIDAN PROJECT

Indy Fresh Market report

MAY 2022 | ISSUE 22-C02

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Abbey Chambers, Researcher

Tom Guevara, Director

Drew Klacik, Senior Policy Analyst

Lauren Palmer, Research Assistant



INDIANA UNIVERSITY
PUBLIC POLICY INSTITUTE

101 W. Ohio Street, Suite 400

Indianapolis, IN 46204

policyinstitute.iu.edu

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

In Indianapolis, many residents do not have easy access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable food. In fact, 47% of people in Marion County live more than 1 mile from a grocery store, in areas known as food deserts—places that are “low income and have low access to food sources.”¹ Inequitable food access adversely impacts a person’s ability to live a full and healthy life and reach full potential. Providing residents with access to nutritious and affordable food poses a significant challenge for government and nonprofit entities, which can enable food access solutions that are equitable, sustainable, replicable, and systemic. Equitable food access is a complex problem, requiring innovative and dynamic approaches to meet consumer demand for grocery stores that are physically accessible, clean, secure, and price sensitive to fresh food.

An innovative approach to this issue is underway on Indianapolis’ northeast side, home to large swaths of food deserts. For-profit, philanthropic, community-based, and academic entities have partnered to work toward increasing local food access through the construction of a new locally owned grocery store.

The grocery store project described in this report is an important part of a larger economic investment taking place in a historically disinvested neighborhood that once was a thriving area of manufacturing. In 2020, Cook Medical—in collaboration with Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana—selected a Northeast Indianapolis site to develop a new medical device component manufacturing facility. The venture promises to bring jobs to an area left behind by economic growth. Early engagement with community-based nonprofit United Northeast Community Development Corporation (UNEC) and area residents was influential in helping leaders from Cook and Goodwill decide on the site. Ongoing engagement with community members informed leaders at Cook that food access was a high-priority need without a clear solution.

In response, Cook expanded its activities and investments in the area, working with its partners to build a new full-size grocery store. Two northeast side resident-entrepreneurs—who used to own and operate a small local convenience store—will eventually own and operate the new Indy Fresh Market grocery store. The future owner-operators are receiving in-depth training on all aspects of grocery store operations and management.

Indy Fresh Market is the outcome of a unique development model that addresses complex problems using a dynamic system partnership led by Cook Medical. In the partnership, public, private, and nonprofit entities respond to the complexities created by the unique contexts, needs, and priorities of communities that have been historically and systemically left behind by economic growth and development efforts. While the partnership started with building a medical device component manufacturing facility to fill an employment gap in Northeast Indianapolis, community input guided the partnership to evolve their activities and investments to help fill a food access gap. This and other community investments made by the partnership are seen collectively as a means of supporting future manufacturing workers and their community by removing barriers that could interfere with workers’ ability to improve their economic futures. The organizations in this dynamic system partnership have leveraged their complementary strengths, networks, and resources to respond to a specific, persistent, and community-defined socioeconomic challenge which government and nonprofit entities have struggled to address on their own.

Cook and its partners asked the IU Public Policy Institute to model the immediate and future economic impacts of the Indy Fresh Market grocery store, provide a set of recommendations on instruments and metrics that will provide feedback on the store’s community impact and employment outcomes over time, and enable a long-term evaluation of this key community investment.

Key community-focused project details

- The project intentionally seeks to hire operations employees from the neighborhood and nearby community where the grocery store will be located. It also plans to provide wraparound services—such as health and education support—to the employees and their families.
- Thus far, 100% of the project construction has been performed by minority and women-owned businesses, and Cook has promoted use of local minority and women-owned business suppliers. Construction workers also will receive upskilling support and services from Darden Group, a minority-owned construction management firm.
- The project development partners work together closely and have clear roles for engaging with the community and its stakeholders. They prioritize their engagement based on collaboration with and feedback from community members. Each partner is focused on economically and socially empowering community residents to help them succeed over time.
- Two local residents who owned a small convenience store in the community will run the grocery store. They are receiving training and support to successfully own and operate the new full-size store.
- Over time, complete ownership of the store operation and real estate will be transferred to the two resident-entrepreneurs on a contract purchase model.

COMMUNITY-DERIVED FINDINGS

From July through December 2021, a member of the PPI research team attended 21 community meetings and spoke with 17 individuals during 10 interviews. The researcher asked interviewees how long they had lived, worked, or served in the northeast area, what it was like when they first moved into or became engaged with Northeast Indianapolis communities, how the area has changed, and what the area's strengths, challenges, and needs are. Because food access is of particular interest in this study, the interviewer prompted conversations about where interviewees shopped for food, their concerns about food access in Northeast Indianapolis, and their hopes for the new Indy Fresh Market grocery store.

Interviewees spoke about the closures of grocery stores on the northeast side. Some interviewees attributed these closures to high rates of theft and expressed concerns that Indy Fresh Market would be similarly impacted. Other interviewees, however, thought theft was an issue that those other grocery stores could have overcome with adequate investments into security measures, quality products and facilities, and building relationships with community members. Because there are no full-service grocery stores in the northeast area, interviewees said they traveled outside of their neighborhoods to shop at stores that offered satisfactory selections of quality foods, especially fresh meat and produce. The quality of the shopping environment was also important to interviewees. They talked about wanting to patronize stores that were clean and where the culture of the environment made them feel comfortable. Interviewees expressed hopes that Indy Fresh Market would develop into an anchor institution in the community, one that reflects Northeast Indianapolis' demographics and culture and that actively engages in the area's social and economic networks.

Community findings recommendations

Based on findings from interviews with area residents and community liaisons, PPI has identified three recommendations that can help guide Indy Fresh Market toward becoming a sustainable anchor institution in Northeast Indianapolis.

1. Prioritize building relationships with community members—including those with limited mobility and who rely on public transportation—by finding and creating opportunities to connect with residents, nonprofits, and government entities that serve local communities.
2. Create a welcoming, comfortable, and inclusive environment that community members will be motivated to support by reflecting the demographics and culture of Northeast Indianapolis through the store's design, staff, and selections.
3. Work to overcome language and cultural barriers. For example, native Spanish-speaking residents in Northeast Indianapolis could be served by developing partnerships with organizations that have established trusted relationships with this portion of the area's population.

STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS

PPI also interviewed several individuals from the 38th and Sheridan project's partner organizations to understand the grocery store's conception and evolution. This group also talked about aspects of project implementation that have contributed to successes, challenges they have faced, and potential areas of future concern. Important to project success has been each partner's commitment to achieving project goals and overcoming challenges as they have arisen.

Interviewees said that project leaders' engagement with community members is a significant contributor to project success, and prompted them to build a grocery store as well as connect them with the two residents who will become the store's eventual owner-operators. Active, regular community engagement has been a significant contributor to project successes, allowing project partners to build trusting, authentic connections with community members and gain their support and insights. UNEC has been critical in helping these partners effectively engage with the community.

The 38th and Sheridan project continues to evolve as project partners work with community members and respond to defined challenges. To address potential areas of future concern, leadership from Cook and Goodwill are now expanding their work within the local community to include public safety and housing.

FRESH MARKET CONSTRUCTION ECONOMIC IMPACT

Construction of Indy Fresh Market will provide both short- and long-term economic benefits. Researchers project the store's building phase will result in a one-time economic contribution of \$11.1 million to Marion County. That estimate is based on an initial investment of \$7 million for construction, land, and equipment, plus an additional \$4.1 million of indirect and induced economic activity. Indy Fresh Market's construction also will create an estimated 39 direct jobs and 61 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in the Marion County economy. These jobs will generate more than \$4.6 million in wages, benefits, and related labor income annually.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

A previous PPI report on the potential impacts of the manufacturing facility summarized the data captured through existing surveys and protocols, and recommended collecting additional information.³ As a result, Cook has been working with Goodwill to develop the appropriate protocols and specific new questions to be included in future research.

The first priority is to amend the survey new Cook employees receive when they start with the company. Although the new facility's employees will actually work for Goodwill, the surveys they receive will be administered similarly to how Cook surveys its employees. Once the existing surveys are updated, Cook will share them with PPI for a final review and possible additional recommendations. PPI also recommended hosting annual group discussions for employees who live in the neighborhood. This discussion would focus on quality of life in Northeast Indianapolis and examine the manufacturing facility's impact on the neighborhood. This input could then be compared with perceptions from local residents who do not work at the facility.

Similar survey instruments should be used, protocols followed, and group discussions facilitated with Indy Fresh Market employees to understand the impacts of their employment on their households, economic and career progress, and work satisfaction. These methods can further track and measure Cook's impact on quality of life in Northeast Indianapolis.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Community members have expressed strong aversions toward survey assessments. As a result, PPI is modifying its approach to minimize the potentially burdensome and invasive nature of organizational research in communities. While the team is still embedded in Northeast Indianapolis and conducting ongoing interviews with community members, they are engaging with

other entities that also are conducting or plan to conduct research in that area. Doing so can help teams work together to align and complement their efforts and research questions, share survey instruments, methods, and data. This collaboration can potentially maximize resources and benefits that can be shared with community members.

PPI is using the following framework to evolve its approach to evaluating the impact of the 38th and Sheridan project:

- What questions truly need answered because they are not already covered, either directly or indirectly, in topic-based literature, existing available datasets, or previous reporting?
- What questions are community members asking and can organizations conducting research apply at least some of their resources toward answering those questions?
- What other research projects are organizations conducting in the area, and are there opportunities for those entities to collaborate or support one another?
- Is a survey the most appropriate mechanism for meeting research needs or can the research questions be answered through other methods, perhaps through closer, more embedded engagement with community members?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Dynamic system partnerships are coalitions of private, public, nonprofit, and educational entities that define and address socioeconomic needs using community-based input to guide their activities and investments.⁴ This approach creates a customized, place-based network of partners who effectively work together to achieve a common objective. Working across sectors, these partnerships span the boundaries of individual programs and may be able to respond to persistent socioeconomic disparities more quickly and effectively than governments and nonprofits working alone.

Such a partnership is developing a new medical device component manufacturing facility and a new grocery store in a local food desert to directly benefit and improve quality of life among Northeast Indianapolis residents. Both buildings are anchor facilities of the 38th and Sheridan project, led by Cook Medical through its subsidiary, Cook Indy Investments LLC.⁵ This project operates based on a concept of corporate social responsibility that is different from traditional models. The new store is the result of a resident-identified food access gap in Northeast Indianapolis, and will help community members become more capable of taking advantage of employment, educational, and other opportunities to realize their full potential.

Cook Medical is a medical device manufacturing company based in Bloomington, Indiana. The company provides medical device products to 135 countries worldwide. The partners developing the grocery store include Cook Medical, Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, United Northeast Community Development Corporation (UNEC), Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF), Joe Welsh Consulting, Martin University, along with local construction firms and workers. This project shows how close collaborations between community leaders, for-profits, nonprofits, community foundations, and academic institutions have the potential to restore opportunities and services to communities in need. The key to success is developing a team of partners who work with communities to identify priorities and challenges and who have the resources and skills toward building solutions.

THE PROJECT

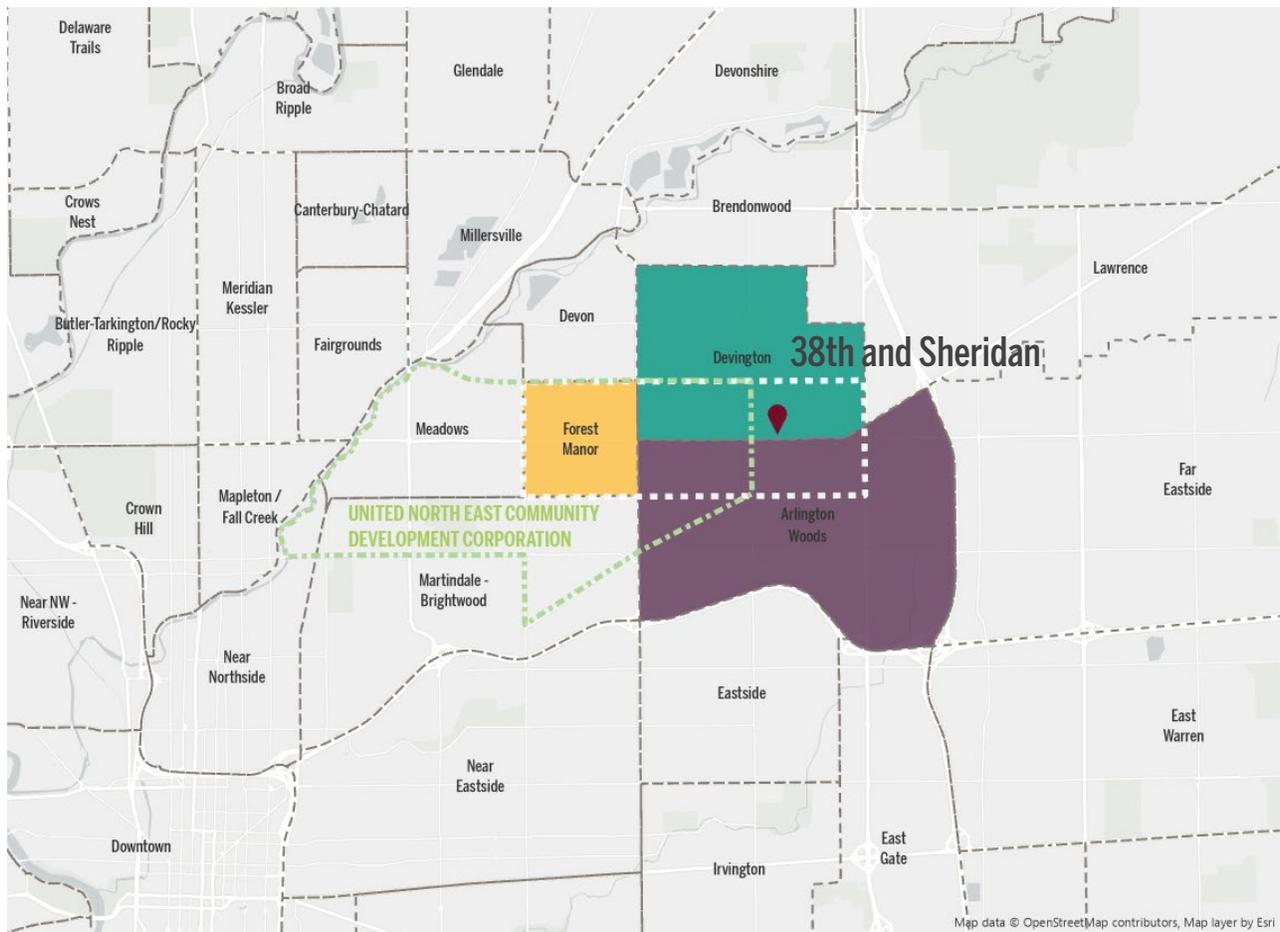
The new grocery store, called Indy Fresh Market, will be a full-size facility spanning more than 16,700 square feet. It will cost approximately \$7 million for construction, land, and equipment, and it will seek construction and supply services from local minority-owned businesses. In addition to Cook's own investments in the project, IMPACT Central Indiana—a regional LLC created by Central Indiana Community Foundation, The Indianapolis Foundation, and Hamilton County Community Foundation—is investing in capital and inventory to build the grocery store. The city of Indianapolis also approved a tax abatement to provide further financial support for the store's development.

Although the facility is being developed by Cook Medical and partners, ownership of the store and real estate will eventually be sold to two resident-entrepreneurs on a contract purchase model. The high cost of building the grocery store has been driven by untimely steep increases in materials. The project partners responded to this challenge by changing the construction's financing so the resident-entrepreneurs can become owners over time. To prepare the future owner-operators to run a full-size grocery store, Cook hired a retail supermarket consultancy, Joe Welsh Consulting. The consultant has created professional development opportunities—including internships at grocery stores in Indianapolis and Chicago—to give the men experience in all aspects of grocery store management. Importantly, the consultant helped establish a sustainable business model to keep food product costs in line with major chain grocers. This means the store will not be at a competitive disadvantage and the people who shop there will not have to pay higher prices simply because they're shopping at a smaller local store.

Additionally, Cook brought Martin University into the partnership. Martin University is located on Indianapolis' northeast side and is Indiana's only Predominantly Black Institution of higher learning. Working alongside the retail supermarket consultant, Martin University created a curriculum to provide business training to the future owner-operators. The curriculum will serve a broader audience and be available to other prospective grocery store entrepreneurs.

The grocery store intends to hire employees from the surrounding community, defined as the area from 42nd Street to 34th Street (north to south) and Sherman Drive to Shadeland Avenue (west to east) (Figure 1). To expand access to as many people as possible, the store will accept most governmental food assistance programs, such as WIC and SNAP. The store also will be located on a new rapid transit bus line, further expanding access to the store. Its business model is being designed to enable engagement and collaboration with local community food groups in order to plug into and support food access networks in Northeast Indianapolis.

FIGURE 1. 38th and Sheridan project focus area with overlapping neighborhood boundaries



COMMUNITY-DERIVED FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDY FRESH MARKET

APPROACH

From July through December 2021, a member of the PPI research team attended 21 community meetings and spoke with 17 individuals during 10 interviews. Most community meetings were neighborhood association meetings hosted by the Arlington Woods Neighborhood Association, Devington Communities Association, Keystone-Millersville Neighborhood Association, and Sheridan Heights Association for Neighborhood Enhancement (SHANE). Three of the four neighborhood associations met on a monthly basis. The Keystone-Millersville Neighborhood Association met in July and October.

The researcher also attended monthly Alliance for Northeast Unification (ANU) Community Partner Collective meetings. ANU meetings allow nonprofit and governmental practitioners on the northeast side to connect, share information, and learn about events, programs, and resources of interest to community partners and residents. These meetings also provide a platform for discussing collective concerns and action items to help define and meet quality-of-life goals.

PPI's attendance at these meetings allowed researchers to hear about community concerns, as well as receive notifications about events and programs intended to address concerns or enhance the quality of life in Northeast Indianapolis. These meetings helped researchers connect with potential interviewees and gain contextual information that enriched and deepened conversations with the residents and community members they interviewed.

Out of the 10 interviews conducted, nine were one-on-one conversations with five Northeast Indianapolis residents and four community liaisons. The community liaisons did not live in Northeast Indianapolis but worked for governmental or nonprofit partners and service providers in the area. One interview was an in-person conversation with a group of seven women involved in a weekly book club. All but one of the book club members were longtime residents in Northeast Indianapolis. The one outlying member traveled from Pike Township on Indianapolis' northwest side to participate in the book club.

The PPI researcher asked interviewees several questions, including how long they had lived, worked, or served in the area, what it was like when they first moved into or became engaged with Northeast Indianapolis communities, how the area has changed, and their thoughts about the area's strengths, challenges, and needs. Because food access is of particular interest in this study, the interviewer prompted conversations about where interviewees shopped for food, their concerns about food access in Northeast Indianapolis, and their hopes for the new Indy Fresh Market grocery store. It is important to note that all interviewees had access to a personal vehicle and drove to the grocery stores where they preferred to shop, even if it meant traveling several miles. Likely, individuals who do not have cars and rely on public transportation to get groceries do not have the flexibility to choose where they shop. This may impact their access to affordable and nutritious foods. The lack of access may have long-term impacts on their overall health, including incidences of diet-based illnesses, such as diabetes and obesity.²

FINDINGS

Some interviewees attributed the closures of previous grocery stores in the northeast area to high rates of theft and expressed concerns that Indy Fresh Market would be similarly impacted. Other interviewees, however, thought theft was an issue that those other grocery stores could have overcome with adequate investments into security measures, quality products and facilities,

and building relationships with community members. Because there are no full-service grocery stores on the northeast side, interviewees said they traveled outside of their neighborhoods to shop at stores that offered satisfactory selections of quality foods, especially fresh meat and produce. The quality of the shopping environment was also important to interviewees. They said they wanted stores that were clean and where the culture of the environment made them feel comfortable. Interviewees expressed hopes that Indy Fresh Market would develop into an anchor institution in the community, one that reflects Northeast Indianapolis' demographics and culture and that engages in the area's social and economic networks.

Becoming a food desert

When prompted to talk about food access in Northeast Indianapolis, interviewees mentioned grocery stores that had closed over the years. This indicates the area was not always a food desert, but that sustainable food access had long been a challenge. Interviewees most frequently mentioned a Cub Foods store in the Avondale Meadows area that closed in 1997⁶ and a Kroger store—an anchor store in the now dilapidated Devington Shopping Center at 46th Street and Arlington Avenue—which closed in 2018.⁷ A community liaison who was an active participant in the Devington Communities Association spoke about the closure of the Devington Shopping Center Kroger and the gap it left in the community. She said, “When the Kroger closed on 46th and Arlington, that was the largest attended Devington [Communities Association] meeting we’ve ever had.” She explained that community members wondered, “What are we going to do? How are we going to feed people?” Efforts in her organization have focused on growing food and providing it to northeast side food pantries to help fill the need for food among the area's struggling residents.

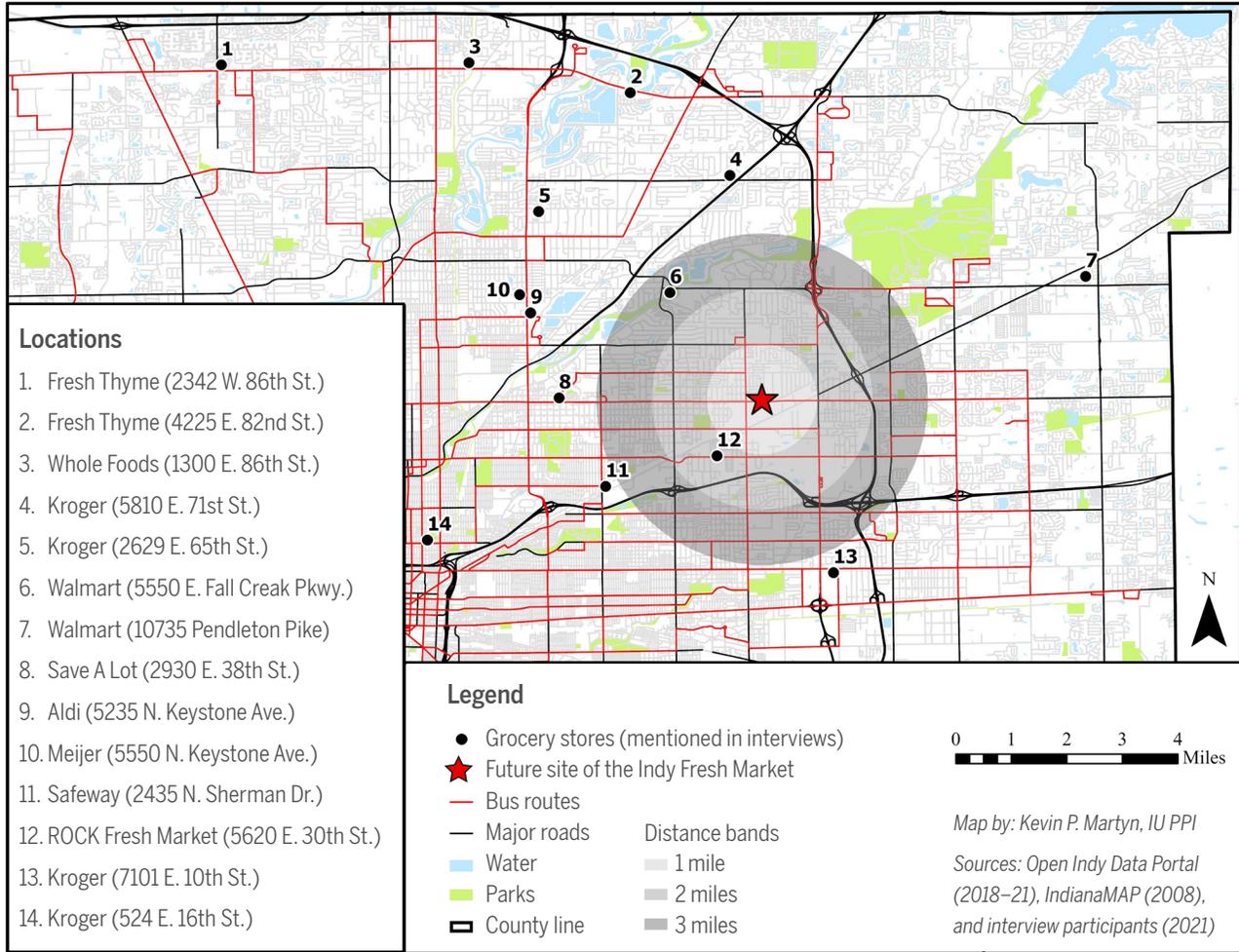
Interviewees offered explanations about why previous grocery stores had closed. Many interviewees shared that theft was a significant factor in driving both Cub Foods and Kroger from the area. Two interviewees advised that the new Indy Fresh Market store will need to plan to mitigate that issue. An Audubon Gardens resident said the new store's operators will need to “make sure it's secure. So, [people are] not coming in there taking the food out like they did when Cub's was here.” She continued, “That should be a no-brainer for me. I don't understand why it's even an issue. I mean, if you put a new store there, knowing the climate is today the way it is, then security should be at the top of the list. You know, just take care of that and wipe that off . . . your list.”

A community liaison who worked in the Avondale Meadows area for more than two decades also shared that security was “something that we will definitely want to have a plan for.” However, she added that a security strategy should not “target people.” She did not want to see the store's security go so far as to make people feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. She said, “You don't want to have that element every time you go into a store to shop that you have someone watching you or following you.” Instead, she wanted to see Indy Fresh Market's operators work on building relationships with people, which she thought would help curb people's desire to steal from the store.

Other interviewees had different ideas about why the area's grocery stores had closed. Although a resident who lived near 46th and Shadeland said he heard the stores closed because of theft, he was not sure he believed it. He said, “I'm just going to be honest with you. I can see it happening, but I can't visualize it,” meaning that he could not imagine that so much product was stolen that a store would have to close. He continued, “I just can't see you going in there, walking out with everything. Where's the security? Security ain't doing nothing? I just can't picture that somebody can steal you out of business. . . . That's a lot of stealing.” He said he could not recall that the companies had said anything to community members—or to the broader public—about theft being an issue in their stores until they were closing them. He said this made him feel like theft was an excuse to justify the closure rather than a genuine reason about why the stores were not sustained. He sensed the companies simply did not see value in sustaining investments in Northeast Indianapolis communities.

Women in the book club depicted grocery store closures as “political.” One participant compared the Devington Shopping Center Kroger to a Kroger at 16th Street and Park Avenue on Indianapolis' near north side (Figure 2), an area that has seen

FIGURE 2. Grocery store locations near E. 38th Street and N. Sheridan Avenue



significant investment and increases in property values in recent years. One participant said that, although the Kroger at 16th Street and Park Avenue “was going down at the same time as the one in Devington,” there was investment made into the 16th and Park Kroger. She thought that was because the store was in a revitalizing neighborhood. Meanwhile, the Kroger in the Devington Shopping Center was closed.

The women in the book club raised general questions about why investments are made into some communities and not others. One participant concluded, “It goes back to ‘follow the dollar.’” She said, “The reason why we don’t have [those investments] is because we don’t have the dollars and they [people in wealthier communities] have the dollars.” She continued, “They make this community look and feel like we don’t care. That’s what upsets me. Like, ‘Oh, they don’t care.’ Well, it’s not that we don’t care, it’s just that we don’t have the power to get back the things that we need.” The power she was referring to was residents’ spending power as well as their ability to advocate for their needs and be heard by decision makers.

As this interviewee spoke, she described a collaborative type of engagement between people investing in Northeast Indianapolis communities and residents investing time and resources in their own communities. She said, “If the [Indy Fresh Market] grocery store keeps up with the quality of food that everybody [wants to buy], that’d be great because I’d love to see minorities prosper. I want to see that store succeed. I don’t want it to disappear like the rest of the stores that have been in and out, in and out in this community.” She acknowledged that the responsibility not only rests on Indy Fresh Market to maintain good quality food that meets community members’ preferences. She added “It’s on our part, too, to patronize [it]. We’ve got to spend our dollars with the companies that are in this area. And I’m not talking about spending it with McDonald’s and, you

know, fast food.” The interviewee wanted to see the development of a hyper-local economy wherein community members were taking advantage of and directly benefiting from quality investments.

Shopping for groceries

The PPI interviewer asked interviewees to talk about where they typically shopped for groceries (Figure 2). All interviewees had access to a car and did not rely on public transportation to travel to a grocery store, significantly expanding their options. One interviewee said she traveled as far as 86th Street to shop at Fresh Thyme and Whole Foods. Most interviewees, however, said they frequented stores closer to their northeast side homes. The store mentioned most often was the Kroger at 71st Street and Binford Boulevard. Notably, this Kroger location is not on a public transit line, making it difficult to access for those without a car.

Residents prioritized selection and quality over location. For instance, although there is a Walmart Neighborhood Market at 56th Street and Fall Creek Parkway—closer to the Northeast Indianapolis area than the Kroger at 71st and Binford—interviewees did not say they shopped there regularly. The resident who traveled to 86th Street to shop at Fresh Thyme and Whole Foods said she only went to the nearby Walmart for things like toiletries and paper goods. She said, “It can’t be food. I don’t buy food there.” Interviewees who said they did not go to the Walmart Neighborhood Market explained that it was because they were not satisfied with the quality and/or the selection of the food. A resident who lives near 46th Street and Shadeland Avenue said that the selection at that Walmart “is not like Kroger. They don’t have as many things because it’s just the market. It’s not a full Walmart. It’s the Walmart market store.” Most interviewees emphasized the importance of having access to a full-service grocery store that offered fresh meats and produce. Although these interviewees could travel to a store with such offerings, someone relying on public transit would have to travel 3 to 4 miles to access a full-service grocery store with fresh meat and produce. Their closest options would be either the Kroger at 10th Street and Shadeland Avenue or the Meijer on Keystone Avenue.

Since the closure of the Kroger in the Devington Shopping Center at 46th Street and Arlington Avenue, a Devington resident said he had been traveling to the Kroger at 71st and Binford, almost directly passing the Walmart Neighborhood Market at 56th and Fall Creek. He explained that he preferred to go to “a store [he] trusted.” He added, “I don’t really trust the Walmart down the street.” In a pinch, he said he would go to the Dollar General on Emerson Way, across the street from the Walmart Neighborhood Market. This resident also mentioned that there are Aldi and Meijer stores on Keystone Avenue, as well as another Kroger at 65th Street and Keystone, but he said, “That’s still quite a ways.”

The resident who lived near 46th and Shadeland mentioned there is a Safeway store at 25th Street and Sherman Drive, near his workplace. He said he did not shop there because it is in the opposite direction from his home and the store did not have everything he liked to buy. He said, “It is not a big outfit, even though they got the . . . meat department, but they don’t have a deli . . . and the produce department is small. So, thank God it’s there, but it don’t have the selections of a Kroger or something like that.”

Interviewees expressed similar dissatisfaction with the Save A Lot grocery store in the Avondale Meadows area. Despite it being the closest grocery store to many of the interviewees with whom we spoke, none of the interviewees said they shopped there regularly, including interviewees who worked in the immediate vicinity. Interviewees were dissatisfied with the store’s offerings and the inside and outside cleanliness of the store. They said it was nice when it opened in 2017⁸ but had since declined to the point that it was no longer an acceptable option for them. An Audubon Gardens neighborhood resident said, “I have pictures on my phone of when it opened, and we had a big celebration and looked at the food and all, how things were going to be laid out, and that lasted about six months. . . . I came in several months later . . . and I couldn’t believe the difference and the trash [outside].”

Indy Fresh Market as an anchor institution

Interviewees expressed excitement and optimism about Indy Fresh Market, as did participants in community meetings. Community members have been eager for updates. They want to know when the store would begin hiring and eventually open to the public. The resident who lives at 46th Street and Arlington Avenue shared, “I think it’s a fabulous idea, definitely, to have a grocery store,” because that is one of the community necessities that he said has “disappeared” over the years. A community liaison whose organization manages a community garden that provides food to local pantries said, “This grocery store from Cook is exceptionally exciting for people.”

Two community liaisons who worked in the Avondale Meadows area talked about how they envisioned using Indy Fresh Market. One said the new store conveniently will be located on her route to and from work. She explained, “Before, I would just stop in at Save A Lot, but I don’t do that much.” She said, it will “be great to be able to just stop somewhere and not have to go up north just to get food, out of my way.” The other community liaison hoped she would be able to get healthy lunches at Indy Fresh Market, noting, “There’s a lot of fast-food places, and so, even for the staff to get something that’s healthy, you’ve got to go up Keystone [Avenue]. The closest . . . store that you can probably get a healthy salad or something is maybe Aldi or Meijer.” She said, “It’s going to be very much welcomed to have that [Indy] Fresh Market.”

A Devington area resident said he was “thankful” for the investment at 38th and Sheridan and that he hoped it “encourages more of the same.” He talked specifically about the significance of a grocery store to a community, characterizing a grocery store as “a big part of any community.” He said a grocery store was important not only because of the jobs it would provide, and access to a basic need, but also because it would be a space for social interaction among community members. He said there is “something about a grocery store . . . it brings people together.” He observed, “You see people at the grocery store. There’s jobs at a grocery store, and, hopefully, there’s good food.” An Audubon Gardens resident thought the store could host outdoor markets during the summer months to bring people together.

Interviewees said they wanted to see Indy Fresh Market become a social and economic anchor in the community in ways that many businesses had not. Community members said most Northeast Indianapolis businesses did not participate in community meetings and events, build relationships with community members, or reflect the culture or demographics of the area. The Audubon Gardens resident who wanted to see Indy Fresh Market host outdoor events said that many of the area’s businesses “don’t know us [and] we don’t know them.” She continued, “They’re sitting here sucking up whatever resources the neighborhood has and taking it out of the neighborhood.” She did not think most of the area’s businesses were assets to the community.

Conversely, one of the community liaisons who worked in the Avondale Meadows area talked about how pleased she was with the plans she had heard for Indy Fresh Market’s development, that it would be reflective of and connected to both the people in and the culture of Northeast Indianapolis. She said, “I love the idea of who they’re wanting to incorporate to actually make the business run from the top to the bottom. I think that’s important to see people who look like you, like me, and so I want to be able to see that there’s a comfortability and a safeness in there.” She spoke about what it can be like for her and other community members when a store does not feel culturally comfortable or safe, saying, “no one looks like me, no one speaks my language, no one understands the culture, they don’t understand . . . even how to speak, maybe, in the language of the culture or the neighborhood.”

This interviewee imagined that Indy Fresh Market being a locally owned independent grocery store might be the right answer to Northeast Indianapolis’ food access gap. She thought its community-based model could “embody the authenticity of the neighborhood [and] the values of the neighborhood” and thus would be more sustainable than a standardized corporate model. She explained, “If you create [Indy Fresh Market] to simulate a Whole Foods or a Fresh Thyme kind of vibe, style, then you create a separation. You create, maybe, a stigma, like, ‘I’m not gonna be able to afford this.’ Because I’ve been at Fresh Thyme, and

it's a different culture. It's completely different from your neighborhood Walmart." She also wanted to see Indy Fresh Market "incorporating a lot of local farmers and local growers" in order to tie into "the neighborhood and local connections, so whether you go [to a community garden] versus . . . Indy Fresh Market, that still binds us as the northeast area, together." In these ways, she imagined the grocery store being an integral part of the northeast side's social and economic networks.

The community liaison whose organization manages a community garden thought Indy Fresh Market being an independently owned store could position it to become an anchor institution in the area. She said, "There's something about an independent grocery store that you cannot get in a chain, and I hope that that's what I can see there." For her, that "something" was a deeper, richer connection that she imagined community members would be able to have with the store's owners, because the owners would be part of the community, too. She thought the store would be better equipped to serve Northeast Indianapolis communities because they "could build a relationship with those folks."

The importance—as well as challenges—of having deep and rich connections with Northeast Indianapolis communities was highlighted in the comments of two Audubon Gardens interviewees. One of these individuals pointed out that the area's Black and Hispanic residents "eat uniquely different from a lot of people," and she hoped the grocery store would cater to those residents' preferences. Talking specifically about Hispanic neighbors who did not speak English well or at all, both Audubon Gardens interviewees described difficulties they have faced in overcoming language and cultural barriers to build trusting relationships with their neighbors. Still, one of the interviewees emphasized that, if Indy Fresh Market is "going to be a neighborhood thing, neighborhood entity, service, [then] they're gonna have to [cater to those residents]. They can't [ignore] them, because we want it to be where you can get out and walk to a store."

In becoming an anchor institution in Northeast Indianapolis, one community liaison saw the grocery store, as well as the adjacent manufacturing facility, having the potential to disrupt the area's decades-long trend of underinvestment and disinvestment. She said the way Northeast Indianapolis was underserved in food access, education, workforce development, and employment opportunities signaled to community members that their communities did not have value to well-resourced outsiders and decision makers. She said the community's lack of resources and investment "make it feel 'less than.'" She imagined community members and outsiders alike might look around Northeast Indianapolis, see how it is underserved and disinvested, and think, "Why should I care?" She thought this sentiment of "less than" would continue to cycle "until we find out ways to systemically change it." She was optimistic about what the grocery store and manufacturing facility could do in breaking the cycle of underinvestment and disinvestment in Northeast Indianapolis. She added, "This grocery store is a start. It can be a start. If it's truly for the community and for the community's benefit, and it's going to employ the community—same with the factory—if you're going to give them a fair wage and you're going to give them good training and you're going to train them in a way that they want to be there for a long time or they're going to take what they're knowing and they can share that and grow." She thought the store could "give people a reason to do well."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings from interviews with area residents and community liaisons, PPI has identified three recommendations that can help guide Indy Fresh Market toward becoming a sustainable anchor institution in Northeast Indianapolis.

1. Prioritize building relationships with community members—including those with limited mobility and who rely on public transportation—by finding and creating opportunities to connect with residents, nonprofits, and government entities that serve local communities.
2. Create a welcoming, comfortable, and inclusive environment that community members will be motivated to support by reflecting the demographics and culture of Northeast Indianapolis through the store's design, staff, and selections.
3. Work to overcome language and cultural barriers. For example, native Spanish-speaking residents in Northeast Indianapolis could be served by developing partnerships with organizations that have established trusted relationships with this portion of the area's population.

STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS & EXPECTATIONS

APPROACH

To capture the origins and evolution of the project thus far, PPI interviewed several individuals from the project's partner organizations, including Cook, Goodwill, and United Northeast Community Development Corporation (UNEC). Interviewees were individuals who attended weekly meetings during which partner organizations gave project updates and addressed challenges. Meeting attendees were invited to participate in interviews conducted via Zoom. Researchers asked them about the creation of the partnerships, original plans for the project, how the project has evolved over time, what challenges have been encountered, and how those challenges have been addressed.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Project aspects that have evolved since conception

When Cook Medical and Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana set out to build a new manufacturing facility in Northeast Indianapolis, bringing professional and educational opportunities to an area where residents were experiencing barriers to upward mobility, they did not anticipate that building a grocery store would be their next big project. However, their partnership with UNEC and ongoing engagement with community members informed Cook that many residents in the area do not have easy access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable foods, and that addressing this challenge was a high priority.

A member of Cook's leadership team explained that it was through their engagement with community members that Cook learned of the community's food access gap. This is what led them to the idea for the grocery store. She said, "Along the way, we've obviously gotten more engaged with the community. [Food access] wasn't a part of the original perspective . . . [but] that is a reasonable outcome from getting to know the community, the resources and assets of the community, and what the community wants, and what the community needs help with." By purposefully engaging with community members, Cook better understood their needs and priorities and could use its resources to collaborate on a sustainable solution.

The idea for a grocery store started taking shape when Cook's president met the grocery store's future owner-operators at a community clean-up event, hosted by Cook and Goodwill at the manufacturing facility site. The two men—who were residents in the area and operating a small convenience store—dreamed of eventually opening a full-size grocery store that would fill the area's food access gap. Cook's president realized that supporting the two men in their dream of creating a grocery store in the area would be beneficial not only to the community, but also to Cook's goals of removing local barriers to economic mobility and hiring reliable and productive workers from the surrounding area. While Cook and its partners are investing in the construction, land, and inventory required to build and open the grocery store, the resident-entrepreneurs will eventually take full ownership of the store's operation and real estate through a contract purchase model.

Recognizing that operations of a small convenience store are significantly different from those of a full-size grocery store, Cook brought in a retail supermarket consultant to help develop a sustainable business model and create professional development opportunities—including training at grocery stores in Indianapolis and Chicago—to give the men experience in all aspects of grocery store management. Additionally, Cook brought Martin University into the partnership. Martin University is located on Indianapolis' northeast side and is Indiana's only Predominantly Black Institution of higher learning.

Contributors to project successes

Partnerships with community members have been critical to bringing the manufacturing facility and grocery store to fruition and meeting the overall goals of reducing barriers and bringing economic opportunity to Northeast Indianapolis. A member of Cook's leadership team said, "I've seen other projects that have had tremendous pushback, and it's because they're floating—they're not engaging." Cook's commitment to being engaged with the community has allowed them to build trusting and authentic connections and gain community members' support and insights. In large part, these connections have been facilitated by UNEC. The same member of Cook's leadership team described the dynamics between Cook and community members, saying, "It has to be a partnership and you have to be out with people all the time. And if you're doing that on your own, it's hard to get that open door to people. So, with [UNEC], we knew we had that. But I knew going in, you know, building a building and hiring people and the number of partnerships we've got, it's going to be complicated." The interviewee indicated that project partners are operating on a set of shared values that view the project as a priority when he emphasized that each of them is committed to actively contributing toward meeting project goals. He said, "Everybody has come to the table. We have weekly meetings. Everybody shows up, and everybody's doing the work."

An interviewee from UNEC similarly conveyed partners are operating on a set of shared values. She said they each are passionate about the project and bring an entrepreneurial spirit to it. She explained that, although the partners "come from all different sectors and environments . . . we have the answers within each one of our organizations," and those answers center on "people in this neighborhood." The interviewee also praised the uniqueness of this type of redevelopment project, saying "It's so refreshing, to say the least, because . . . before, we didn't have that. But to have that now, that element of economic development that shares that [community focus], it's been so inspiring." She said the partnership's ability to evolve effectively from one project to another has been because of an "ability to see [that] everybody has their own strengths that they bring to the table."

Challenges to date

Most of the challenges that project partners have faced have been related to supply chain issues that have impacted project timelines and budgets. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, shipping and production delays on construction materials forced the project partners to make slight adjustments to the manufacturing facility's construction timeline and more significant adjustments to the grocery store's construction timeline. For the manufacturing facility, Cook's team was able to place timely orders for materials to keep construction progressing. For the grocery store, steep increases in the cost of materials forced project partners to reconsider how they would finance the store while maintaining a model that would still enable the resident-entrepreneurs to obtain ownership down the road.

Potential areas of future concern

Project partners have broadened their involvement beyond the manufacturing facility and the grocery store to now include concerns about public safety and housing in the community.

- Housing: Concerns exist about potential gentrification and displacement, but leadership is hoping to prevent these issues by shifting their focus to homeownership in the community and land banking.
- Public safety: Leadership from Cook and UNEC are meeting with community members, local police, and other public and nonprofit leaders to begin conversations about addressing the area's high crime rates.
- Employment: With current shortages in the job market, some members of leadership have raised concerns that hiring from the immediate local area could be difficult, although no issues have arisen in early stages of hiring.

Suggestions for other businesses pursuing a similar investment model

Indy Fresh Market is the outcome of a unique development model that addresses complex problems by using a dynamic system partnership led by Cook Medical. In the partnership, public, private, and nonprofit entities take a flexible and contextualized approach to addressing and reducing disparities. This new approach to development can respond to the complexities created by

the unique contexts, needs, and priorities of communities that have been historically and systemically left behind by economic growth and development efforts. While the partnership started with building a medical device component manufacturing facility that will help fill an employment gap in Northeast Indianapolis, community input guided collaborators in the partnership to evolve their activities and investments to help fill a food access gap. This and other community investments made by the partnership are seen collectively as a means of supporting future manufacturing workers and their community by removing barriers that could interfere with workers' ability to improve their economic futures. The organizations in this dynamic system partnership have leveraged their complementary strengths, networks, and resources to respond to a specific, persistent, and community-defined socioeconomic challenge which government and nonprofit entities have struggled to address on their own.

Key features of this project's dynamic system partnership offer up a model that can be replicated in other geographic areas or to address other complex socioeconomic challenges.

- The partnership is a multisector collaboration among entities that share a common mission. In the partnership, a for-profit firm is playing an essential role. Where government and nonprofit entities typically struggle, the private entity can use its flexibility and resources to meet complex project objectives.
- The partnership relies on trusting relationships and consistent communication among its entities and with community members. Leaders in the partnership engage actively, intentionally, and authentically with existing and longtime residents throughout the course of the project.
- Ongoing community engagement gives residents and local advocacy groups meaningful roles in decision-making processes, thereby increasing community members' control and ownership of their areas' futures. Residents' priorities and concerns guide the partnerships' processes and goals.
- Working alongside community members, the partnership identifies local challenges and uses its strengths, networks, and resources to support and complement existing community assets and to respond collectively to specific, persistent, and community-defined socioeconomic challenges.
- The partnership's activities are tracked and measured using quantitative and qualitative methods that analyze economic and cultural impacts. Measures of success are based in whether intended beneficiaries are affected in equitable and inclusive ways.

FRESH MARKET CONSTRUCTION ECONOMIC IMPACT

APPROACH

As with the construction of the manufacturing facility, the work done to prepare the Indy Fresh Market grocery store will provide short-term, one-time economic benefits associated with the rehabilitation and construction of the facility. It also will eventually provide long-term annual benefits associated with operations. While Cook and its partners will strive to direct their spending and hiring to the immediate neighborhood, the economic benefits will spread beyond the neighborhood to the rest of Marion County, the state of Indiana, and beyond. The initial estimates of the project's economic contributions are focused on Marion County. Once construction is complete and data on spending by ZIP code is collected, the PPI research team will produce a second set of neighborhood and county-wide economic impact estimates.

ESTIMATING ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Indy Fresh Market's economic impact estimates are based on the economic contributions of construction costs provided by Cook Group of \$6 million for construction, \$300,000 for land, and \$700,000 for equipment. PPI uses IMPLAN, one of the two most commonly used input/output models, to estimate the economic contribution. Input/output models use direct inputs, such as construction cost or total employment, to estimate the indirect and induced economic activity associated with the initial direct investment or employment.

For example, contractors will be hired to perform tasks associated with construction. The investment made when hiring those contractors represents the direct investment. The contractors then purchase supplies or hire subcontractors, and those expenditures stimulate additional activity and produce the indirect impact. Induced impacts result from owners and workers spending their income on unrelated consumption such as housing, food, clothing, etc. The direct, indirect, and induced impacts represent the total economic contribution of the initial investment as it works its way through the local economy.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACT

The research team estimates the initial expenditure of \$7 million on construction, land, and equipment will produce an additional \$4.1 million in indirect and induced economic activity. Thus, they estimate the one-time total economic contribution from the construction and rehab for Indy Fresh Market to be more than \$11.1 million.

A critical component of Indy Fresh Market's economic impact are the jobs the new demand creates and its associated employee contribution. In total, the work is estimated to create 39 direct and 61 total full-time jobs with over \$4.6 million of labor income, including wages and benefits.

FIGURE 3. Estimated economic impact of Indy Fresh Market construction

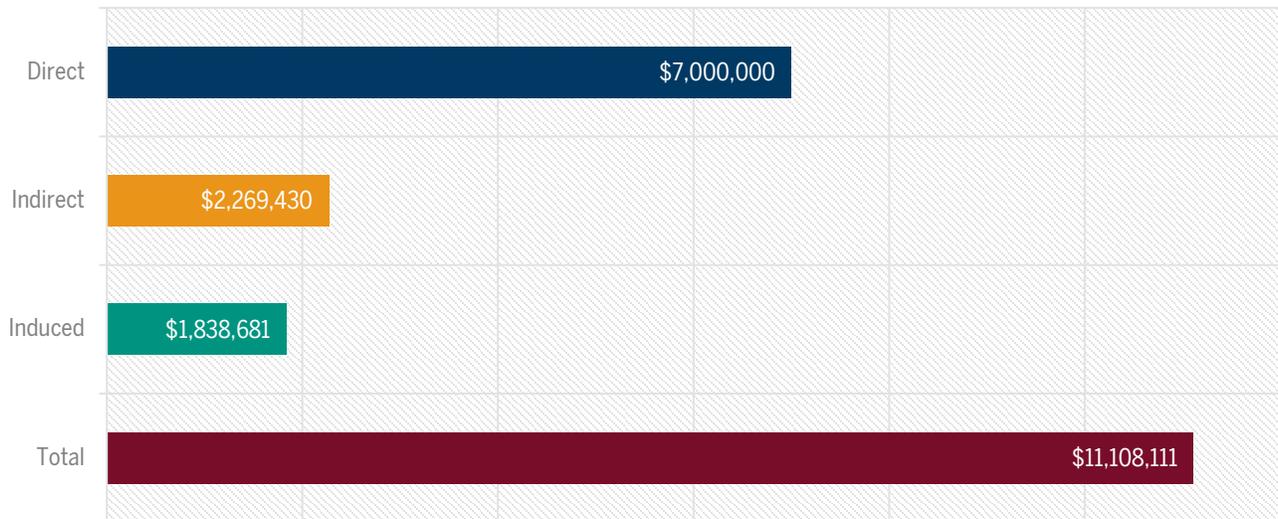
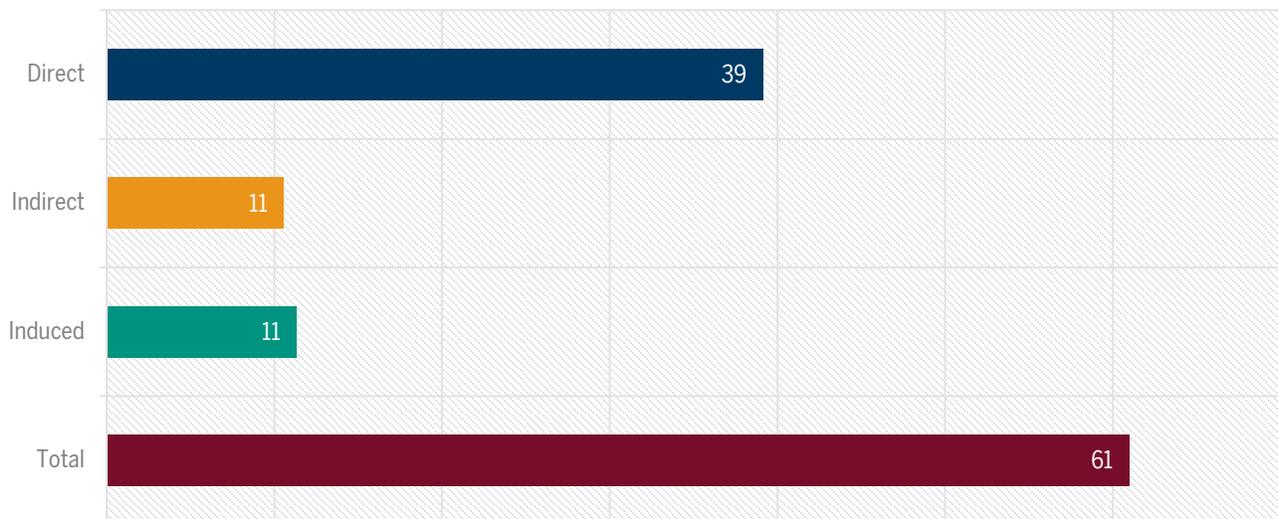


FIGURE 4. Estimated number of jobs created by construction of Indy Fresh Market



EMPLOYEE SURVEYS

The cornerstone of the 38th and Sheridan project is identifying, hiring, and developing individuals in the targeted neighborhoods immediately surrounding the facility. This intentional effort is expected to provide improved economic stability and result in opportunities for the employee and the rest of their household.

Cook Medical and Goodwill Commercial Services have preexisting survey instruments that routinely collect key data that provides insights into the employees'—and occasionally their households'—economic progress, career progress, and work satisfaction. Among the tools in place—which also begins the data collection process—is the Goodwill employment application. Additionally, Cook routinely surveys new hires, undertakes an annual employee engagement survey, and conducts an exit interview. Finally, Cook's personnel department data allows researchers to track annual wages, job changes, attendance, and some performance measures.

PPI and Cook worked together to develop additional questions to be added to existing surveys to capture impacts related to the intentional efforts to connect employees with the company and Northeast Indianapolis neighborhoods.

Employees at the manufacturing facility will be Goodwill Commercial Services employees working in a Cook Medical facility. This means Goodwill would need to allow these employees to participate in standard Cook employee surveys that enable data collection and comparison with Cook employees at similar facilities.

A previous PPI report on the potential impacts of the manufacturing facility summarized the data captured through existing survey and protocols.³ It also provided recommendations for additional information for the company to collect. Cook has worked with Goodwill to develop appropriate protocols and specific new questions for its surveys. The first priority is to amend the survey new employees at Cook receive when they begin their careers with the company. Once the existing surveys are updated, Cook will share them with PPI for a final review and possible additional recommendations.

PPI also recommended hosting an annual group discussion for employees who live in the neighborhood. This discussion would focus on quality of life in Northeast Indianapolis and examine Cook's impact on the neighborhood. This input could then be compared with perceptions from residents who do not work for Cook.

EMPLOYEE SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Indy Fresh Market should use similar surveys as Cook, follow similar protocols, and host group discussions with its employees to understand the impact their employment has on their households, economic and career progress, and work satisfaction. Doing so can further track and measure Cook's impact on quality of life in Northeast Indianapolis.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Upon engaging in the 38th and Sheridan project and surrounding communities, PPI researchers began developing a community-wide survey to evaluate the impact of the 38th and Sheridan project. Once they drafted a survey, researchers requested feedback on it from community members to ensure it asked relevant questions in appropriate ways. It quickly became apparent that community members were not amenable to the idea of a paper or online survey.

A woman who had been working in the area for about two decades as a community liaison for a government entity said that Northeast Indianapolis residents had been “surveyed to death.” An Audubon Gardens neighborhood resident described her annoyance with surveys, saying, “A lot of the information that gets [collected], the data that’s compiled, it never, never benefits us.” She said community members often did not even see the data or reports unless they asked for them. She said, “You have to make an effort to find out who has the data, and can we see it?” Even when data and reports were shared with community members, she did not feel like the community saw meaningful results or changes. She added, “It just never goes anywhere.” She seemed demoralized when she further explained, “We’re doing the same thing, we’re turning the same cartwheels now that we were turning several years ago.”

Community members seem burdened by the fact that organizations expected them to participate in research, but then did not share data or findings, dedicate resources toward meaningful interventions to meet community needs identified in the research, or activate solutions that community members shared when surveyed. These cases beg the question: Who benefits from community-based research?

After listening to community members, PPI began modifying its approach to evaluating the impacts of the 38th and Sheridan project into one that focuses on minimizing the sometimes burdensome and invasive nature of organizational research in communities. In addition to continued embeddedness in Northeast Indianapolis communities and ongoing interviews with community members, PPI researchers are engaging with other entities that are currently conducting or are planning to conduct research in the area. These entities include:

- United Northeast Community Development Corporation: UNEC is gathering community feedback to update the Northeast Corridor Quality-of-Life Plan and guide the Equitable Food Access Initiative.
- Eskenazi Health: Eskenazi is opening a new health center in the area and is designing longitudinal studies to understand impacts on social determinants of health.
- Diabetes Impact Project: DIP-IN is in the midst of a five-year program working to reduce diabetes rates in areas where incidences of the disease are high, including Northeast Indianapolis.

Gaining awareness and understanding of existing research projects in Northeast Indianapolis can help researchers find ways to align their efforts and research questions. Such collaborations can help organizations share and complement surveys, methods, and data, potentially maximizing their resources and the benefits that can be shared with community members.

CONSIDERATIONS

As PPI researchers develop a more responsive approach to evaluating the impacts of the 38th and Sheridan project, the following questions are being considered:

- What questions truly need answered because they are not already covered, either directly or indirectly, in topic-based literature, existing available datasets, or previous reporting?
- What questions are community members asking and can organizations conducting research apply at least some of their resources toward answering those questions?
- What other research projects are organizations conducting in the area, and are there opportunities for those entities to collaborate or support one another?
- Is a survey the most appropriate mechanism for meeting research needs or can the research questions be answered through other methods, perhaps through closer, more embedded engagement with community members?

MODELING COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DEVELOPMENT

This report updates the ongoing work of the 38th and Sheridan project where Cook Medical is building a medical device component manufacturing facility. In addition to the facility, the development focuses on engaging residents to determine how the community can best position itself to take advantage of business investment. Cook is leading the community redevelopment efforts in partnership with a coalition of private, nonprofit, and public partners. The coalition's latest investment—a full-service grocery store called Indy Fresh Market—addresses an immediate and critical need to improve community access to fresh, wholesome, and more nutritious food. This grocery store will be operated and eventually owned by two neighborhood residents.

The grocery store portion of the development is an example of how a project led by a private company is removing silos that prevent timely collaboration between public and private agencies that can provide resources to address the needs of workers and community members facing employment barriers. Having Cook lead efforts for the creation of both the grocery store and the manufacturing facility exemplifies a community-first approach. It shows that project partners have listened to—and appear to be responding effectively to—community-defined challenges that could act as barriers to success for the manufacturing facility and other neighborhood development efforts. Such practices may significantly improve the results of redevelopment projects targeted toward underinvested communities.

Cook Medical identified the grocery store as a critical need only after they had taken the time to build trusting relationships with community members and nonprofit partners. They established these relationships before anything was built. Doing so allowed Cook and their partners to more quickly identify additional community needs beyond the jobs its facility will create. Their approach also allows them to pinpoint the resources required to address those needs.

By using its own resources and working with nonprofit, philanthropic, and public agencies, Cook Medical acted in its own economic interest by building a grocery store that will be complete in the next year. Aligning the timing of that grocery store completion with the opening of its manufacturing facility means workers and residents alike will have local access to healthy food. In addition, residents said they view the grocery store as a place to potentially build community while creating even more jobs that can further remove barriers to economic self-sufficiency for neighborhood residents.

More investments are planned to improve security, transportation, housing, and infrastructure in the area. Cook expects that when workers and families have access to these critical supports, they also will be more reliable and more productive.

As the project progresses and operations begin, PPI will continue to evaluate the economic effects on future workers and the neighborhoods around the 38th and Sheridan project. PPI also will continue to document how project partners work together in a dynamic system partnership to rapidly identify development challenges, eliminate threats—such as displacement of residents from nearby communities—and capture opportunities for the businesses investing in the surrounding community. PPI's goal will be to provide qualitative and quantitative information on the project's various investments and related outcomes in the community surrounding the project site. Finally, as PPI collects data, researchers will develop additional reports to provide possible insights into new or improved approaches to developing, implementing, and measuring economic development programs.

To achieve an overarching objective of development without displacing residents, project partners must maintain clear roles for themselves, stay engaged with the community, and continue to use an entrepreneurial approach to identify resources,

talent, and relationships that keep development moving forward. Solving complex challenges—such as increasing equitable economic and quality-of-life opportunities for underinvested communities—requires a new way of thinking. Leaders must reimagine implementation to be better at understanding the needs, expectations, and aspirations of residents in undervalued places. Policy makers and program managers must consider how their programs could incentivize their agencies and nonprofit partners to be better followers and collaborators when a more community-engaged firm is ready to take the lead in economic development.

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DESIGN BY

Karla Camacho-Reyes, CRISP Special Projects Coordinator



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