



## Sustainability Fellowship **Increasing Healthy Food Access - Bridgeport, CT**

The City of Bridgeport is one of the largest and most diverse in Connecticut. Two neighborhoods in Bridgeport are “food deserts:” residents of these neighborhoods lack consistent access to a selection of fresh, local produce. There have been previous efforts to work with local corner stores or farmers markets, but none of these has yet proved to meet the needs of neighborhood residents and to be economically sustainable. This project will gather vital information relative to the feasibility of possible long-term solutions: ideally, leading to the siting of a grocery store in at least one of these neighborhoods.

A UNHSI Sustainability Fellow will work with long-term residents, local leaders from the city government, and possible business or NGO partners, examine the demographics, economics and possible business case/prospects for bringing a grocery store to the East End and South End neighborhoods in Bridgeport. A final report will make all of the findings from that research transparently available in a written report.

Specific tasks may include:

- Working directly with partners like the Economic Development office research the business case for siting grocery stores in specific areas of the City
- Interview local residents to better understand the needs, available resources and constraints
- Review existing data from other food initiatives (farmers markets, healthy corner stores, Healthy Food financing initiatives) to understand existing data on community specific needs and concerns
- Look at models from elsewhere (e.g., grocers that harvest leftover produce for lower cost healthy options, integration of small business incubation and jobs training into food access models) to identify best practices that may work locally.

The fellow would have the opportunity to interact with a diverse community and gain knowledge of urban planning and the role of politics in addressing systemic change. The community will benefit by having a neutral individual develop and present an unbiased report on the feasibility of a grocery store and alternative solutions that will assist them in identifying the best solution.

Food access is a critical social justice issue and one that is a problem in many areas. The Fellow will gain unique first-hand experience in addressing this issue. This is an opportunity to tackle an entrenched problem involving complex systems and diverse stakeholders, and to make a real difference in a community.

**Location:** Bridgeport, Connecticut

**Time commitment:** 40 hours per week, June 6-August 19, 2016

**Compensation:** \$6000 stipend

**Desired Qualifications:**

- Enrollment in an undergraduate or graduate degree program: ideally in urban planning, community economic development, business planning and development, and/or social entrepreneurship.
- Familiarity with food systems desirable.
- Fluency in issues of environmental and social justice, and a background working in vulnerable or underserved communities.
- Superb listening skills essential.

**UNHSI Sustainability program eligibility:**

Graduate students, exceptional undergraduate students, and recent graduates are eligible. We will encourage, but not require, an academic sponsor or reference for each fellow, and where possible we will ask that course credits are awarded.

**Supervision, Training, Mentoring and Evaluation**

This fellow will receive day-to-day supervision from Marilyn Moore, Connecticut State Senator, and mentoring and professional development offerings from UNHSI.

Fellows will be expected to participate in three MANDATORY events:

- A three-day, two-night orientation in Durham, NH, June 1-3rd. Lodging and food are provided; Fellows are responsible for any associated travel costs.
- Midterm project presentations to UNHSI staff, faculty and relevant project partners (can be done remotely).
- A summative evaluation and feedback session at the end of their placement.

**Apply by February 23<sup>rd</sup>** at <https://www.sustainableunh.unh.edu/sustainability-fellows>