

UNLIMITED POTENTIAL

# Neighborhood outreach, food needs assessment, workshops and events

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## Introduction

Thank you to the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office and other partners for their efforts to improve public health outcomes by increasing food resiliency and investing resources to reach people in high-need areas through trusted community members. We are particularly thankful to the community members who took the time to share their ideas, thoughts, and recommendations..

## Background

To better understand community members' relationship with food, their current food-related experiences, and their desires for the future, the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office, Unlimited Potential, and ASU's Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems partnered to complete a food needs assessment survey and

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implementation of a series of community workshops to ensure alignment between residents' needs and urban agriculture pilot projects.

Unlimited Potential Community Health Workers (CHW) led community member outreach in the neighborhoods of Alegre, Escalante, and La Victoria/Victory Acres and the recruitment and coordination of community workshops in the Spring, Summer, and Fall of 2023.

This summary presents the outcomes of the food needs assessment survey, community outreach efforts, workshop results, and food showcase event.

### **Community Food Needs Assessment Survey**



**Survey:** The assessment survey was a series of 20 questions specific to food accessibility, satisfaction with the current food environment, food security, topics people would like to learn about, and how urban agriculture might look in their neighborhood.

**Delivery:** The assessment survey was available both online and in a one-on-one survey format and was available in both English and Spanish.

**Community Outreach:** One-on-one surveys were conducted at a variety of locations that included the Escalante community garden, the local food bank, Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal church, the Escalante community center, and during canvassing efforts in Alegre, Escalante, and La Victoria/Victory Acres.

**Participants:** 86 residents took the survey. The one-on-one survey participants were randomly selected within the three neighborhoods. The online survey participants were found via promotion with community partner organizations and their networks.

**Demographics:**

Neighborhood By Percentage		Gender Identity By Percentage		Language Preference By Percentage	
Escalante	46.50	Woman	73.30	Spanish	47.70
Alegre	9.30	Man	24.40	English	51.20
La Victoria/Victory Acres	20.0	Prefer not to respond	2.30	Other:	0.00

Age Group By Percentage		Race & Ethnicity By Percentage	
< 18 years old	2.30	White	23.30
18 - 25	11.60	Black or African American	5.80
26 - 35	22.10	American Indian or Alaskan Native	5.80
36 - 45	19.80	Asian	8.10
46 - 55	18.60	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2.30
56 - 65	12.80	Hispanic	60.50
66 years old or older	12.80	Prefer not to respond	1.20

**Staff Participants:** The assessment surveys were conducted by experienced CHWs who are trusted members of their local communities. Community Health Workers Ana Karen Anaya, Aidee Covarrubias, Samantha Esparza, Juana Silva and Minerva Velarde led the needs assessment outreach and were assisted by Araceli Montero, Margarita Ramirez, Julia Rodriguez, Nancy Sandoval and Briseida Santos.

## Food Assessment Survey Results:

### Access:

- The top 3 places for participants to purchase food were the following; 94% at the grocery store, 16% at the dollar store, and 12.8% at a farmers market.
- Less than half of the participants are satisfied with options to find healthy food. The primary barriers are cost, distance, and not knowing where to find it.
- Quality, cost, and location matter most when purchasing food; culture, health considerations, and plant-based options are also important.

### Food Security:

- 53% of participants worry about running out of money for food and 45% don't have enough money to buy the food that they need.

### Nutrition & Education:

- People want to know more about health and nutrition, cooking and recipes, and edible native desert plants. 85% of participants believe cooking classes will be beneficial.
- Almost one in five participants does not have the time to cook or prepare food.
- In order of importance, participants wanted to learn more about food in the following ways; health and nutrition, cooking and recipes, edible and native plants, medicine, eating seasonally, fiber, food waste diversion and composting, and food entrepreneurship.

### Vision of Urban Agriculture:

- Urban agriculture should increase access to local food through farmers' markets, community gardens, and community orchards or food forests. Vacant land should first be used for food production and secondly for recreation.
- The benefits of urban agriculture included improved food access, learning garden skills and the ability to grow food for one's own use or for others, building a sense of community and improved overall well-being.
- Better communication about availability is needed because, for example, only 48% of participants knew about the Escalante Community Garden.

*See Appendix A for the complete survey results.*

## Workshop Series 1

May 10, 2023 \_ Tempe Making Space Festival



USDA Grow Local Tempe partners participated in the Tempe Making Space Festival. Unlimited Potential CHW's shared the results of the needs assessment survey and asked people about the types of agriculture projects they would like to see in their neighborhood, and where they would like to see them.

People were interested in farmers' markets, community orchards, edible gardens, school gardens, and urban farms and identified potential locations. The ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems team displayed the eight case studies on different urban agriculture models and solicited feedback.

## Workshop Series - 2

June 22, 2023 \_ Escalante Community Center

*Needs Assessment Survey and 10 policy recommendations*



Unlimited Potential, the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office, and the ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems, hosted a community workshop at the Escalante Community Center to share the results of the needs assessment survey and discuss 10 policy recommendations for urban agriculture in the neighborhood in more detail. Forty-eight people attended the event; mostly residents from the Escalante neighborhood.

Posters were used to present the needs assessment survey results and included additional prompts for consideration and participant input.

Prompt	Top Response
What Urban Agriculture model interests you the most?	School garden.
What obstacles do you face accessing and eating healthy food?	Too expensive.
How do you want to get involved?	Learn more about health and nutrition.
What brings you to the event?	Explore new ideas about food and to support my community.

See Appendix B for the complete record of responses.

The final state analysis and policy recommendation report will be available via ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems; noted below are the workshop highlights.

ASU Research 10 Policy Recommendations	Participant Comments/Perspective
Create a Tempe Food Action Plan rooted in community outreach and engagement.	<p>Increasing dedicated resources (people and space) and including community members in the planning process are important for urban agriculture to be successful.</p> <p>Distinct health, cultural, and access needs exist within different areas of the city and need to be included.</p> <p>Interest in various phases of the food cycle included growing, nutrition and health, preparation, canning, dehydration, and composting.</p>
Increase urban agricultural visibility by growing in public spaces ( local <a href="#">Tiger Mountain Foundation Model</a> )	<p>The collective nature of the concept would contribute to its success and reduce the barriers to participation. People had fond memories of gardening in the past.</p> <p>Including options for children, youth, and seniors, increasing outreach, and addressing potential safety issues would increase participation.</p> <p>Restarting a composting program was recommended.</p>
Collaborate with neighboring cities to expand successful programs.	Spaces of Opportunity in Phoenix was suggested as a successful integrated model.

<p>Hire a community liaison to support initiatives and act as a hub for education, mentoring and support.</p>	<p>Open access to community workshops and seminars on learning about urban agriculture from community experts was important and could complement existing programs at the Escalante Community Center.</p>
<p>Implement a fruit-sharing program.</p>	<p>There is a need to increase trees in general, with fruit-bearing a bonus. It was noted that fruit trees have already been removed from neighborhoods.</p> <p>If people were not comfortable sharing from their yard, they were happy to donate excess to a food pantry.</p> <p>Launching a seed-sharing program alongside a fruit-sharing program would promote more climate-friendly varieties.</p>
<p>Create viable workforce development options.</p>	<p>Workforce opportunities should include considerations for seniors and teenagers that would be available on a part-time and/or less strenuous basis.</p> <p>Increasing outreach is also important to spread the word.</p>
<p><b>ASU Research Recommendations (cont.)</b></p>	<p><b>Participant Comments/Perspective</b></p>
<p>Collaborate with Tempe school districts to promote school gardens and cooking.</p>	<p>Programs are highly regarded due to multiple touchpoints but need to align with school interest, staffing, and other resources.</p> <p>Connecting programs from elementary to high school with certifications available could be beneficial.</p>
<p>Expand existing micro-grants to include food-specific options.</p>	<p>Assistance would be needed to evaluate, propose and submit grants. Ideas for use of the grants included irrigation, greywater infrastructure, community cooking spaces, workshops, pollinators, and school gardens.</p> <p>Some HOAs restrict food production. Existing HOA improvement grants may need to be updated to include urban agriculture and meet bylaws.</p>
<p>Support rain harvesting efforts and expand rebate programs for smart irrigation.</p>	<p>The future of water resources is a concern. People have stopped gardening to save money on water bills. People were interested in food production rebate programs.</p> <p>Greywater usage is somewhat familiar but education would be needed for people to feel confident knowing how to use greywater for food production.</p>

Uphold Indigenous Peoples and knowledge and center equity.	Participants were primarily interested in specific crops and nutritional value and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge of agriculture.
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**Workshop Series - 3**

**August 31, 2023 \_ Escalante Community Center**

*Select pilot projects*



Unlimited Potential, the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office, and the ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems hosted a follow-up community workshop at the Escalante Community Center to select the neighborhood-specific pilot projects and identify neighborhood ambassadors. Eighteen people attended.

Six pilot projects were identified and participants learned about the different urban agriculture models, the proposed sites and then made recommendations for each site.

Pilot Projects	Key Recommendations
Thew Elementary School	Create a gardening education program that includes a gardener-in-residence, composting, and after-school cooking and nutrition classes
Connolly Middle School	Connect the current school garden with the culinary program through a gardener-in-residence, composting, after -school cooking and nutrition classes and a farmers market and/or a farm bag program.
McClintock High School	Create additional shade on campus through a food forest concept and expand the existing culinary program to include food entrepreneurship. Add a gardener-in-residence for the garden and community forest, nutrition classes linked to Connolly Middle School, and participate in a local food purchasing program for the cafeteria and the culinary

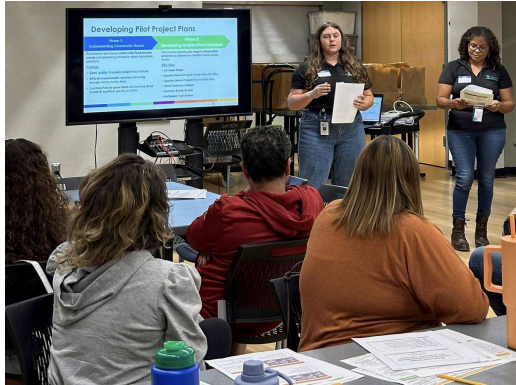


EnVision Center	Leverage an on-site commercial kitchen and programming space to develop new programs focused on education, workforce development, and food access. Add a farmers market and/or food bag and composting component.
Apache Central - Project #1	Develop a community food hub to include educational programming and training, food access resources, and a community space for collective sourcing of locally produced goods.
Apache Central - Project #2	Develop an edible landscaping / food forest model that provides direct access to food through on-site food production and compost initiatives.

**Workshop Series - 4**

**November 9 2023**

Confirm pilot projects and develop a collective vision



Unlimited Potential, the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office, and the ASU Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems hosted a follow-up community workshop at the Escalante Community Center to discuss and confirm the pilot project topics for each site, prioritized project components, and develop a collective vision for each site. Twenty-six people attended.

**The common theme for all of the projects was connection** and designing projects to complement one another. For example, the school sites should reflect the progression of a student’s food education during their school career. Since sites such as the Envision Center and Apache Central are close in proximity, they should take advantage of the opportunities to collaborate and create more impact.

Pilot Projects	Collective Vision	Priority
Thew Elementary School	Educational advancement, community building, cultural connectivity autonomy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Garden</b> (<i>outdoor education &amp; food production space</i>)</li> <li>• <b>School Garden Coordinator</b> (<i>part-time paid staff role to manage school garden program</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Cooking and Nutrition Education Program</b> (<i>after-school cooking classes for students &amp; families</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Composting and Local Food Procurement Program</b> (<i>reducing</i>)</li> </ul>

		<i>food waste and sourcing local produce in the cafeteria)</i>
Connolly Middle School	Garden integration, on-site food production and distribution, and community building.	<p><b>School Garden</b> (<i>outdoor education &amp; food production space</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Garden Coordinator</b> (<i>part-time paid staff role to manage school garden program</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Produce Bag Program</b> (<i>on-site food distribution for students' families &amp; community members</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Composting and Local Food Procurement Program</b> (<i>reducing food waste and sourcing local produce in the cafeteria &amp; culinary program</i>)</li> </ul>
McClintock High School	Innovation, circularity, community-oriented, and cross-disciplinary.	<p><b>Food Forest</b> (<i>an edible landscape, education tool, &amp; food production space</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>School Garden Coordinator</b> (<i>part-time paid staff role to manage school garden program</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Food Entrepreneurship Program</b> (<i>student education on career pathways within the food economy</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Local Food Procurement Program</b> (<i>sourcing local produce in the cafeteria &amp; culinary program</i>)</li> </ul>
EnVision Center	Accessibility, education, entrepreneurship, and community orientation.	<p><b>Community Kitchen</b> (<i>multi-use kitchen space for educational classes &amp; business development</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Cooking and Nutrition Education Classes</b> (<i>health-focused cooking and nutrition education to support food access</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Food Entrepreneurship Program</b> (<i>training program for entrepreneurs to develop their food business &amp; access commercial kitchen space</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Farmers' Market</b> (<i>market that expands access to fresh, affordable produce &amp; locally-produced goods</i>)</li> </ul>
Apache Central - Project #1 & 2	Community connection and growth, accessibility, education, on-site food production, and flexible spaces for food exchange.	<p><b>Food Resource Center</b> (<i>community gathering space &amp; educational center for food-related training and food access support</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Food &amp; Urban Agriculture Education</b> (<i>food and urban agriculture-focused workshops &amp; classes</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Basic Needs Access Support</b> (<i>food access, budgeting, &amp; social benefits sign-up/support</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Food Hub</b> (<i>joint produce sourcing initiative to secure local produce for local grocery, farmers' market, &amp; food pantries</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Food Forest</b> (<i>site-wide edible landscape that provides shade and food access</i>)</li> <li>• <b>Garden Space</b> (<i>education garden space used for teaching &amp; demonstrations</i>)</li> </ul>

## Community Food Showcase Event

January 20th, 2024

*Showcase pilot projects, Envision Center, City of Tempe resources, and celebrate progress*



Over 350 community members participated at the Community Food Showcase Event at the Envision center!

The event was hosted by the City of Tempe Sustainability and Resilience Office, Hedberg Garden Group, ASU Swette Center, AZ Sustainability Alliance, Local First Arizona, Maya's Farm, and Unlimited Potential, along with other City of Tempe services.

The event included interactive activities focused on food, a free produce market, opportunities to win home gardening supplies, and other City of Tempe services.

A community survey about the pilot projects was completed before and during the event with a total of 75 responses, 48 being completed during the event. The Envision Center was the pilot project with the most interest (48%), followed by Apache Central Development (21%), Connolly Middle School (13%), Thew Elementary (11%), and McClintock High School (7%).

Almost 90% of survey respondents said they had a good understanding of the Grow Local Tempe initiative and 71% wanted to be kept up to date with new information and with ways to get involved.

### Summary

The power of partnerships was demonstrated through this collaborative work to engage and energize community members through the local food system. The workshop series built the momentum and knowledge for people to engage thoughtfully, envision the future, and to make informed recommendations about the pilot projects. The food showcase event gave everyone a physical space to imagine the future and to celebrate.

We are grateful for all the relationships and partnerships that have grown and been strengthened through Grow Local Tempe. We look forward to the next stage of improving access, food security, and nutrition education through a connected food system.

For questions or comments, contact Tawsha Trahan @ [ttrahan@unlimitedpotentialaz.org](mailto:ttrahan@unlimitedpotentialaz.org).