



experimental
station

2025 Increasing Food Access Report

STRENGTHENING THE ILLINOIS FOOD SYSTEM

TERMS YOU NEED TO KNOW:

SNAP

Is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and is managed at the federal level by the US Department of Agriculture. SNAP is administered at the state level by the Illinois Department of Human Services where recipients apply to get an Illinois Link card.

Nutrition Incentives

Provide SNAP customers cash incentives for fruits and vegetables through matches, vouchers, coupons, or discounts.

Link Match

Is the statewide nutrition incentive program run by Experimental Station. SNAP users receive Link Match vouchers to spend on fruits and vegetables when they use their Link card at participating locations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pages 4–11 | Link Up Illinois

Link Match in Numbers
Importance of Link Match
Partners Highlights
Increasing Ease and Reach through Marketing
Brick & Mortar Community Engagement
Link Match Locations

Pages 12–17 | 61st Street Farmers Market

Farmers Market in Numbers
Year in the Life of the Market
Education Programming

Page 18 | City EBT

Page 19 | Illinois Food System Roadmap

61st Street Farmers
Market's cooking class



61st Street Farmers
Market's gardening class



Uptown Farmers Market



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friend,

We have been doing it for the past 18 years—making our communities healthy again. Since 2008, Experimental Station has been pursuing our vision of a healthy and food-educated South Side and an Illinois where all Illinoisans have affordable access to fresh produce and locally and sustainably grown food. Today, as a result of our deep commitment and earned expertise, we are recognized as a leading voice and innovator in increasing food security at the local and state levels. As you will see in the following report, thanks to our dedicated staff and many valued partners in our work, 2025 was a banner year of continued programmatic achievements, as well as exciting, transformative, system-level innovation.

Looking ahead, we are uncertain what 2026 will bring. Federal funding cuts and changes to SNAP work requirements have left states scrambling to address increased food insecurity—along with the need to address funding cuts to other essential programs. At the same time, we are hopeful that the extension of the 2018 federal Farm Bill to September 2026 and the federal government's recent emphasis in dietary guidelines away from ultra-processed foods and toward fresh and more nutritious ones will lead to strong federal support for our food access work. We also see opportunity for rebuilding Illinois' food system in the loss of markets for commodity crops resulting from tariffs; struggling Illinois commodity farmers may see an economic future in diversifying their production by growing food crops and thereby contributing to greater food security in our state.

What we do know about 2026 and beyond is that much will be asked of us. As we continue to work to make our communities healthy again, we will rely on the collective commitment of our many partners, collaborators, and supporters—whose efforts are also reflected in our stories of success. If you are not yet among them, we hope the following pages will inspire you to become involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Connie Spreen".

Connie Spreen
Executive Director

LINK UP ILLINOIS LINK MATCH

Launched in 2009, 'Link Match' is the statewide nutrition incentive program that doubles the purchasing power of SNAP benefits with vouchers for fruits and vegetables at participating markets, farm stands, and grocers. This program serves as a bridge between Illinois SNAP recipients and farmers, fostering a more resilient and equitable food system.

In 2025, despite extraordinary challenges for SNAP recipients—including benefit payment delays and legislative uncertainty—we saw unprecedented program growth:

\$2.26 MILLION

in Link Match redemptions provided a record amount of healthy food to Illinois families.

The network expanded to
157 PARTNERS,
including 28 brick and mortar locations.

As federal priorities shift, we at Link Up Illinois remain steadfast in our commitment to our neighbors. We provide the funding, training, and marketing necessary to ensure every Illinoisan, regardless of income, can access the fresh produce they need to thrive.

LINK MATCH PARTNERS

129

Farm Direct Total

97 Traditional Farmers Markets

37 operating in the winter

14 Farm Stands

3 Delivery / Online Ordering Services

1 CSAs

8 Retail Space / Pop Ups

6 Mobile Markets

30 Mobile Market sites

28

Brick and Mortar Store Total

6 Co-ops

8 Small- to mid-sized grocers

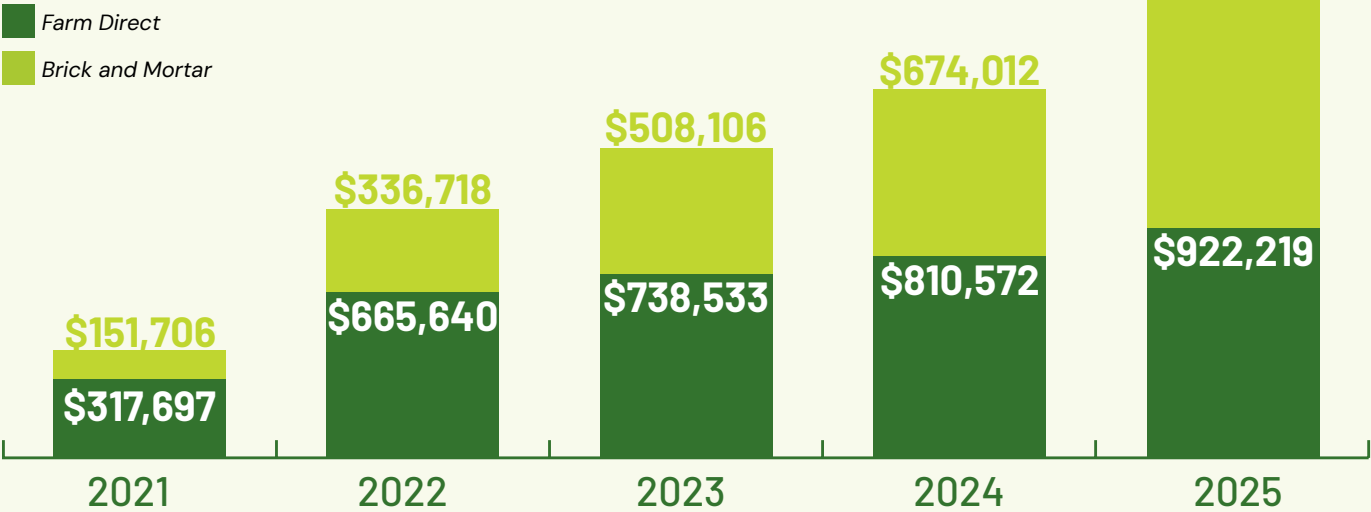
14 Full service grocers

Englewood Village Market

LINK MATCH PURCHASES OF
FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

\$2.26 MILLION

Total Link Match redemptions in 2025



LINK UP ILLINOIS
PROGRAM SURVEY RESULTS

The 2025 Link Match Program Evaluation was conducted by the Tulane School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine.



74.4% stated that their health has gotten better because of Link Match.



97.3% rated experience with Link Match as positive or very positive.



88.8% indicated that Link Match has increased the amount of fruits and vegetables they eat.



92.4% stated that Link Match was important or extremely important to their decision on how to spend their SNAP benefits.

IMPORTANCE OF LINK MATCH

In 2025, Illinoisans who rely on SNAP to eat and feed their families faced unprecedented difficulties receiving their benefits and understanding their eligibility. H.R.1—or the “One Big Beautiful Bill” passed on July 4th—caused widespread alarm with the announcement of SNAP and Medicaid changes. Frustrations continued when the 43-day government shutdown caused November SNAP benefits payments to be significantly delayed.

Through these extraordinary challenges, Link Up Illinois did our best to reduce confusion by staying up-to-date on news affecting SNAP and disseminating the most accurate information. Despite the confusion, Link Match had a record breaking year with over \$2.2 million in fresh fruit and vegetables provided to Illinoisans using SNAP. At a time when federal government support is in question, Link Up Illinois remains committed to helping our neighbors access healthy foods for themselves and their families.

An Englewood Village Market Team Member holding Link Match vouchers



TONY'S FRESH MARKET *Where Every Checkout Increases Access*

Tony's Fresh Market is more than just a neighborhood grocery store. They are a community partner focused on access. That commitment is reflected in its partnership with the Link Up Illinois program.

Through our partnership, since launching Link Match at Tony's in Plainfield, Joliet, and Bolingbrook, shoppers have redeemed over \$400,000 for purchases of fresh fruits and vegetables, demonstrating both strong participation and meaningful community impact.

Tony's Fresh Market offers a seamless Link Match experience by applying the benefit automatically at the register. This program structure removes the need for remembering to bring your vouchers or receipts, making Tony's program one of the easiest to use.

Tony's has played an active role in the program's success by also implementing in-store activations, food demonstrations, and customer engagement that helped introduce Link Match to shoppers.

By pairing strong operational support with community-focused outreach, our partnership with Tony's Fresh Market continues to expand access to nutritious food and support communities.



GREATER WABASH FOOD COUNCIL **Strengthening Reach in the Southeast**

Trish Bellmore, of the Greater Wabash Food Council, became a Link Up Illinois partner in 2024. Her dedication and vision led her to become a regional Link Up Hub partner in southeastern Illinois, supporting nearby farmers markets with everything from SNAP authorization and Link Match setup to day-to-day operations.

Since the Hub was established, Trish secured SNAP authorization for Grayville Farmers Market and helped to establish four new farmers markets in Carmi, Fairfield, Olney, and West Salem. All of these now accept SNAP and Link Match.

It is no small feat to start a farmers market and become authorized to accept SNAP. To accomplish this for four markets in less than six months is astounding!

Link Up Illinois is proud of the tailored assistance and marketing that we provide our Link Match partners, but local experts are often the most effective resource to connect to local community members. Trish and the Greater Wabash Food Council continue to expand affordable food access in southeastern Illinois and provide a great example of how the Hub model helps communities thrive.

West Salem Farmers Market



“The Link Match program is one of the most impactful tools we have for strengthening both food access and vendor success. It brings more neighbors into the market, increases purchasing power for families using SNAP, and directly boosts sales for our local farmers. The result is a more vibrant, inclusive market that truly serves the whole community.”

— LORI VANOOSTEN,
TWIN CITY FARMERS MARKET

“It’s been incredible to watch six communities come together in support of our local growers, makers, and producers. What’s equally inspiring is hearing from residents with traditional jobs who are turning to the market as a way to launch a side hustle. We’ve long promoted the market as a great place to test whether a passion project could become a full-time business—and now we’re seeing that message resonate.”

— TRISH BELLMORE,
GREATER WABASH
FOOD COUNCIL

INCREASING EASE AND REACH THROUGH MARKETING

Each year Link Up Illinois staff provide marketing materials to our Link Match partners. This is a crucial resource for market managers and farmers who often have much to do and too little time. Link Match is successful when folks understand how it will benefit them, a goal only achieved through concise and consistent messaging. Everything we create is available in 5 languages – English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian and Polish.

Ultimately our goal at Link Up Illinois is to make implementation of Link Match effortless and to reach as many people as possible. Providing excellent marketing materials and communication is one way that we uphold that commitment.

“Making a visible effort to help those who speak another language, especially around money, shows a degree of care and respect that is not quantifiable.”

— KATIE HORWITZ MARTINEZ,
DOWNTOWN EVANSTON
FARMERS MARKET



Brochure

Showing all Link Match locations and program basics is provided to all participating locations, Illinois Department of Human Services facilities, and other community partners. A QR code in the brochure directs to the digital version of the brochure in all 5 available languages.



Social Media Graphics

Range from basic program information to step-by-step instructions guiding SNAP users on how to use Link Match. Customizable versions are available on Canva accompanied by instructions on how to use the graphics.



'How to Use Link Match' Flyers

are particularly helpful when there is a language barrier between staff and customers.



Vendor Booth Signage

guides SNAP shoppers to vendors who accept SNAP and Link Match, creating a straightforward shopping experience.

BRICK & MORTAR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Link Up Illinois' Brick & Mortar program nearly tripled over the last three years despite one consistent challenge—getting the word out in the communities served by our partner stores. Grocery stores have limited resources to market the program. Consequently, Link Up Illinois has developed a core set of strategies to build confidence among employees and shoppers alike.

In-store training equips store teams with materials and procedures for seamless program integration. Informational tabling sessions familiarize customers with

the program, and a full set of marketing materials (store signage, handout flyers, social and e-newsletter templates) efficiently communicates Link Match information when our team is not present. Additionally, we partner with organizations such as Garfield Park Community Council, Lurie Children's Hospital, and local food banks, who are educating community members about the food access and health resources available to them.

Increased presence in the store and beyond not only empowers shoppers to maximize their benefits but also fosters trust, driving sustained participation and healthier choices.

“It was another successful year with Link Match! As our SNAP sales grow and provide more benefits to our customers with Link Match. I am really glad I had the opportunity to work with you last year and a half. It will be a challenging year for SNAP recipients with new rules and regulations.

Fresh Foods is ready to help needy families and to start another successful year in 2026 with Link Match.

—HEA LEE, FRESH FOOD
CARBONDALE



LINK MATCH PROGRAMS

NORTHERN IL

Farm Direct Partners

Broadview Farm and Gardens Farm Stand
DE Farms
DeKalb Farmers' Market
Farmers Rising Rockford
Gurnee Farmers Market
Jo Daviess Local Foods
Kankakee Farmers Market
Lanark Farmers Market
Liberty Prairie Farm Store
North End City Market
Oregon Farmers Market
QC Farmers Market
River's Edge Farmers Market
Rockford City Market
Rockford Midtown Market
Twin City Farmers Market
Woodstock Farmers Market

Brick & Mortar Partners

Cornucopia Natural Market & Deli
Food Shed Co-op
Jewel-Osco: Antioch
Jewel-Osco: DeKalb

CENTRAL IL

Farm Direct Partners

Champaign Farmers Market
Danville Farmers Market
Downtown Bloomington Farmers' Market
Galesburg Farmers Market
Good Samaritan Inn's Mercy Market
Illinois Product Farmers Market
Jacksonville Farmers Market
Le Roy Farmers Market
Macomb Farmers Market
Market 309 – Trewyn Park
Monticello Farmers Market
Old Capitol Farmers Market
Peoria RiverFront Market
Quincy Farmers Market
Rantoul Farmers Market
Richland Farmers Market
Sola Gratia Farm
Terripin Farms
Urbana's Market at the Square
Warsaw Mercantile

Brick & Mortar Partners

Common Ground Food Co-op
Green Top Grocery
NOSH Good Mood Food

SOUTHERN IL

Farm Direct Partners

Alton Farmers' & Artisans' Market
Belleville Farmer's Market (N Belt West)
Belleville Farmer's Market (N Illinois St)
Benton Farmers Market

Carmi Farmers Market
Centralia Farmers Market
DeMange Farm
Du Quoin State Fair Farmers Market
Eldorado Farmers Market
Elverado Farmers Market
F.R.E.S.H. Farmers Market
Fairfield Farmers Market
Farmer's Market of Carbondale
Food Works Mobile Farmers Market
Food Works Winter Market
Grayville Farmers Market
Land of Goshen Community Market
LEAF Food Hub
Marion Farmers Market
Maryville Farmers Market Inc.
Olney Downtown Farmers Market
Pete's Produce Roadside Stand
Theodora Farms Farm Store
Village of Brighton Farmers Market
Vine Street Market at O'Fallon Station
West Salem Farmers Market

Brick & Mortar Partners

Fresh Foods Carbondale
Neighborhood Co-op Grocery

CHICAGO

Farm Direct Partners

61st Street Farmers Market
Andersonville Farmers Market
Austin Harvest
Austin Town Hall Farmers Market
Bronzeville Farmers Market
Chicago Patchwork Farms Farm Stand
Daley Plaza Market
Division Street Market
Eden Place Farmers Market
Edgewater Monday Market
Englewood Village Market
Farm on Ogden
Finding Justice – Farm Stand, Market Booth, and Online Market
Forty Acres Fresh Market
Fresh Moves Mobile Market
Garfield Park Neighborhood Market
Gary Comer Youth Center Farmers Market
Glenwood Sunday Market
Green City Market – Avondale, Lincoln Park, and West Loop
Growing Home, Inc. Farm Stand
Hamptons Farmers Market
Hegewisch Farmers Market
Hyde Park Farmers Market
Jefferson Park Sunday Market
Lincoln Square Farmers Market
Logan Square April Pop-Ups
Logan Square Farmers Market
LUCSA
Muzz Mobile

North Lawndale Community Farmers Market
Northcenter Farmers Market
PCC Market
Plant Chicago Farmers Market
Plant Chicago Indoor Firehouse Market
Pullman Farmers Market
Saint James Community Farm
South Chicago Farm Stand
South Deering Farmstand
Top Box Foods
Uptown Farmers Market
West Humboldt Park Farmers Market
Wicker Park Farmers Market
Windy City Harvest Farmers Market

Brick & Mortar Partners

Cermak Produce: McKinley Park
Cermak Produce: Pilsen
Dill Pickle Food Co-op
Go Green Community Fresh Market
Jewel-Osco: Belmont–Cragin
Jewel-Osco: Bronzeville
Jewel-Osco: South Shore
Jewel-Osco: Wicker Park
Mi Mexico
Morgan Mini Mart
One Stop Food
Save A Lot: West Garfield Park

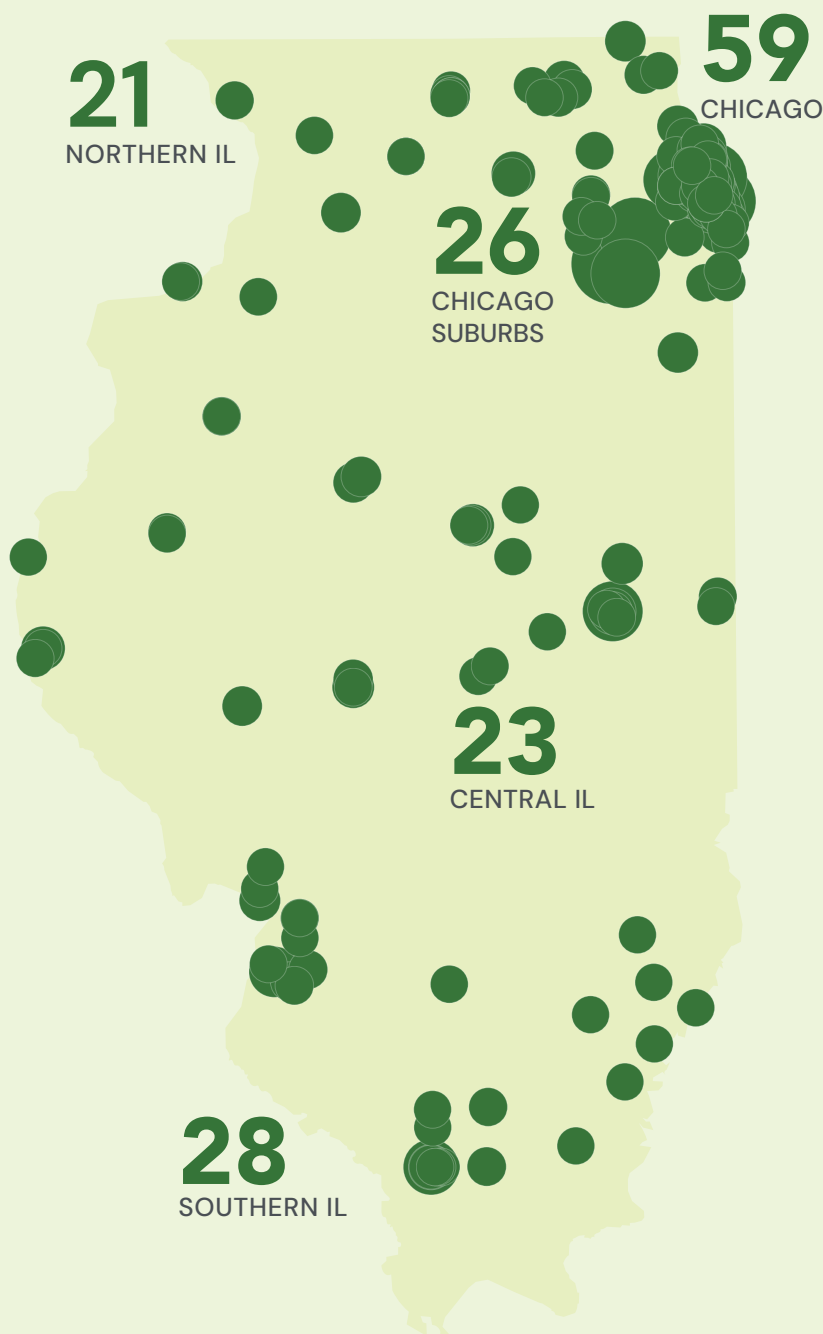
CHICAGO SUBURBS

Farm Direct Partners

Aurora Farmers Market
Aurora Farmers Market West
Batavia Farmers' Market
Brookfield Farmers Market
Downtown Elgin Farmers Market
Downtown Evanston Farmers Market
Glenview Farmer's Market at Historic Wagner Farm
It Takes A Village Community Farm
Maywood Summer Market
Northbrook Farmers Market
Oak Park Farmers' Market
Oswego Country Market
Palos Heights Farmers Market
Park Forest Farmers Market
Park Ridge Farmers Market
Real Foods Collective Mobile Market
Skokie Farmers Market
The Just Food Initiative of the Fox Valley
Z-Farm Stand

Brick & Mortar Partners

Cermak Produce: Melrose Park
Jewel-Osco: Oak Park
Living Fresh Market
Sugar Beet Food Co-op
Tony's Fresh Market: Bolingbrook
Tony's Fresh Market: Joliet
Tony's Fresh Market: Plainfield



“The Link Match program has literally helped us ‘grow’ our market from our vendors to our customers. Our market would not be what is without the Link Match program. We are proud to offer Link Match to provide access to fresh food to those in our community!”

— VIRGINIA JIMENEZ,
DEKALB FARMERS MARKET MANAGER

LOOKING FORWARD

Link Up Illinois remains committed to a more food-secure Illinois, amid limited funding and ongoing legislative uncertainty. Our focus is forward-looking yet realistic: shifting from past growth-driven approaches toward deepening impact across our existing network.

We are launching a targeted outreach initiative to connect more directly with neighbors where they live and learn, raising program awareness and building a foundation of goodwill. Paired with prioritized shopper education and onsite engagement, this will help increase redemption rates and put more fresh produce onto families’ tables.

While large-scale expansion (particularly in the brick-and-mortar space) faces funding constraints, we remain dedicated to welcoming more farmers markets and, specifically, to increasing awareness among individual growers. By enabling farmers with farm stands to implement Link Match, we support their livelihoods in yet another way while helping deliver vital nutrition to roadside locations.

Together, we will continue cultivating a resilient food system that nourishes all Illinoisans.

61ST STREET FARMERS MARKET

The 61st Street Farmers Market is a resource for food access and education on Chicago's south side, hosting a weekly farmers market and market-day educational opportunities for youth and adults. In addition, the Market manages a hoop house and resident community garden, and distributes garden produce to community members. Throughout the year, it offers seasonal youth and adult classes, including a comprehensive food education program for 2nd through 5th graders who learn about healthy eating, gardening, and cooking skills. Our programming takes place at Experimental Station and in the surrounding area, primarily serving its community members.



MARKET STATS

68,122

Total customer attendance

35

Market days

36

Total Market Vendors

88%

Of Market customers come to the Market to buy fresh produce*

72%

Eat more fruits and vegetables because of the Market*

**Annual survey of 848 customers*

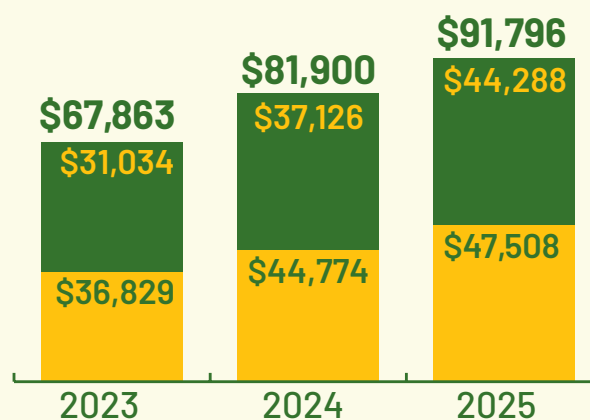
LINK SALES AND LINK MATCH REDEEMED

623

SNAP customers

■ Link Match Redeemed

■ SNAP Sales



66 "The 61st Market is part of our family in so many ways. Our health as a family has been impacted for the better. The change to fresh, local food has shifted our whole health."

— JOCELYN, A MARKET CUSTOMER

MARKET DAY 116

Total market programs



24 Sprout Station

A safe space for families with children to be creative, find resources, or rest during the market



17 Market School

A booth for Market customers of all ages to learn about food and sustainability with interactive activities



20 Chef Demonstrations

Chef Demonstrations, local chefs with take home recipes



9 Yoga

Free Beginner Yoga



5 Health Initiatives

Blood pressure and glucose checks



29 Open Shop

Drop in bike shop where mechanics teach repairs to the community and lead group rides



12 Music

Music and performances by local artists

YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE MARKET



WINTER JANUARY – MARCH

Winter is all about preparation, outreach, and education. Seeds are started in order to grow winter-hardy plants like kale and lettuce, and we distribute local produce and seeds to Jackson Park Terrace (JPT) residents. We attend conferences and trainings to find new partners and learn new growing methods. We teach participants in our Blackstone Bicycle Works (BBW) youth program about healthy eating through hands-on activities such as harvesting onions, learning about season extension, and making smoothies.

- **Andrew Carnegie Elementary School teacher appreciation dinner**
- **3 Farm Stand Business Development classes**
- **1 Jackson Park Terrace pop-up event**
- **Indoor Market continues**



SPRING APRIL – JUNE

Spring kicks things back into gear. Our 18th outdoor farmers market season officially opens and we resume food education classes for 2nd to 4th graders from Andrew Carnegie Elementary School. Additionally, our JPT hoop house gardener orientation, volunteer work days, and transplanting in the hoop house prepare us for summer.

- **4 Farmers Market Vendor Training Sellers Course Classes**
- **28 in school healthy eating, gardening, and after school cooking classes**
- **1 JPT pop-up with produce giveaway and bike repairs**
- **1 Carnegie parent day visit to the hoop**
- **2 BBW youth garden visits and cooking classes**



SUMMER JULY – SEPTEMBER

By the end of June, we have transplanted over 1,500 seedlings and are growing 100's of fruit and vegetable varieties for our garden, students, and community. This is the largest number of plants we've ever grown! We spend the majority of the summer season maintaining our thriving garden and market.

- **1 Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH) back-to-school pop up farmers market and chef demo**
- **3 outdoor chef demo pop-ups and garden/market tours**
- **6 BBW youth garden visits and cooking classes**
- **Carnegie family open house – produce and smoothie giveaway**
- **24 weeks of produce giveaways during the outdoor season**



"Garden day is the best! I wish we could come here every day!"

— CAIRO,
3RD GRADE GARDENING



FALL OCTOBER – DECEMBER

We come full circle in the fall. Beans planted in April are harvested in October, and used in our After School Cooking class in a 3-bean soup. Our bumper crop of cucumbers and tomatoes continue to be enjoyed by our 5th grade cooking class and JPT residents. We reflect on an abundant season as we shut down the garden for the winter and begin to plan for next year.

- **8 garden classes**
- **16 in-school and after-school cooking classes**
- **4 Farm Stand Business Development classes**
- **Indoor Market season begins**
- **Over 1,400 lbs produce grown**



"We're making healthier choices as a result of cooking class!"

— DR. COLEMAN, 5TH GRADE TEACHER
AT CARNEGIE ELEMENTARY

EDUCATION PROGRAMMING


799

Youth (357) and adults (442) served


24

Youth cooking classes


1,400+ lbs

Produce distributed at giveaways


24

JPT Harvest days/Produce giveaways


1,500+

Seedlings distributed to JPT garden, youth, community members and organizations


3

Garden based JPT chef demos


8

Hoop House events in collaboration with Jackson Park Terrace, POAH, BBW, and Carnegie Elementary


37

participants in the Farm Stand Business Development Course and Sellers Course

“

"I look at food differently now. There is a big difference between food coming straight from the garden versus coming from a can."

— MAHASIN, JPT RESIDENT GARDENER

“

"I love gardening with you. Relaxing, checking on my bed. It's like being at the lake. Understanding the soil, how the harvest grows. It's very exciting for me to seed and watch it grow, (then) taste the plants."

— JEWEL, JPT RESIDENT GARDENER

Farm Stand Business Class

In 2024, the City of Chicago created a farm stand business license to allow farmers and community gardens to sell their produce legally. The new license arose out of the recognition that gardeners, urban growers, and people residing in neighborhoods with low access to healthy foods would all stand to benefit.

The Market's Farm Stand Business Development course was created to address the needs of growers. With instructional support provided by Fresh Roberson and guest experts, the course provided key information about successful navigation of the application process, produce safety, farm stand marketing, and more. By the end of 2025, 20 participants had successfully completed the course and had made plans to get the license if it was the right fit for them.

Felicia Kimber of Stalwart Market was one of the participants who successfully obtained the license. ***"We open the garden next month. Without Fresh [class instructor] I wouldn't be able to do what I did. It took so much pressure off. It was divine."***



Felicia Kimber and her brand new license!



LOOKING FORWARD

Our community has been dramatically affected by changes to SNAP and other safety net programs, yet we know our strength is in each other. Experimental Station remains committed to ongoing support of our community and the growth of our programs.

With the Obama Presidential Center's opening this summer, Woodlawn will see an influx of new visitors. We aim to meet this moment with additional vendors at our market, expansion of in-school offerings to kindergarten and first graders, and enhancements to our hoop house garden. By improving this vital space, we will create a welcoming environment that reflects the vibrancy of our community while strengthening local food access for years to come. Through these initiatives, we are building a stronger, more resilient Woodlawn, rooted in community and sustained by growth.

*2nd grade healthy eating students
enjoy trying new fruits and vegetables*

CITY EBT PROGRAMS LEGACY & IMPACT

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the USDA transitioned from paper food stamps to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. Vendors at farmers markets would have to get an FNS number and special equipment for mobile card readers, costing upwards of \$1,000. These were barriers that threatened to cut off thousands of SNAP recipients from fresh, local produce.

Experimental Station stepped in to help overcome that barrier at the City of Chicago's farmers markets in 2010. What began as a pilot program has grown into a 16-year partnership with the City providing over \$1.2 million in fresh food access to SNAP recipients, all while directly supporting the livelihoods of local vendors.

Our partnership started at five key locations and grew to as many as 22 locations in 2015. Over the last 16 years, we have refined the way food assistance works on the ground through actions such as:

- **Setting up dedicated SNAP Stations**
- **Launching the Double Value Coupon Program, now known as Link Match**
- **Implementing Universal Link Match Vouchers**
- **Creating and supporting enhanced market procedures**

By providing these vital services and innovations, we helped empower the City to launch markets in more—and often underserved—areas. More than just a place to shop, farmers markets are community hubs and powerful economic engines, supporting both the family putting dinner on the table and the farmer growing the crop.

Throughout our 16 year journey, Experimental Station has been on the pavement, tent in hand, proud to be a steadfast partner with the City of Chicago. We are committed to ensuring that these farmers markets offer critical access to healthy, local food.

16 YEARS OF
IMPACT IN NUMBERS:



\$1.2 Million
TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT



71,499
INDIVIDUAL SNAP
TRANSACTIONS



\$757,767
TOTAL SNAP SALES



\$508,461
TOTAL LINK MATCH
REDEEMED

First 5 Locations
• **Locations Expanded in 2015**

AUSTIN

WEST
GARFIELD

DWIGHT EISENHOWER EXPRESSWAY

CHICAGO

LINCOLN
PARKDivision
StreetDaley
Plaza

STEVENS EXPRESSWAY

BRONZEVILLE

WOODLAWN

ENGLEWOOD

South
Shore

Beverly

MORGAN
PARK

ROGERS PARK

Lincoln
Square

ROAD BUILDING

Illinois is an agricultural state dominated by production of crops for industrial uses, producing less than 5% of the foods we eat. For more than a decade, we have recognized the risks and costs of importing our food from distant states and countries. Besides the insecurity that comes with dependency on global supply chains for our food, Illinois commodity crop farmers suffer from the insecurity caused by policies and global markets they do not control.

To address these risks, Experimental Station convened a Task Force in 2025 to develop an 'Illinois Food System Roadmap.' Supported by the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Roadmap is a multi-year grassroots initiative aimed at strengthening Illinois' food system, advancing food security, and supporting the growth of our local farm economies. Working with stakeholders across the state, the Roadmap Task Force will develop and implement a process and structure for fostering collaboration and cooperation in and across regions and those working to address system needs.



PHASE I

In Phase I, from January to June 2025, the Task Force convened over 300 stakeholders who, together, developed a vision and underlying values for our food system and helped to identify work already underway toward realizing that vision. Phase I also helped to identify gaps in the system as well as organizations and agencies already working to fill those gaps.

PHASE II

Building on that work, Phase II began with a valuable 3-month partnership with Illinois Tech's (IT) Institute of Design to test a model for facilitating cross-sector collaboration. Focused on increasing institutional procurement of locally grown foods in the Chicago region, the IT-led workshops provided both a useful model and critical insights into the range of obstacles and challenges food system actors may face.



With an expanded Task Force in 2026, Experimental Station looks forward to building further collaboration and, along with Illinois' many food system stakeholders, forging the road ahead.

WWW.ILLINOISROADMAP.ORG





LaShawn Miller, owner of Finding Justice A Flower and Vegetable Garden



Uptown Farmers Market



61st Street Farmers Market

EXPERIMENTAL STATION'S FOOD ACCESS WORK WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE FOLLOWING:



THE CHAPIN-MAY FOUNDATION OF ILLINOIS



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... AND OTHER GENEROUS DONORS.



LEARN MORE
LINKUPIIL.ORG



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