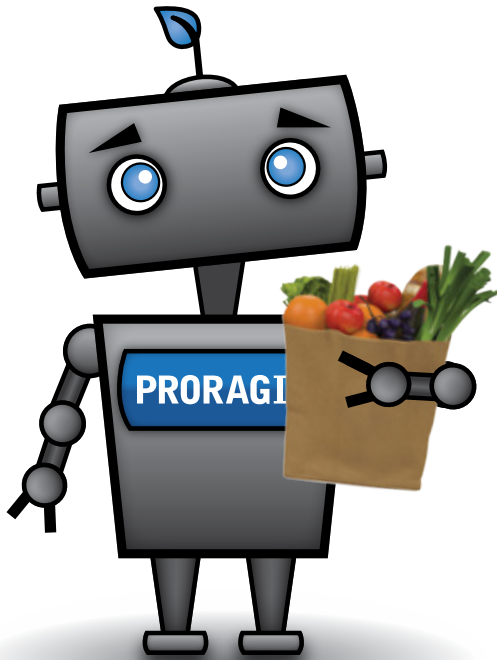


PRORAGIS™

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THE ROLE OF PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES IN PROVIDING HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS FOR COMMUNITIES



More than
23.5 million Americans
including **6.5 million children**
live in low-income areas more than one
mile from a supermarket.

Low-income areas have
half as many supermarkets
as wealthy areas.

8% of African-Americans
live in a Census tract with a grocery store
vs. **31% of whites.**

WHAT DO PARK AND RECREATION AGENCIES DO TO HELP?

According to PRORAGIS,
more than

50%

of park and recreation agencies administer
community garden programs.

Nearly

25%

of agencies
administer or manage
farmers' markets,
providing a farm-to-table source of healthy food for communities.

63%

of agencies rent or
permit spaces for gardens,
allowing people to grow their own healthy
food despite urban or suburban surroundings.

WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Lack of access to healthy food sources has been linked to obesity and numerous chronic health conditions. Park and recreation agencies currently provide millions of Americans access to healthy and nutritious food.

COMMUNITY GARDENS YIELD COMMUNITY BENEFITS

By Travis Smith, Ph.D., and Rishma Parpia

As America grapples with high obesity rates, easy access to fresh, reasonably priced and wholesome foods has become an increasingly important strategy in addressing this problem. Data from PRORAGIS™ tells us that park and recreation agencies are key providers of two tools to fight this “battle of the bulge” in many communities, while also addressing issues of social equity that many cities struggle to address. For many Americans, access to sources of quality food is far from a given. More than 23.5 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income areas more than one mile from a supermarket.¹ Low-income areas are half as likely to contain a supermarket when compared to wealthy areas, and only 8 percent of African-Americans live in Census tracts containing grocery stores versus 31 percent of white Americans.²

Community gardens at park and recreation sites are gaining popularity because of the tangible and intangible value they provide to local communities. In fact, PRORAGIS tells us that more than 50 percent of responding agencies offer community garden programs. Not only do these programs improve the quality of life for gardeners through the production of nutritious food, they are a catalyst for neighborhood and community development, stimulate social interaction, reduce family food budgets, conserve resources, create opportunities for recreation, exercise and education, preserve green space and provide opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural relationships.³ Community gardens at park and recreation sites are particularly important for children in increasing their knowledge and health through gardening programs. Such opportunities increase awareness of food origin and proper nutrition and allow participants to acquire hands-on skills and intergenerational connections.

Park and recreation agencies provide farmers' markets in the communities of almost one quarter of PRORAGIS participants.³ Not only are they qualified to assist in the development and organizational tasks required to start a farmers' market, they are also experts in incorporating recreational programming as an important part of the farmers' market experience. Recreational events at farmers' markets strengthen community bonds and play a significant role in attracting consumers to markets.⁴ In many cities, farmers' markets may provide some citizens their only access to “farm-to-table” produce and possibly their only access to produce of any type.

Once again, the data from PRORAGIS tells us what park advocates have long known — our professionals and their agencies manage and perform important services for their citizens that range far outside of the traditional perception of what a park and recreation agency provides.

Go to www.nrpa.org/PRORAGIS and enter your agency's data to help demonstrate the impact of parks and recreation!

¹ USDA Economic Research Service Report Summary, June 2009.

² Morland et al. “The Contextual Effect of the Local Food Environment on Residents' Diets,” *American Journal of Public Health*, November 2002, Vol. 92, No. 11.

³ National Recreation and Park Association. 2011. *Community Gardens in Parks: Opportunities for Health, Community and Recreation*. Retrieved on August 8, 2014: www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpaorg/Grants_and_Partners/Parks_and_Conservation/Resources/Grow-Your-Park-Case-Studies.pdf.

⁴ National Recreation and Park Association. n.d. Park Vending and Farmers' Markets: Increasing Healthy Food Choices for Underserved Communities. Retrieved on August 9, 2014: www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpaorg/Grants_and_Partners/Recreation_and_Health/Resources/Issue_Briefs/Farmers-Markets.pdf.