

Haven's Harvest
Response to Waste Infrastructure Request for Information
04.21.2023

Haven's Harvest, an environmental non-profit, focuses on reducing food waste and food insecurity in the New Haven area. Our purpose is to locate excess food in the community, thereby reducing waste, and then share the recovered food. Haven's Harvest proposes to create a food recovery hub(HHhub) in the Fair Haven neighborhood of New Haven to address food waste in the wastestream.. It would be the first food recovery hub in Connecticut. This could be the first of many food hubs in the state. Food recovery is absolutely in line with the state's waste hierarchy. After source reduction- feeding people is the objective.The HHhub is a project in Urban development- addressing the infrastructure needed to create a pathway to food recovery. The hub also has workforce development as a goal- to educate and train individuals to address and keep excess edible food in our food system- by aggregating, repackaging, and upcycling into new products. The hub will have the capacity to accept food donations to divert edible food from the wastestream. The recovered food will be shared with Environmental Justice(EJ) Communities. EJ communities are in double jeopardy of food insecurity and the effects of climate change- of which food waste is a contributor.

Infrastructure needs:

- Loading dock for trucks to move donations safely and efficiently into warehouse
- Ample cold and dry storage to hold donations at safe temperatures before redistribution into the community
- Commercial kitchen to repackage food into smaller portions, aggregate food to make complete meals, make meals and to upcycle food into new products
- Green jobs- using fair chance hiring
- Office- operational work/data/collection/meetings
- Community space for meetings
- Micro-grocery- stocked with recovered food
- Electric cargo vehicles
- Enhanced technology- app upgrade

In each of the last 3 years, we have recovered 1.5m pounds of food. This has been with our direct delivery model. We have over 400 volunteer drivers, 100 food donors and share food with over 200 sites. In order to expand, we need increased capacity. Food recovery operations in our city, state and nation need infrastructure. We could easily increase our recovered capacity by 33% per year for the first 3 years with a hub and increased capacity.. There are examples of excess food going to waste that we do not have the capacity currently to redirect. We know a local farm that has tilled under 1000 lbs produce/ week during the growing season. We also have spoken with a truck washing company which has been hauling away truckers' excess food. There are other truckers who have food and need a place to donate. We have no forklift or loading dock currently. The building we are planning to buy is near the junction of I-95 and I-91. This would be an easy/on/off for truckers to donate their excess food.

The site in Fair Haven we are considering includes a parcel of vacant land.. This would allow us to compost, on site, the food scraps from the operation, in collaboration with a local for-profit company. We also expect to have raised beds and bee hives, through the partnership with another non-profit. This would complete the food cycle. The recovered food prevents CO2 emissions and the compost does, as well.

We see this as a model for other communities. Recovered food should stay local. We have a small operation happening in New London and the Lower Naugatuck Valley- both of these projects were recently funded by the Community Foundations in those areas.. We look forward to opening food recovery hubs there, too, in the future.

The host community is an EJ community. The hub will be a resource for food and other community services, served by partners on the second floor of the building. We redirect good food from food donors to subsidized housing sites, faith communities, schools, a reentry program, a healthcare clinic and a methadone clinic in the neighborhood. These persons will benefit directly from our increased capacity to accept more and larger food donations, and redistribute it into the community. We have the strong support of a FQHC- Fair Haven Community Health Center. They want to institute Food as Pharmacy at the clinic. We want to be a partner in that program. The clinic is one block from our proposed building site.

To begin the project, we need funding to gain control of the building, to leverage CIF 2030 funds and begin the environment mental assessment. The attached costs to secure building and begin environmental assessment is attached.

We have a model that is successful, scalable and replicable. We have been repeatedly contacted by towns across Connecticut that want to begin food recovery programs. Infrastructure capacity is necessary to expand and keep edible food in the food system- using excess food to its highest and best use.