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## **Southeast Food Hub Viability Study is Complete and Released to the Public**

The possibility of establishing a regional food hub in Lincoln's Pershing Auditorium has been the subject of a feasibility study by the Joslyn Institute and a number of partners over the past year. The findings of that feasibility study have been made public. [Click here to view the report in PDF form.](#) W. Cecil Steward, President and CEO of the Joslyn Institute, has presented the findings to City of Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler and other city officials.

The Southeast Nebraska Food Hub proposal is intended to consider an public/private, interdependent, comprehensive strategy that addresses environmental, socio-cultural, technological, economic and public policy opportunities and consequences. Its sustainability requires that these factors— or domains—be considered in planning and development. JISC partnered with more than 50 organizations, businesses and individuals in conducting the study, including Nebraska Cooperative Extension, UNL Rural Futures Institute, Nebraska Farmer's Union, Clark Enersen Architects, the City of Lincoln, Nebraska Investment Finance Authority, Lincoln Local Foodshed Working Group, Community Crops, Buy Fresh/Buy Local, and many others.

The proposed demolition of Lincoln's Pershing Auditorium has been an additional catalyst for the timing and direction of the Southeast Nebraska Food Hub feasibility study. The building's important location, cultural and historic attributes, and overall good condition bring it to the forefront in consideration as a location for a multi-use structure including a year-round public market, as well as housing for many of the proposed Food Hub's activities.

Through a process of three charrettes organized by JISC, Clark Enerson Partners architectural and engineering firm drew plans for retrofitting and rebuilding Pershing Auditorium and its environs that include greenhouse, "artist loft" housing units, community information and services center, restaurants, offices, year-round public market, distribution and processing center, storage, specialized food processing kitchens, parking, outdoor festival/events/dining spaces, and a state-of-the-art high tech power plant that both provides energy for the specialized needs of the food-centric areas of the facility and also feeds the energy needs for the neighborhood. Estimates are that by keeping Pershing Auditorium out of the landfill, more than \$2 million in demolition costs and \$2 million in tipping fees will be saved. In addition, a number of Lincoln residents want to save the mosaic mural on the façade of the structure; if the building were demolished, it would cost an additional \$2 million to preserve it.

Co-ops and CSAs, individual small and young farming concerns and well-established large producers, composters and low-income food pantries, and ethnic communities and regulators/government entities and waste management may have different needs and aims. But a food hub can be a source of information, resources, ideas for new revenue streams, a catalyst and proving ground for policy, and innovative channels for all of these.

A food hub is not a public market, nor does a public market require a food hub, but a food hub could enhance the public market in myriad ways. Well-established corporate farms may already have their own processing and distribution channels, but a food hub may act as a resource to their finding new markets, economies of scale through connection with other similar producers, among other resources.

The three charrettes JISC convened in conducting the feasibility study discussed ownership, leadership, management, responsibility and how a food hub centered around Pershing Auditorium might operate. A regional food hub could be instrumental in bringing together such a varied group of stakeholders with divergent needs and goals, coalescing and strengthening the concept, impact and necessity of local foods in Nebraska generally.

The feasibility study can be downloaded from our website: [http://www.joslyninstitute.org/food\\_hub\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.joslyninstitute.org/food_hub_analysis.pdf)