Enquiry and analysis of year-round food hub progresses

F ew aspects of our lives exhibit such cognitive dissonance as our food. We need fresh, wholesome nutrition, but we are programmed to opt for fast, cheap, processed, often harmful food. Transforming our food paradigm in Southeast Nebraska has been just one of the key avenues of exploration for the steering committee established to study how a year-round food hub and public market might impact the Lincoln region, its food producers, processors, distributors and consumers. The study is being conducted under a grant provided by the USDA. The economic and social benefits from such an enterprise are widely accepted, and the timing appears to be opportune to create a regional food hub and public market. One venue being considered is Pershing Auditorium in Lincoln. The committee has been working continuously with a wide range of stakeholders, from food study groups and wholesalers, to producers and consumers, institutions and food policy advocates.

Members of the steering committee have visited vibrant, growing year-round public markets in Denver, Iowa, Kansas City, Missouri, Raleigh, N.C., and other cities. “There is an ever-shrinking trend toward growing food locally, and purchasing and consuming locally-grown food across the nation,” said Donna Wiedewitsch, committee member and Program & Operations Manager at the Joslyn Institute. “Lincoln is no exception.” In fact, consumers have become more willing to pay higher prices for locally grown food. The effects of climate change on small and medium-sized farms, food deserts, distribution systems, means of transforming our consciousness about food, cutting food waste, feeding the hungry, commercial kitchens and processing are all part of the study.

Surveys of wholesalers, producers, consumers, food policy advocates and others are being conducted as the study continues through next September.