

# Rethinking our Approach to Successful Farmers' Markets in Low-income, Multi-Ethnic Communities with the South Madison Farmers' Market

By: Abigail Jackson,  
Master's Candidate, Dept. of Urban & Regional Planning,  
Zieve TA for the Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies

Paul Davidson,  
Undergraduate Student,  
College of Letters & Science '15

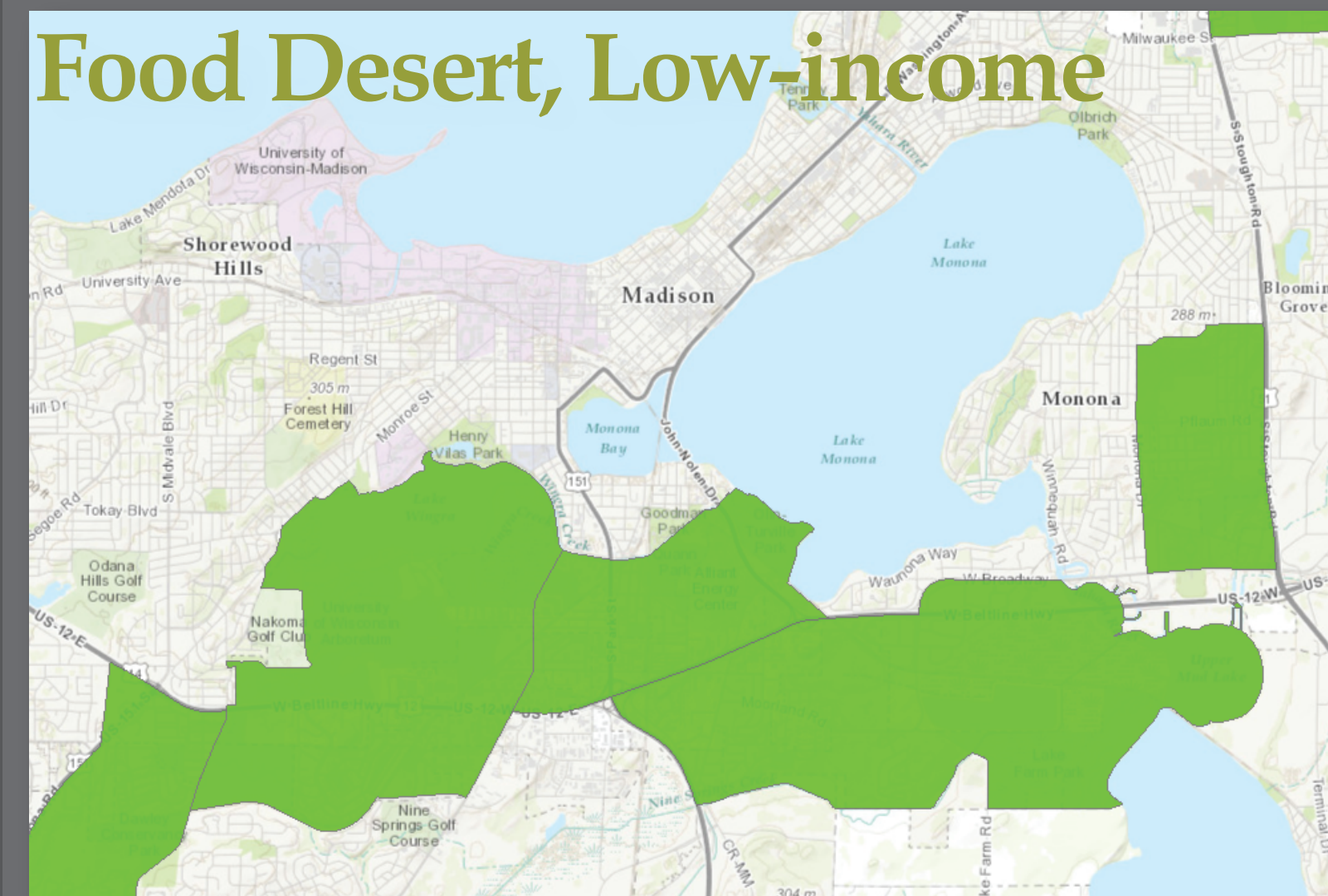
Dadit Hidayat,  
Public Humanities Fellow, FairShare CSA Coalition-Center for the Humanities  
PhD Student, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

Special thanks to Robert Pierce and the South Madison Farmers' Market, our community partners.

## PROBLEM

### Community-Level

#### Food Desert, Low-income



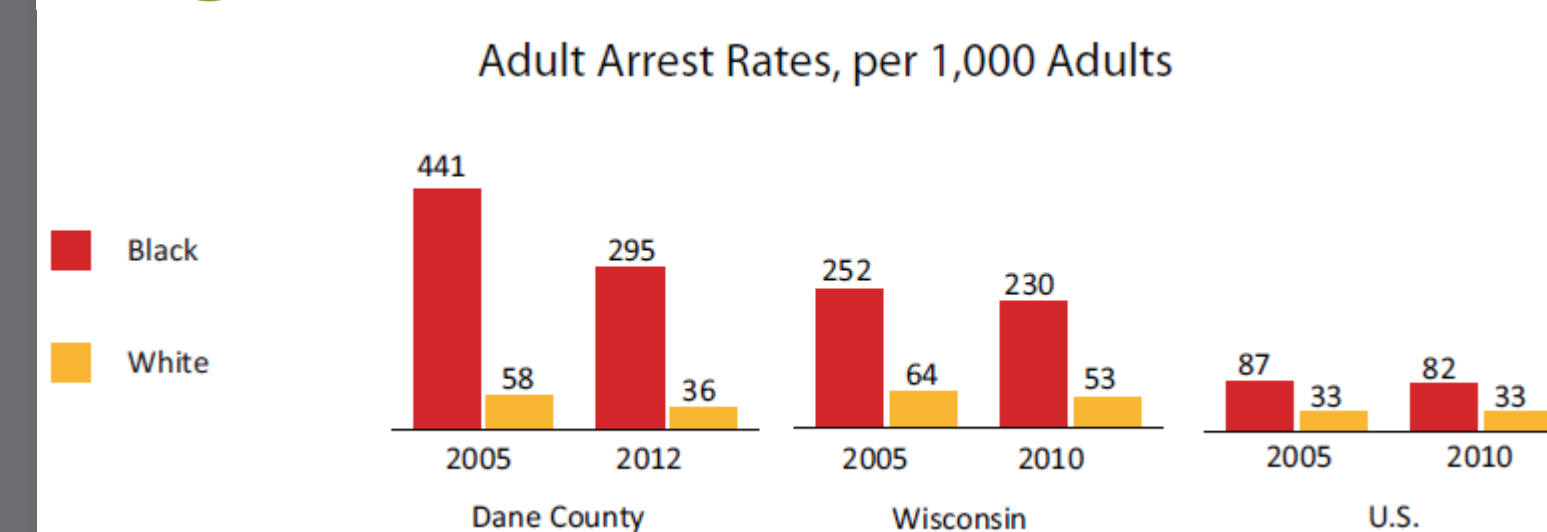
USDA ERS Food Research Atlas, Oct. 31, 2014

Low-income census tracts where a significant number or share of residents is more than 1 mile (urban) than the nearest supermarket

"While black men made up only 4.8% of the county's total adult male population, they accounted for more than 43% of all new adult prison placements during the year [of 2012]."

-Race to Equity Report

#### High Incarceration Rate



Race to Equity Report, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2014

### Farmers' Market-Level

#### Caught in a Catch-22: Lack of Vendors at South Madison Farmers' Market

Thanks to the work of two Nelson Institute capstone courses, students ran a focus group with local farmers to understand what attracts vendors to sell at a farmers' market. The farmers' modal response centered around profits. While Robert Pierce, manager of SMFM, is most concerned with providing access to healthy food to his community, farmers from outside of South Madison value profits more; thus, they sell at markets located in higher-income communities.

Cannot attract additional CUSTOMERS because there are not enough VENDORS  
Cannot attract additional VENDORS because there are not enough CUSTOMERS



#### Increasing Age of Farmers and Decline of Black Farmers

Robert Pierce, market manager of SMFM, like most other baby boomer farmers is hoping to slow down in 3-5 years. This poses a threat to the future of the SMFM, because there is a lack of farmers/vendors in the area that are willing to take over the SMFM. Additionally, Robert is one of the few remaining black farmers in Wisconsin. In order to create a cultural shift towards eating healthier food in the South Madison Community, it is imperative that customers trust the vendors at the SMFM. Using the farmers' market as a strategy to address issues of racism and poverty, the farmers' market must be rooted in the lived experiences of low-income people and people of color (Alkon, 2008).

## PROJECT'S APPROACH

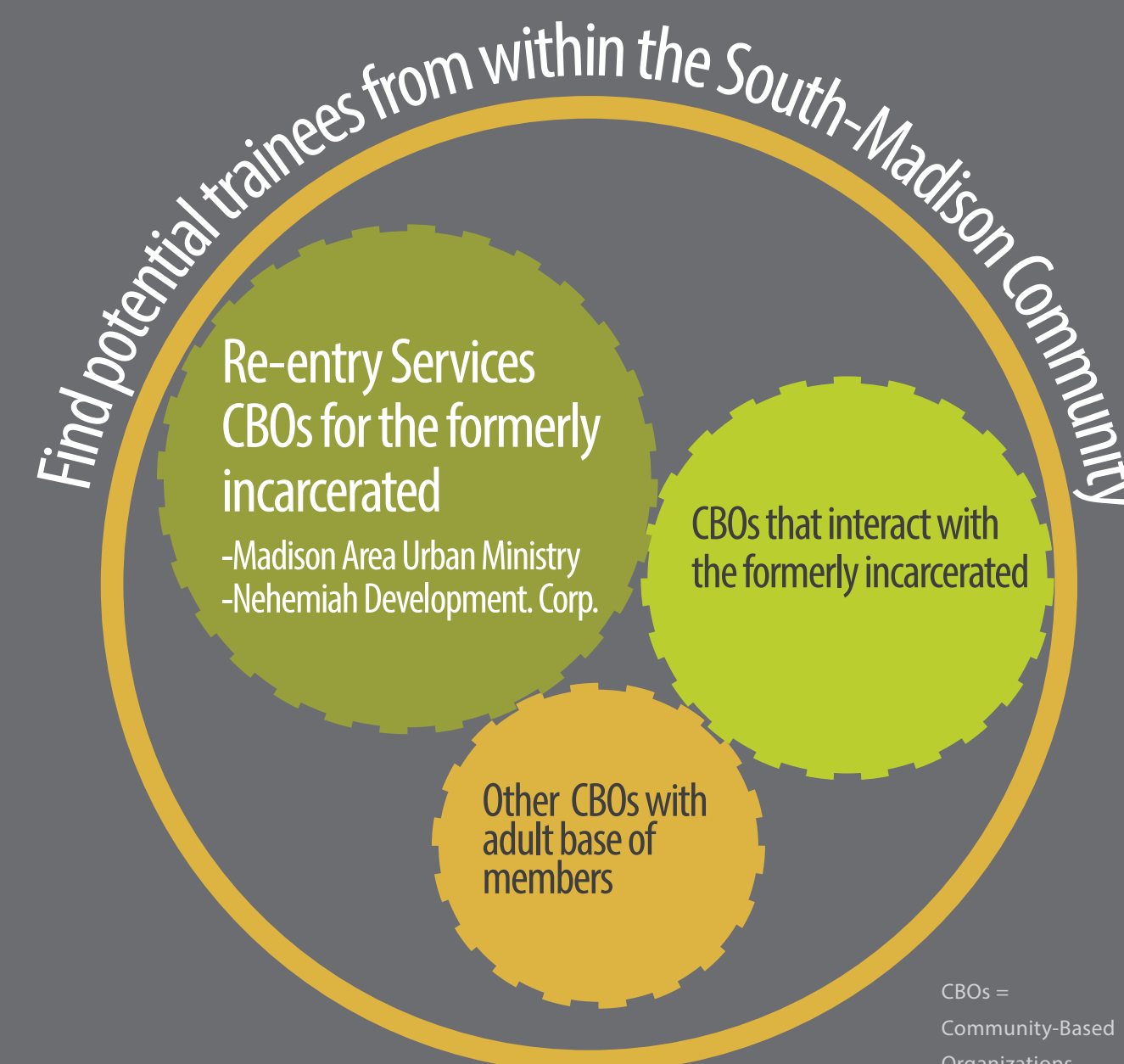
### Strengthen community's self-help capacity

#### Phase 1: Identification and Recruitment

In partnership with the SMFM, students of the Nelson Institute's Service Learning Capstone Course will organize a series of mini-workshops in which participants will get a glimpse of what it is like to be an urban grower. Students will closely engage participants, work with them, and address any anxieties throughout the process to keep them motivated and supported. Participants will be encouraged as much as possible to be a part of the process of designing the workshop so that it fits with their expectation. Overall, the goals are:

- to raise awareness on urban agriculture systems
- to think about food access in South Madison
- to introduce an SMFM model and its role in food justice in South Madison

Through this phase, we hope to identify and recruit 3 new growers for the project.



#### Phase 2: Send Recruits to Training

Recruit (3)  
Free, 5 mo.-long training

The 3 recruits will be sent to Growing Power's Commercial Urban Agriculture Training Program, a 5 month-long intensive course on how to become an entrepreneur by means of farming.

#### Phase 3: Start Growing



#### Phase 4: Sell at SM Farmers' Market



By recruiting farmers from within South Madison, the expectation is that they will sell at the South Madison Farmers' Market despite potentially low sales at first. This is because they will value community access to healthy food in equal or more importance to profits.

Unlike other low-income markets, this approach emphasizes building local capacity in a slower process of building strong relationships for people to consciously come together, share support, mobilize resources, and experience a sense of belonging to the community in which they reside (Piilisuk, 1996).

Additionally, the farmers will welcome Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT) of FoodShare, and WIC & Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Vouchers.

Students from future courses will help provide the labor gap necessary to attract more customers to meet the revitalized supply. Students will use best-practices to market the SMFM to the community.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS



#### Sustained Healthy Food Access

With 3 newly trained farmers committed to the success of SMFM, South Madison will have reliable access to healthy food for years to come even if SMFM manager Robert Pierce decides to "slow down."



#### Vendors at SMFM

An immediate outcome from this project will be an additional 3 farmers selling at the SMFM. Additional vendors will attract more customers to the SMFM (Garry Stephenson, Larry Lev and Linda Brewer, 2008).

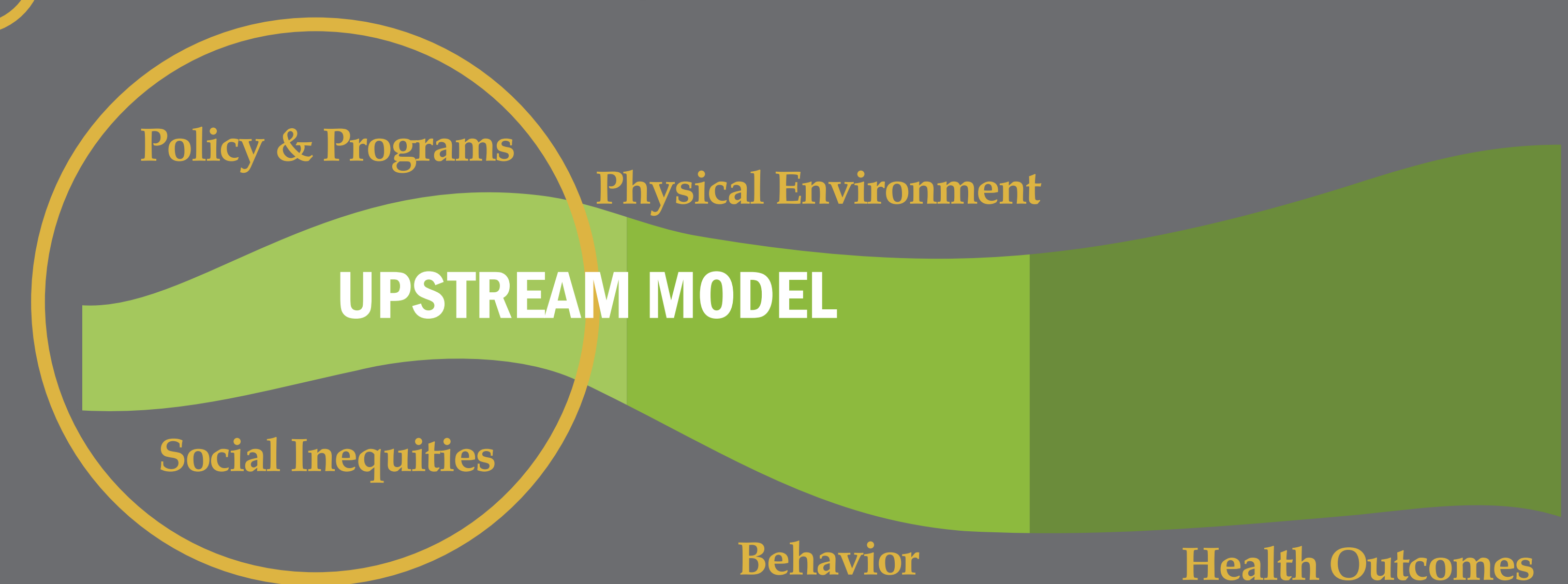


#### Strengthened Community Relationships

Community development through the farmers' market (Morales, 2009).



#### Pipeline for Urban Ag and New Farmers Developed



Go to  
<http://dadithidayat.nelsoninstitute.org/partnership/smf>  
to learn more about our project and how you can get involved.

