

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

\$19 million

Total project costs

\$1 million

Total funds provided by the New Orleans Fresh Food Retailer Initiative

\$1.5 million

Total funds from the Low Income Investment Fund's HFFI allocation

\$500,000

Forgivable loan component from FFRI

175+

Full- and part-time jobs created

25,000 sq. ft.

Food retail square feet (as part of 60,000-square-foot community hub)

21,983

Residents in surrounding area served by store, according to the census, of which 50% are low-to-moderate income residents, according to HUD

Profile: The ReFresh Project

New Orleans, Louisiana



Photo: Mayor's Office, City of New Orleans

In February 2014, as part of the renovation of a 60,000-square-foot supermarket vacant since Hurricane Katrina, a new Whole Foods in New Orleans celebrated its grand opening. The store, which offers more than 330 local products, was built with a strong emphasis on affordability and community partnership. This new addition to the city is part of an innovative development — The ReFresh Project — that also includes [Liberty's Kitchen](#), a nonprofit that provides culinary training to at-risk youth and meals to public schools, and Tulane University's [Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine](#), the first teaching kitchen in the U.S. associated with a medical school. Other tenants in the newly renovated space represent a variety of community health, education and revitalization efforts: [FirstLine Schools](#), [Boys Town](#) center for children and families, [Crescent City Land Trust](#), and [SPROUT NOLA](#), an on-site teaching farm. Together, the project represents a one-stop shop of food, health, and other amenities — a Community Health Hub — that helps to improve health and well-being and can serve to revitalize underserved communities.

"As a part of the ReFresh project, the new Whole Foods Market is further proof that New Orleans is on a retail and redevelopment roll. This strong investment in an underserved community is not only an opportunity for economic growth and job creation but also an example of the strategic partnerships that are positioning our city as a national model for urban renewal."

Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans

In an effort to support the surrounding community and economy in both the development and implementation of the ReFresh Project, the City of New Orleans provided recruiting, hiring, and training services to ensure a robust local workforce. These efforts helped over 250 residents with job applications and resulted in new jobs for over 175 employees, more than 80 percent of whom are New Orleans residents.

The Whole Foods Market Broad Street store also provides nutrition education to the community: on-site educators create recipes for shoppers and host classes about healthy eating and shopping on a budget. As a Community Health Hub, the ReFresh Project is designed to improve the health of the surrounding communities by holistically addressing the social and environmental determinants of health. This is accomplished through joint programming among project partners, including high-quality fresh food access and shopping education, as well as culinary and nutrition education, youth and workforce development, health-care access, gardening and wellness programming, and wraparound services, making it a well-rounded and vibrant asset in the neighborhood.

The [ReFresh Project](#) was developed by [Broad Community Connections](#), a local nonprofit community development organization working to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood with an emphasis on economic, residential, and cultural development, and by L+M Development Partners, Inc., a New York-based firm that specializes in creative approaches to mixed-use and mixed-income developments.

“Broad Community Connections’ vision for the ReFresh Project has been to create a development that will not only deliver the highest quality fresh foods to the Broad Street neighborhoods, but also create an economic and community development anchor for a community that has been underserved for decades. [The opening of Whole Foods Market is] a testament to the vibrancy of the communities along Broad Street and New Orleans more generally.”

Jeff Schwartz, Executive Director of Broad Community Connections

One key financing component for ReFresh was the [New Orleans Fresh Food Retailer Initiative](#) (FFRI), a public-private financing program that is having a major impact on local fresh food access, job creation, and community revitalization in the city. After Hurricane Katrina greatly intensified the lack of healthy food access in New Orleans, the city council convened the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee in 2007 to identify recommendations for supporting grocery stores and other healthy food retail throughout the city. A key recommendation was to prioritize healthy food retail within the strategic rebuilding of the city, and as a result, the FFRI was launched in 2011. The initiative was seeded with an initial \$7 million in federal Disaster Community Development Block Grant Funds, of which fund partner [HOPE Enterprise Corporation](#), a regional community development financial institution, has committed to match 1:1. To date, \$3 million of those funds have resulted in over \$40 million in additional investment.

FFRI promotes healthy food retail development in neighborhoods where residents struggle to access healthy food. The initiative — administered by the City of New Orleans, HOPE, and The Food Trust (a national food access organization) — offers direct assistance to retail businesses by awarding forgivable and interest-bearing loans to grocers opening or expanding stores. The FFRI provided \$1 million in financing to Broad Community Connections to develop the ReFresh Project site. The project also received New Markets Tax Credits, as well as funds from the [Low Income Investment Fund](#)’s federal [Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#) (HFFI) allocation, providing grants and loans to healthy food retail projects opening in underserved communities nationwide.

For more information about the Healthy Food Access Portal, contact us at info@healthyfoodaccess.org.

