

# DCS Project Proposal

*Tuscaloosa-Holt Community Gardens*

## **Mission Group**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides the background information on the systemic problem of Food Deserts in the state of Alabama, specifically in the Tuscaloosa-Holt Community. The scope of our Daniel Community Scholars Mission Group is starting a trend in alleviating the problem of food deserts and food insecurity within Holt, Alabama by creating free to low-cost community gardens in order to provide fresh fruits and vegetables that are relatively inexpensive, healthy, and accessible.

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**Part 1: Addressing the Community Need with Supporting Research**

1. Overview
  - a. The purpose of this research is to answer: what (if any) food deserts may exist in the city of Tuscaloosa, Alabama?
2. What is a Food Desert?
  - a. The phrase ‘food desert’ is often used to refer to neighborhoods throughout our country in which fresh vegetables, fruit, and other healthy foods are not easily accessible.<sup>1</sup> According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), a food desert is any area “where a significant percentage of the population lives more than a mile from the nearest source of fresh, healthy food.”<sup>2</sup> Adding to these definitions, the Alabama Department of Public Health has stated that “a food desert refers to a residential area with no immediate access to quality foods that support a healthy diet but [are] often served by plenty of fast food places.”<sup>3</sup>
3. What are some of the problems associated with Food Deserts?
  - a. Many people living in food deserts eat mostly fast, processed, or otherwise non-fresh foods simply because they are easier to get a hold of. However, it has been found that maintaining a balanced diet which includes daily consumption of fruits and vegetables is one of the key contributors to maintaining good health.<sup>4</sup> Thus, one of the oft cited problems associated with food deserts is that they often lead to poor diets which subsequently can lead to detrimental health outcomes.<sup>5</sup>
  - b. Particularly, type II diabetes, heart disease, and obesity are ailments that food deserts are said to contribute to.<sup>6</sup> Other negative outcomes that studies have associated with food deserts and inadequate nutrition include reduced adult productivity and disrupted cognitive functioning.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the health consequences that stem from limited access to healthy foods is believed to “be the most devastating for children.”<sup>8</sup> For example, research has shown that “[g]iven the associations between healthier eating and children’s academic performance,

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<sup>1</sup> *What is a food desert?*, The American Heart Association, [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/Food-Desert-Infographic---Text-Version\\_UCM\\_475876\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/Food-Desert-Infographic---Text-Version_UCM_475876_SubHomePage.jsp); Phillip Pessar, *America’s Food Deserts Need Community Solutions, Not Big Box Stores*, CivilEats, May 12, 2016, <http://civileats.com/2016/05/12/poor-health-in-americas-cities-flint-extend-beyond-the-water/>

<sup>2</sup> Emily Williams, *Lost in the food desert*, The Crimson White, August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.cw.ua.edu/article/2014/09/lost-in-the-food-desert>

<sup>3</sup> *What is a Food Desert?*, Alabama Dep’t of Public Health, available at <http://adph.org/obesity/assets/FoodDesert.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Fresh Food for All: Improving Access to Healthy Food in Alabama*, Alabama Healthy Food Access Stakeholders, 22, available at [https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN\\_report\\_5.pdf](https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN_report_5.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Emily Williams, *Lost in the food desert*, The Crimson White, August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.cw.ua.edu/article/2014/09/lost-in-the-food-desert>

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Fresh Food for All: Improving Access to Healthy Food in Alabama*, Alabama Healthy Food Access Stakeholders, 11, available at [https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN\\_report\\_5.pdf](https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN_report_5.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

poor nutrition may be a mediating factor in the perpetuation of education achievement gaps in low-income areas.”<sup>9</sup>

4. Are Food Deserts prevalent in Tuscaloosa County?

- a. According to numbers from the 2010 Census, approximately 25 million Americans live in areas deemed to be food deserts.<sup>10</sup> However, research has shown that as a result of factors such as poverty, Southern states such as Alabama are disproportionately more affected by food deserts.<sup>11</sup> In fact, food deserts are said to affect approximately 2 million Alabamians, as *every* county in our state has at least one neighborhood that is deemed to be a food desert.<sup>12</sup> Here in Tuscaloosa County, multiple neighborhoods classify as food deserts and food insecure. One neighborhood is Alberta City—a neighborhood located within the city of Tuscaloosa. Holt, Alabama, a community just west of The University of Alabama, is a food desert and food insecure as well<sup>13</sup>. The main grocery store in Holt is Dollar General.
- b. According to the USDA’s Food Access Research Atlas, there are several tracts within the Alberta City area that have relatively high numbers of low-income households without access to healthy food. For one neighborhood in Alberta City, this is the case for close to 10% of households, and for another neighborhood in the area this is the case for close to 20% of households.<sup>14</sup> One former resident of the Alberta City community has described it as being “a city with a very wide income gap, and [in which] the poor population doesn’t have access to transportation.”<sup>15</sup>

5. What can be (or is currently being) done to address the aforementioned problems?

- a. Throughout the nation, there are three approaches to addressing the problem of food deserts that various advocates and/or organizations have utilized.<sup>16</sup> First,

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<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Phillip Pessar, America’s Food Deserts Need Community Solutions, Not Big Box Stores, CIVILEATS, May 12, 2016, <http://civileats.com/2016/05/12/poor-health-in-americas-cities-flint-extend-beyond-the-water/>

<sup>11</sup> *What is a food desert?*, The American Heart Association, [http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/Food-Desert-Infographic---Text-Version\\_UCM\\_475876\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/General/Food-Desert-Infographic---Text-Version_UCM_475876_SubHomePage.jsp);

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Food Access Research Atlas*, The United States Dep’t of Agriculture, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>; Emily Williams, *Lost in the food desert*, The Crimson White, August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.cw.ua.edu/article/2014/09/lost-in-the-food-desert> [http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/al-reportfinalweb.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/al-reportfinalweb.original.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> *Food Access Research Atlas*, The United States Dep’t of Agriculture, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx> (showing that this is the case for 9.8% of households living in Census Tract 01125010803, and the case for 18.9% of households living in Census Tract 01125010500).

<sup>15</sup> Emily Williams, *Lost in the food desert*, The Crimson White, August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.cw.ua.edu/article/2014/09/lost-in-the-food-desert>

<sup>16</sup> *Fresh Food for All: Improving Access to Healthy Food in Alabama*, Alabama Healthy Food Access Stakeholders,

“[t]he best-known and most often implemented solution to increasing access to fresh food for underserved areas is direct or indirect investment in supermarkets and grocery stores.”<sup>17</sup> This approach has often involved building grocery stores in low-income areas as a way to combat any lack of geographical access to healthy foods. Second, many organizations have started programs to create ‘alternative food systems’.<sup>18</sup> This approach often focuses on creating alternative sources of fresh food access such as the development of more farmers markets, food stands, and/or community gardens.<sup>19</sup> And third, many organizations have helped to design and create regional food hubs which are often programs used to manage the targeted distribution of fresh foods throughout certain areas.<sup>20</sup>

- b. Dr. John Higgenbotham, director of the University of Alabama’s Institute for Rural Health Research has studied the local effects of food deserts within Alabama.<sup>21</sup> One thing that Dr. Higgenbotham has found in his line of work is that “the issue of food deserts is a largely geographic problem, [and that] educating children about nutrition is a key element in trying to work towards lasting change.”<sup>22</sup>
- c. In recent years, Dr. Higgenbotham and entities like the Druid City Garden Project have been awarded grants to help fund work which “aims to create lasting solutions to food deserts and obesity by customizing solutions that fit each individual community.”<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Dr. Higgenbotham has stated that something else that can be done to combat the problem of food deserts is raising awareness of this problem amongst and getting college students involved in and caring about helping to design and implement projects to try to alleviate these problems.<sup>24</sup> During their four year tenure in college, it is believed that college students are ripe with the time, energy, and human capital capacities that many non-profits with limited resources yet working to alleviate the problems associated with food deserts could benefit from.

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27, available at [https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN\\_report\\_5.pdf](https://dusp.mit.edu/sites/dusp.mit.edu/files/attachments/project/ECN_report_5.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 31.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 32.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 37.

<sup>21</sup> Emily Williams, *Lost in the food desert*, The Crimson White, August 7, 2014, available at <http://www.cw.ua.edu/article/2014/09/lost-in-the-food-desert>

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

## Part 2: Providing Historical Context

1. Researchers have found that “the barriers to food access are complex and varied.” Traditionally, food deserts “are often areas of racial, social, and economic discrimination.” For example, lending institutions have often been unwilling to invest in grocery stores and other businesses seeking to set up shop in many urban and minority communities. This “history of lending institutions’ abandonment of low-income areas” has been intricately connected with other factors such as land availability, zoning codes, and business construction and operation costs, and which contribute to the prevalence of food deserts.
2. So although oftentimes such people know that they ought to eat healthier, there are oftentimes very real barriers to adopting healthier eating habits. Particularly, unhealthy food is much cheaper and more accessible—and often considered tasty by kids. Stated differently, “it’s expensive to eat healthy.” So along with lack of healthy food options being present in the neighborhoods deemed as being ‘food deserts,’ there are also transportation and income barriers that exacerbate many of the problems associated with food deserts.

### Part 3: Proposed Action and Implementation

#### 1. Overall Goal:

##### a. Our proposed Goals of Action include:

- i. To build community gardens at Hurricane Baptist Church and Soma Church, which are both located in the Holt community and will provide different crops at each location.
  1. Focus groups will be held with each of the churches and their congregations to decide what crops they believe would be most beneficial and sustainable for their community. As a DCS group focused on placing maximum importance on the people we are impacting, we want to involve the community as much as possible and communicate to them that we value their opinions and input in every stage of the process.
- ii. To create an area for community building focused on improving nutritional health and community well-being
- iii. To create a free and accessible area of attainable crops at the community's convenience
- iv. To provide more fresh, affordable foods to low-income areas in order to alleviate the suffering felt by living in a food desert

- v. To create an environment that encourages community building and learning about healthy, nutritious foods
    - a. The main way this will be accomplished is through our community partnership with the State Office of Minority Health and specifically Julia Sosa.
      - Nutrition education and information programs will be hosted at the churches free of charge.
2. Development of Project:
- a. Roles of the Mission Daniel Community Scholars Group:
    - i. Planting and Gardening: Akeisha Anderson and Andrea Hayes
      - 1. This group will be coordinating the planting and gardening of each crop, which includes planning the designated locations for each crop and assisting volunteers in the correct way to plant.
    - ii. Building and Construction: Carson Ford and Phuong Nguyen
      - 1. These leaders will be in charge of coordinating the physical construction of the garden, which will involve some heavy lifting.
      - 2. They will also be in charge of correctly placing the foundation for the gardens including the sand, dirt, and topsoil, and acquirement of tools and crude construction materials.
    - iii. Media: Caitlin Cobb
      - 1. This job includes coordinating photographers and videographers to capture moments and create media for later on.
      - 2. This also includes capturing the speeches of everyone and interviewing leaders and community members.
      - 3. This group will be tasked with creating pictures, videos, and post-event media, as well as coordinating speakers and news media beforehand.
    - iv. Pre-Project Advertising and Volunteer Coordination: Akeisha, Andrea, Carson, Phuong, & Caitlin
      - 1. Everyone will be in charge of collaborating and reaching out to organizations, departments, and news sources to get the word out about the project.
      - 2. Everyone will assist with recruiting volunteers and coordinating their volunteer times.
  - b. These are preliminary roles that will most likely be amended. We will all be participating in other roles throughout the days leading up to the project as well as the day of.



### 3. Volunteers:

- a. Shifts will be used to coordinate volunteers and make the most effective use of everyone's time. Additionally, all volunteers will be divided during shifts between the two locations.
  - i. The first shift will be from 9am-12pm.
    1. This time slot will be specifically focused on the building and construction of the gardens.
  - ii. The second shift is from 12pm-3pm.
    1. This time slot will focus on the planting and gardening of the crops
  - iii. The third shift is from 3pm-6pm.
    1. This time slot will primarily focus on capturing pictures and videos (which will be happening throughout the day), but it will be specifically reserved for organizing speakers to reflect on the event
- b. Number of Volunteers
  - i. Around 15 people per time slot per group will be needed, although the more people helping the better.
    1. But, a maximum of 25 people per time slot will be in effect because having too many people at one time will crowd the space and render the project ineffective.
  - ii. Once organizations have agreed to help, we will send out a Doodle Poll to coordinate times in order for their members to sign up for specific volunteer time slots and jobs
- c. Recruitment of Volunteers:
  - i. Listed below are specific organizations we will be contacting for volunteers:
    1. Fraternities and Sororities: philanthropy/Greek point
    2. Homegrown Alabama: university farmers market group
    3. Tuscaloosa Garden Club
    4. Druid City Garden Project
    5. Church congregations from the garden locations
    6. Honors College.
    7. Center for Service and Leadership
  - ii. In order to advertise the event properly before it occurs, we will have pre-event recruitment by our DCS Group:
    1. Speaking at the different organizations
    2. Leaving info sheets with them
    3. Creating an email form to send out to organizations

4. Getting in contact with the leaders of Departments and Organizations in order to increase access to volunteers
  5. Sending out Doodle Polls after speaking
- iii. Compensation for Volunteers:
1. As a DCS group, we would love to have the chance to thank everyone who might be involved with building the community garden.
  2. We hope to send out sample baskets of the fruits and vegetables that are grown at the locations to the different organizations that sent volunteers.
- d. Possible Risks to Volunteers:
- i. Physical Risks
    1. The heavy lifting and construction aspects of the project could render some physical injuries, but as long as volunteers are knowledgeable about what their physical capabilities are, all injuries should be completely preventable.
    2. Depending on the crops, volunteers with allergies could possibly have problems with gardening or insect allergies since we will be outside.
  - ii. Emotional Risks
    1. We don't want the people to feel like we are intruding on their community or insinuating that they don't know how to prepare good, nutritional means
  - iii. Environmental Risks
    1. We are already dealing with soil that is hard to plant and grow in, so we need to make sure we are fully prepared to deal with problems sustaining the crops
    2. Our solution to inadequate soil will be constructing box gardens.
    3. In addition, to maintain soil health and sustainability, composting will be employed.
    4. The community partners must have space and flat ground for the gardens to be built on
  - iv. Communication Risks
    1. As a group, we need to make sure we communicate our entire plan of implementation to the community partners, in order for them to approve everything.
      - Both Hurricane Baptist and SOMA Church will be appointing a liaison who will communicate with the group and help develop the most appropriate implementation plan.

2. Volunteers need to be kept as up to date as possible to ensure their commitment to volunteering at the garden as well as avoiding any problems the day of
- v. Timing Risks
  1. For the actual dates of implementation, we need to make sure people are free and available

Ideally, weekends would be preferred

2. The seasons for the crops we are growing have to come into consideration

- e. Volunteer Training:
  - i. No formal training will be required of the volunteers, but job descriptions will be sent out prior to the event and prior to signing up to inform everyone of what they will be doing, so they can be fully prepared.
  - ii. Volunteer Job Descriptions:
    1. Building: involves heavy lifting of railroad ties, laying dirt/sand, digging, etc.
    2. Gardening: involves fertilizing and planting the different crops
    3. Media: involves documenting the experiences of the day, taking pictures, taking videos, interviewing people, creating small write-ups for post-event followups
- f. Volunteer Transportation:
  - i. Volunteers will be sought out to carpool other university students.
    1. Students will be going back and forth from the University to get volunteers per the different time shifts.
  - ii. DCS Group Leaders will also help carpool to and from the location.
4. Engagement of the Blackburn Community:
  - a. The Blackburn 2016 class and other current members of the Blackburn Institute will be asked to volunteer throughout the day as well as help advertise the project to recruit volunteers.
  - b. Advisory Board members and Fellows, if located in Tuscaloosa, will be asked to spread the word with their colleagues/businesses in order to attract more local publicity to this event.
  - c. If businesses wanted to sponsor particular crops or garden locations, that could be made an option
5. Elevator Pitch/Hook:
  - a. In order to explain our project in as concise and efficient a way as possible, we have developed a “elevator speech” that will be used when speaking to recruit volunteers and organizations, as well as when speaking to general audiences.
  - b. “Food Deserts. How many people know what that is? How many people would be

able to identify where they occur? Well, our Daniel Community Scholars group project sought to find answers to these questions and help out a community in need at the same time. Food deserts are areas that lack access to healthy, affordable food. This systemic problem results in many things like more processed food, higher obesity rates, less attainable fresh crops, and higher costs of store bought foods. Additionally, food deserts are much more common in low-income areas. Coincidence? Not at all. Low-income areas typically do not have the resources to remedy their food deserts. And, all of these problems are present in the Holt Community, just west of UA's campus. Who knew that so many people were suffering from a problem like food deserts that can easily be fixed? And, that easy fix is a community garden. Our DCS group will be implementing community gardens at two separate locations that will provide low to no-cost fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as create a community center for Holt citizens to get together, celebrate nutrition for their people, and improve the overall market for affordable, accessible food.”

## 6. Technological Components

### a. Pre-Event

- i. Hosting focus groups at both locations to ensure the community voice is guiding the development and construction of the community gardens.
  1. A basic plan has already been laid out including costs of the garden and actual construction. However, the crops that will be grown, the exact number of beds (1-4 beds), official dates for construction, and official dates for the nutrition and education programs have yet to be determined.
- ii. Advertising to all departments, Honors College, clubs, Greek community, outside clubs, emails through University, newspaper, University radio station
  1. Point of contact for media for orgs
  2. Summary of what we will be doing
- iii. Creating ads for the church bulletins at the churches we are partnering with
- iv. Social media
  1. Advertising through University Programs
  2. Maybe creating an Instagram account
  3. Using Blackburn Twitter, Facebook Page, etc.

### b. Event

- i. Mayor and Community leaders coming to speak
- ii. Having the preachers of the churches speaking

1. Specifically about the community impact
    - iii. Leaders from our DCS Group and Blackburn speaking
    - iv. Local news doing a story on it with coverage day of
    - v. Taking pictures and videos
      1. Go Pro
      2. Photographers
      3. Videos of speakers
  - c. Post-Event
    - i. Write up in newspaper: Tuscaloosa News and CW
    - ii. Photos and write up sent to clubs and University students via email
7. Timeline for Implementation of Entire Project
  - a. Our timeline for the project is begins on with a monthly plan then transitions to a weekly and daily plan.
    - i. Two months to a month and a half before the event:
      1. During this time, we will begin contact with organizations that could provide volunteers, as well as talk to all necessary greek-affiliated organizations and the University in order to set up Greek/Philanthropy points or other forms of credit students can receive for volunteering at our garden.
      2. Additionally, we will begin coordinating volunteer sign-up, once we have made contact with other organizations and they have shown interest in helping.
      3. Finally, members of the DCS Group will be attending weekly meetings of the organizations that are interested to advertise the project and tell their members more about what we will be doing.
    - ii. One month before the event:
      1. We will finalize all volunteers for the event by sending out Doodle Polls to coordinate volunteer times.
      2. The DCS group will also reach out to public officials, the local news, the Crimson & White, and the campus radio station to set up some form of advertising for the project, as well as coordinate speakers and news coverage for the event.
      3. Looking at the supplies needed for our project, we will begin ordering the materials that take a longer time to be delivered as well as those that are not live and will not perish before a month's time.
      4. We will also set up focus groups at the churches over two

weekends to discuss the crops being planted at their community gardens.

5. Finally, we will contact the University about using the vans as shuttles to and from campus, so more students can get involved. We will also be coordinating students who volunteer to drive.

iii. Two weeks before the event:

1. Our DCS Group will re-finalize all of the times for volunteers and fill in any volunteer gaps from people who might not be able to help any more.
2. We will also send out job descriptions to every volunteer shift, so they are fully prepared for the work they will be doing.
3. By this time, we will have created emails and press releases to be sent out via university emails including through the departments, the Honors College, and outside organizations.
4. We will be checking with both of the locations to make sure all of the set-up for the event is planned out and feasible. Specifically, technological components will be looked after, as well as the layout for food stations.
5. We will follow up with all speakers at the event, including the local news, members of the congregation/preacher, and the mayor, to make sure their schedules haven't changed and the times still work for them.

iv. One week before the event

1. Our DCS group will now buy the rest of the perishable supplies this week, including crops, food for the event (that will be cooked), etc.
2. Another email will be sent out in the organizations, departments, and Honors College to further publicize the event as well as recruit any last minute volunteers.

- b. More specifically, the project date will require precise and ample scheduling, coordination, and pre-planning from everyone involved.

i. The day before the event:

1. We will be checking and re-checking all of the supplies to make sure everything is in order and be working with the two churches to make sure they have everything they need and all is set up.
2. One last reminder will be sent out to all volunteers and

coordinating organizations of times, addresses, expectations, and such to further familiarize everyone with the project and make sure everyone is fully prepared.

3. All food, supplies for the project, and other necessary items will be delivered to the two locations.
- ii. The day of the event:
    - a. **Ideally community gardens will be built by mid-march.**
      - Most plants growing season begins in March and continues through April
    - b. **There will be two build days. One for each location.**
      - Up to four, 4' by 6' beds, will be constructed.  
Minimum of two beds, maximum of four
      2. At **7am**, the DCS Group will be arriving at the location for the day to make sure the preliminary things are setup as well as meet all of the people from the church congregations helping out.
      3. **8:30-9am**: Volunteers will be arriving at the church location via coordinated carpooling.
      4. At **9am**, construction of the garden will begin at the churches.
      5. Around **11:30am**, we will have a lunch break and provide food and drinks for everyone. We will most likely order Subway sandwiches, chips, and cookies because this is probably the most affordable and efficient, easy meal service.
      6. Around **12-12:30pm**, the gardening volunteers will begin working at the location.
      7. At approximately **3pm**, the garden will almost be finished, and the church will hear from members of the community/congregation, their preacher, and a local Tuscaloosa City official.
      8. At **6pm**, the day will officially be over and the garden will be closed. As a group, we will reflect with the community on the day and discuss what the next steps will be to continuing the community garden.
  - c. Our DCS Group would also like to include a follow-up thank you gift to the organizations and the churches for helping out with creating the gardens and giving us this opportunity to impact the Holt community.
    - i. Additionally, we will be coordinating post-event follow-ups in the Crimson & White and in department, organization, and university emails.

## Part 4: Community Partnerships

There are three main community partners. They are Hurricane Baptist, Soma Church, and the State Office of Minority Health in the Alabama Department of Public Health.

### I. State Office of Minority Health

A previous relationship existed with the State Office of Minority Health. Andrea Hayes, the Community Partner Specialist, volunteered throughout high school and during college at multiple events with the Office of Minority Health. The State Office of Minority Health documents different health issues present within minority populations. One of these issues is food scarcity.

The State Office of Minority Health considers Holt a food desert. This helped identify and define a community need within Holt. Andrea Hayes also attended Holt Community Partnership meetings where a want for a community garden was expressed.

One of the issues discussed at these meetings was the toxicity of Holt soil which presents a barrier to a possible community garden. This helped defined the scope of the project in making raised garden beds a defining characteristic of the proposed community gardens.

Julia Sosa, the director of Minority Health, will help develop and provide resources for nutrition education and information programs at Hurricane Baptist and Soma Church. The exact date for these programs will be determined in focus groups that are held at the churches. These focus groups will occur throughout fall, winter, and spring leading up to the actual construction of the community gardens. Andrea Hayes and Ms. Sosa have discussed the time and commitment required for these programs.

Blackburn students will have opportunities to facilitate these programs by operating as assistants to Ms.Sosa during the nutrition and education programs.

Satisfaction surveys from the State Office of Minority Health will be utilized to rate the success of the nutrition information and education programs. They will be completed by everyone who participates (community members, Blackburn students, and Ms. Sosa). This part of the project will end when the determined number of program dates, decided upon by future focus groups, have been completed.



## **II. Hurricane Baptist**

No previous relationship existed with Hurricane Baptist. Andrea Hayes knows Terry Heverly who is very active within Holt. He provided her with contact information of various churches within Holt.

Andrea initially established contact over telephone. Since her initial call, Andrea has attended two church services at Hurricane Baptist. During her first visit, Andrea met with Bishop Lancaster and the deacons of Hurricane Baptist and described the proposed project to them. She related that Daniel Community Scholars Program was a competition and there was no guarantee that this project would be selected.

The leadership of Hurricane Baptist is aware that they will be required to help in the maintenance of the community garden. Andrea communicated that for the first four months after the community garden is built Blackburn students and fellows will help with the maintenance of the gardens. This does not exclude students from other organizations from participating in maintenance; the only commitment made up to this point is Blackburn students assisting in maintenance of the community garden. During this time, Andrea Hayes will oversee the development of a long-term maintenance plan with Hurricane Baptist. The same day of Andrea Hayes' first visit, Hurricane Baptist contacted her and agreed to be a community partner with the Blackburn Institute.

It was decided that the best way to move forward with the planning of the proposed community garden was to have focus groups upon selection of the Mission Group's project proposal. These will be hosted at Hurricane Baptist. The focus groups will ensure that the community's voice is the main factor guiding the creation of the community gardens. The focus groups will decide what exact crops will be planted, how the gardens will be maintained, when the nutritional programs will take place and other similar factors.

At this first meeting, Bishop Lancaster and the deacons confirmed that food insecurity was a prevalent issue within Holt Community. They also agreed that having nutrition education and information programs are an important aspect of the community gardens. This helped confirm and define the project scope.

During Andrea Hayes' second visit, she described the potential project to the church members. A popular idea was to get the youth program involved with maintenance of the garden. Church members were excited to participate in future focus groups. Since then, Andrea Hayes has primarily maintained contact with Bishop Lancaster through phone calls and text messages.

## **III. Soma Church**

No previous relationship existed with Soma Church. Contact was established through telephone calls. Andrea Hayes called Shaun Faulkner the head pastor of Soma Church.

Andrea explained the scope of the proposed project: construction of community gardens to address the lack of healthy, affordable produce within the Holt Community. Pastor Shaun is aware that the project will only proceed if it wins the Daniel Community Scholars Competition.

If selected, Pastor Shaun will appoint a church liaison to facilitate communication with the Blackburn Institute and ensure optimal efficiency. Soma Church is expected to help with the maintenance of the gardens and being a physical location for one of the two community gardens. Pastor Shaun and Andrea Hayes agreed that the best way to ensure Holt's citizens' are guiding the development of the community garden is through focus groups held after selection of the program. These focus groups will be hosted at Soma Church.

Soma Church will help with promotion and advertisement of the proposed community garden. The Blackburn Institute's involvement in the project will end four months after the community gardens have been constructed. During that time, Andrea will be collaborating with Soma Church's liaison and Pastor Shaun to develop a long-term maintenance plan of the community garden present at Soma Church.

## Part 5: Mission Group Project Budget:

Our main goal of the community gardens budget is to provide a head start for a sustainable solution in dealing with food deserts and food insecurity in Tuscaloosa-Holt area. The project's initial goal is to build two sustainable gardens at two separate locations (Hurricane Baptist Church and Soma Church), to be maintained weekly by both the local community and University students. These tangible products of fresh foods and vegetables can alleviate the lack of fresh produce.

The main source of funding will come from Daniel Community Project's Fund of \$5000. This will include the purchase of materials, crops and tools (to be stored and maintained by the two church community but accessible to outside volunteers).

Costs were calculated from the local Home Depot and Ground Floor Landscape Supply in Northport, Alabama

Please see the attached Excel file for budget sheet.

## Part 6: Project Sustainability

Sustainability is a key factor in this project because what happens in these community gardens has the potential to affect everyone in the area as well as future generations and communities. As our community gardens' successes grow, our group recommends that a network be established between the University of Alabama, the Blackburn Institute, and the community gardens. This will ensure that constant communication is maintained and that the potential for expanding the original community gardens to areas outside of the two churches is also a possibility.

After the initial project is completed, our DCS group along with Blackburn students will coordinate weekly visits for four months to the community gardens in order to have face to face contact with the two churches, their congregations, and their leaders, as well as to make sure the gardens are being properly taken care of.

Creating and coordinating a community garden network would allow us to continually send volunteers for keeping the garden well-maintained and would give us the opportunity to potentially fundraise for each of the locations. We understand that the Blackburn Institute initially provides the funding for the DCS project, yet, in order for our project to be sustainable year after year (especially through harsh seasons), then the communities will need to have continual funding to keep costs to their people low. Details of the fundraising will be worked through with both churches upon establishment of the community gardens.

Final factors of sustainability that need to be considered are the daily to weekly maintenance of the gardens and the leadership succession within our DCS Mission Group. Daily maintenance will be covered by church and community members, and the weekly visits (for four months) by volunteers from the University or through the Community Garden Network members.

Andrea Hayes will be developing a long-term maintenance plan during the four months Blackburn is visiting the sites weekly. She will be working in conjunction with the church focus groups and potential organizations, listed earlier in the proposal. Potential organizations that may take the weekly garden maintenance over permanently are Green Bama, within the Center for Service and Leadership, and Eta Sigma Gamma, a health education and promotion society that already has a presence in Holt.

For ensuring leadership of the project, our DCS group will work with the churches and Community Garden Network to maintain open communication throughout the months after implementation, and, upon our students' graduations, leadership will be maintained through the Blackburn Institute and the mainly the Community Garden Network.

Julia Sosa will offer the initial nutrition education and information programs. We are hoping to establish a relationship with the Food and Nutrition Undergraduate Major at The University of Alabama. Ideally the relationship would be set up so that junior and senior students would teach classes surrounding the produce in the community gardens as an upperclassman project or for practicum hours. This would benefit Holt Community and UA food and nutrition students because they will be get real-life, hands on

experience.

## Part 7: Support Letters from Community Partners

### I. State Office of Minority Health

Blackburn Institute  
The University of Alabama  
2400 Ferguson Student Center  
Box 870167  
Tuscaloosa, AL

To whom it may concern,

My name is Julia Sosa. I am the director of the State Office of Minority Health within the Alabama Department of Public Health. I am writing today to express my support for the Daniel Community Scholar Mission Group and their proposal for two community gardens in Holt, Alabama.

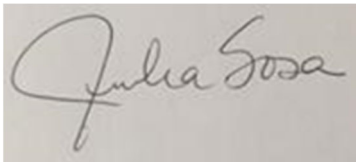
Food insecurity is a very prevalent health issue within Alabama's minority populations. Multiple factors contribute to this problem. A leading factor is lack of grocery stores in low income neighborhoods. Often these neighborhoods' food necessities are met by convenience stores and fast food establishments.

An effective way to address this issue is through community gardens. They enable a community to have access to affordable, healthy food. I have reviewed the DCS Mission Group's proposal for two community gardens within Holt. I strongly support the proposal and recommend funding of this project.

As part of the mission of my office, I will provide nutrition education and information programs as well as resources at the two locations. The two churches selected have significant minority presence. Their member base will be able to attract a larger population to utilize the gardens and these programs.

I commend the students that have created this project, and I am looking forward to establishing a partnership with the Blackburn Institute. I can be contacted at my work (334)206-3812, my personal cell (334)328-0796, or by email at [julia.sosa@adph.state.al.ua](mailto:julia.sosa@adph.state.al.ua).

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julia Sosa".

Julia Sosa, M.S., R.D., L.D.

### II. Hurricane Baptist

Blackburn Institute

The University of Alabama  
2400 Ferguson Student Center  
Box 870167  
Tuscaloosa, AL

To whom it may concern,

My name is Bryant Lancaster, and I am the bishop of Hurricane Baptist in Holt, Alabama. I am writing this letter to express my support for the Daniel Community Scholars Mission group and their proposal for two community gardens in Holt, Alabama. Hurricane Baptist will host and help maintain a one of these community gardens on church grounds or at a property in Holt we recently acquired.

I strongly support building community gardens within Holt because they will serve multiple purposes. Not only does it give community members access to fresh, healthy produce, therefore addressing the issue of food insecurity in Holt, community gardens bring a whole new social dimension to a community. They enable a community to be more healthy, vibrant, and sustainable.

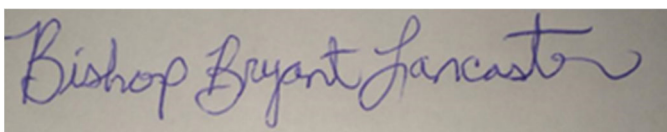
Holt Community was greatly affected by the April 2011 tornadoes. Since then, Holt has made many strides in healing and recovering. Guiding Holt's recovery is the Long Term Community Recovery (LTCR) process. The following three themes course throughout the LTCR: connecting neighborhoods, neighbors, resources and services, creating a vision, a renewed sense of place and neighborhood bright spots, and celebrating heritage, history, culture and diversity. The proposed community garden upholds all these themes. It connects neighborhoods and neighbors through creation and maintenance of the garden. It creates a renewed, healthy sense of place and creates two new bright spots in Holt. It celebrates culture and diversity by allowing different community members to unite over a common goal.

A unique project aspect is the partnership with the State Office of Minority Health which will offer nutrition education and information programs to community members. It goes a step beyond and above by not only addressing the lack of fresh, affordable, healthy produce in Holt but educating members on how to best utilize the proposed community gardens.

If this project proposal is selected, focus groups will be held to ensure the community's voice guides the selection of crops and the maintenance of the garden. This truly is a project for the community, and I am excited to see where it leads.

The DCS Mission Group has full support from myself and the leadership of Hurricane Baptist. I look forward to collaborating with the Blackburn Institute and continuing to develop Holt Community. My phone number is (205) 242-2267, and my email is [bryanto.lancaster@gmail.com](mailto:bryanto.lancaster@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bishop Bryant Lancaster".

Bishop Bryant Lancaster

### **III. Soma Church**

Blackburn Institute  
The University of Alabama  
2400 Ferguson Student Center  
Box 870167  
Tuscaloosa, AL

To whom it may concern,

My name is Shaun Faulkner, and I am the head pastor of Soma Church in Holt, Alabama. I am writing this letter to express my support for the Daniel Community Scholars Mission Group and their proposal for two community gardens in Holt, Alabama. Soma Church will host and help maintain a community garden on church grounds.

I strongly support building community gardens within Holt because they will serve multiple purposes. Not only does it give community members access to fresh, healthy produce, community gardens bring a whole new social dimension to a community. They enable a community to be more healthy, vibrant, and sustainable.

Holt Community was greatly affected by the April 2011 tornadoes. Since then, Holt has made many strides in healing and recovering. Guiding Holt's recovery is the Long Term Recovery Plan (LTCR). The following are three themes that course throughout the document: connecting neighborhoods, neighbors, resources and services, creating a vision, a renewed sense of place and neighborhood bright spots, and celebrating heritage, history, culture and diversity. The proposed community garden upholds all these themes. It connects neighborhoods and neighbors through creation and maintenance of the garden. It creates a renewed, healthy sense of place and creates two new bright spots in Holt. It celebrates culture and diversity by allowing different community members to unite over a common goal.

Soma Church also has a Hispanic ministry that serves the Latino/Hispanic population of Tuscaloosa and Holt. The DCS Mission Group has partnered with a bilingual dietitian to provide nutrition education and information programs to all our members. The proposed community garden is open to all members of Holt in atmosphere where they are welcome and comfortable continuing to uphold the LTCR's celebration theme.

If this project is selected, SOMA will select a church liaison to communicate with the Mission Group. This will ensure the project moves along seamlessly. Focus groups will be held to ensure the community's voice guides the selection of crops and the maintenance of the gardens.

I look forward to collaborating and establishing a partnership with the Blackburn Institute. I know this project will be fruitful for both Holt Community and the Blackburn Institute. My number is (205) 292-9749, and my email is [shaun@somaofchrist.com](mailto:shaun@somaofchrist.com)

Sincerely,

Pastor Shaun Faulkner





Mission Group: Akeisha Anderson, Caitlin Cobb, Carson Ford, Andrea Hayes, Phuong Nguyen

Food Desert in Tuscaloosa					
	Quantity	Revenue per Unit	Total	Running Total	Notes / Details
<b>Revenue:</b>					
<i>Daniel Foundation Funds</i>	1	\$5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>				<b>\$ 5,000.00</b>	
	Quantity	Expense per Unit	Total	Running Total	Notes / Details
<b>Expenses:</b>					
<i>Monthly maintenance fee for 1 year x 2 gardens</i>	24	\$ 25.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00	water, power, broken supplies, extra stock of crops, and unexpected expenditures
<i>Gardening tools</i>	2	\$ 300.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,200.00	hoses, shovels, rakes, irrigation system, buckets, etc
<i>Fertilizer/Compost</i>	2	\$ 400.00	\$ 800.00	\$ 2,000.00	could be: (Home Depot) 50 lb. Composted Cow Manure (Pallet of 50 Bags)
<i>Pesticides</i>	2	\$100	\$ 200.00	\$ 2,200.00	
<i>Plants and seeds</i>	2	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,200.00	Crop examples are tomatoes, lettuce, cabbages, cucumbers, potatoes, corns, etc.
<i>Transportation/shipping fee</i>	1	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 3,300.00	
<i>Compost machine</i>	2	\$ 109.00	\$ 218.00	\$ 3,518.00	Home Depot: The Earth Machine 80gl Composter
<i>Campaigning and raising aweness materials</i>	1	\$ 100.00	\$ 100.00	\$ 3,618.00	fliers, banners, advertisement if needed.
<i>Construction supplies/tools</i>	1	\$ 250.00	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,868.00	woods, nails, hammers, gloves, paints, shovels, etc. to be reused at 2nd location
<i>Soil and base materials</i>	1	\$ 103.00	\$ 103.00	\$ 3,971.00	soil, sand, rocks.
<i>Lunch for volunteers (\$5/person, ~45 volunteers)</i>	2	\$100	\$ 200.00	\$ 4,171.00	catered meals from Subway, *plan to ask for donations from Winn Dixie grocery stores.
<i>Cinderblock for foundations</i>	380	\$ 1.31	\$ 497.80	\$ 4,668.80	8"x8"x16" block, 4'x6'x3' bed, 4 beds/garden, 180 blocks/garden
<i>Grass and leaves clipping to mix with soil</i>	2	\$ 100.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 4,868.80	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>				<b>\$ 4,868.80</b>	
<b>DIFFERENCE</b>				<b>\$ 131.20</b>	<b>Balanced or Budget Surplus</b>