

## **ABSTRACT**

**THESIS:** Developing a Sustainable Food System

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**ABSTRACT:** Quality of life is a central concern for urban planners and the local food system is a primary contributor to this factor. This study investigates quantitative and qualitative developmental barriers faced by localized small-scale sustainable farmers and how they overcome these barriers to make a livable wage. Developmental barriers include the regulation of, and the capital investment in, the management of localized small-scale sustainable food markets. This study employs informal interviews, first-hand work experience over multiple seasons, and relevant economic data. This information seeks to provide insight on the benefits of developing more economic stability for localized small-scale sustainable farmers in cities like Muncie, Indiana. This study also explores how a localized small-scale sustainable food system starts, from the ground up, by using a livable wage as the primary means for attracting local small-scale sustainable farmers to their available markets. This study utilizes urban planning development theory to explore how informal development is used, via democratic agency, to change the outcome of formal development. This study breaks down the difference between United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified organic and localized small-scale sustainable produce. This study uses urban planning development theory to understand the barriers between formal and informal development processes when it comes to food systems in the Midwestern United States. The goal of this study is to break down the benefits of directly investing in local small-scale sustainable food farmers and where to start—a livable wage. This study also provides evidence for the risks and benefits of supporting this type of development in the wake of significant global climate change.