



## Establishing shared-use processing facilities at three possible locations in central and south central Iowa

**Abstract:** One way for small-scale food producers to make money is to add value to their products. Shared-use kitchens offer an option for further processing, cooking, or preservation for a variety of fruit and vegetable crops. This project examines some of the critical factors in establishing and successfully operating a shared-use kitchen.

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*An initial evaluation of the three sites narrowed the focus to a facility in the Sherman Hill neighborhood of Des Moines, Iowa. The business concept for the site included four possible uses for the kitchen: 1) catering, 2) creating shelf-ready food products, 3) making baked good products, and 4) preserving fresh produce. The feasibility of creating a shared-use commercial kitchen for these uses combined market research with analyses of technical, organizational, and financial aspects of establishing the kitchen. The project's results showed that the answer was yes on all three of these aspects, and work has begun to create the kitchen.*



**MARKETING**

### What was done and why?

The project's objective was to determine if a shared-use commercial kitchen would be viable in the Mickle Center. Project strategies involved conducting market research and gathering relevant information needed to answer these important questions:

1. Is the kitchen technically feasible? Is it possible to put in place the equipment and facility upgrades needed for a commercial kitchen that can be rented to people or businesses who seek such a kitchen?
2. Is the kitchen organizationally feasible? Do the right partners exist to fund and operate the kitchen? Are protocols, systems and agreements in place to assure the facility is used appropriately and successfully by its owners, operators and tenants?
3. Is the kitchen financially feasible? Will the costs of upgrading the facility, installing needed equipment and operating the kitchen be sustainable?

### What did we learn?

While establishing a shared-use commercial kitchen in the Mickle Neighborhood Resource Center appears feasible, three important needs must be met: 1) securing funds for facility improvements and equipment; 2) finding and retaining a capable operator; and 3) developing needed protocols, processes and agreements. The next step is to craft a detailed business plan that can be used to help secure funding. A decision will be needed on what constitutes adequate funding, and a concerted effort to secure this funding will be necessary. Once adequate funds are acquired, hiring a project manager who can oversee the facility upgrades and installation of equipment will be important. A marketing campaign to secure tenants to use the kitchen once it is completed also will be critical.