

# GOTHAM GRAZER

SUSTAINABLE FOOD  
NEGOTIATION  
SIMULATION

PRESENTED BY



EARTH DAY INITIATIVE



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## **Gotham Grazer**

Sustainable & Healthy Food  
Negotiation Simulation

Advanced

## **Negotiation Manager General Information**

### **Scenario:**

The neighborhood of Hunts Point in the South Bronx is home to one of the largest food distribution centers in the world. The wholesale food market brings in more than \$2 billion annually. The surrounding area is plagued by poverty. Many local residents do not have access to healthy food and suffer one of the highest asthma hospitalization rates for children in NYC. Nearly 25% of the population is obese, and about 17% have heart-related issues; both which have been proven to decrease with proper nutrition. Most of the population is in school which makes Hunts Point an opportune place to instill the young population with knowledge of sustainability and organic food. Now the new borough president, who won election decrying the previous president's stumbling response to similar crisis', has called together a group of stakeholders to decide how the city should undertake a program of increasing availability of healthy food and developing the proper infrastructure. Should the city improve on its Healthy Bodega Initiative? Should city funding go into the creation of a community-supported agriculture program (CSA)? Start a consistent farmers market or a community garden? Should the city fund educational services to raise awareness and advertise the accessibility and affordability of sustainable food? What scale and pace of response is appropriate given the uncertainty of success and chronic problems of poverty and lack of resources?

### **The Decision at Hand**

Since the new Bronx Borough President entered office he has announced that he is gathering a group of stakeholders to try and solve the lack of healthy food access in Hunts Point. This is a timely manner as the President has many commitments and responsibilities. There is enormous political pressure to do something.

1. City-funded community garden
2. City-funded classes in school
3. Increasing the budget for the Healthy Bodega Initiative
4. Creating a CSA Program
5. Creating a food pantry

### **Logistics:**

This game requires 5 teams (one team representing each different organization) with one team (the president) serving as a facilitator.

The president's facilitation role is important to the game as one hour is a short time to reach agreement among stakeholders with such diverse interests. The game manager can either ask for a volunteer to serve in this role or select a participant who seems willing and able to facilitate. The president's confidential instructions contain guidance on how to facilitate such a discussion. If possible, the game manager should discuss the challenges and approaches to facilitation with this person before the exercise begins. It is also important to emphasize to the whole group that they observe the ground rules and rough agenda contained in their General Instructions.

The game manager should inform the group at the end of the simulation, they will ask the group to vote on the options negotiated by the groups. The vote will take place by simultaneous show of hands. The goal, as laid out by the president, is to achieve the agreement of all parties. However, the city needs to move forward with some plan, so overwhelming agreement among the parties (including the president) would be enough.

The group need not choose one solution from among the options proposed. Rather, a package agreement could include a combination of different programs at different paces and scales to satisfy different stakeholders' interests. No one option will satisfy everyone! If an option is listed as unacceptable, they cannot agree to it unless, perhaps, the agreement substantially modifies the option or greatly advances their interests in another area. The participants should feel free to hybridize solutions and create new options.

### **Debrief:**

The game manager should ask the group questions such as the following to elicit discussion on dynamics within the game and lessons to take away.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. If the group reached agreement, what were the keys to that success? If not, what issues or dynamics prevented agreement?
2. How did different stakeholders respond to the same situation and the continuing threat of poverty and obesity?
3. How were participants able to identify or create options that satisfied multiple interests?
4. How big a role did such issues as social and environmental justice, job creation, financial cost, and uncertainty about healthy food play in the negotiations?
6. Was the group able to agree on a package of solutions that both reduced vulnerability to extreme heat and advanced other important city priorities?

### **Major lessons:**

1. Public policy decisions related to sustainable, organic and healthy food must consider political, economic, and historical realities. Social and environmental justice issues will certainly arise.
2. Effective debate on climate adaptation will require a reliance on shared data and forecasts, which may be interpreted differently, but which can provide a believable basis for discussion.
3. Agreement depends on finding ways to package multiple issues together so that different groups can secure their highest priorities while relaxing their demands in other areas. Tackling issues separately almost always leads to deadlock.
4. The most feasible adaptation measures are those that meet multiple goals, including objectives that are independent of sustainable, organic and healthy food (and all the uncertainties that come with it). We call these no-regrets actions. They can form the core of a more far-reaching response.

## **Hunts Point Commission Simulation**

### **Role: Mayor's Deputy for Food Policy**

#### **General Information**

One of New York City's pervasive socioeconomic and public health problems is the lack of access to healthy, sustainable food. Food deserts—urban areas in which it is difficult to find healthy, affordable foods—are abundant in high-density low-income areas. Economic realities exacerbate the situation; the lack of a developed market for fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs disincentivizes producers and distributors from entering the space.

Nowhere are these problems more apparent than Hunts Point. Hunts Point, located in the South Bronx, is home to Hunts Point Food Distribution Center, one of the largest food distribution centers in the world. Interestingly, the center does not serve the surrounding neighborhood. Instead, every day hundreds of delivery trucks drive *through* the neighborhood, transporting food to wealthier neighborhoods and mid-market distribution centers, leaving the people of Hunts Point with nothing more than emissions.

Those emissions are a contributing factor in high asthma rates in the immediate vicinity of the center. Residents of Hunts Point suffer from other chronic health conditions, most notably diabetes and obesity rates far above regional norms. In fact, The Bronx ranks sixty-second out of sixty-two counties in New York for key public health indicators. The age demographic in Hunts Point skews low, meaning that the local population is younger than the typical New York neighborhood. This can be problematic for the effects of certain health consequences, but also poses opportunities in terms of public education about nutrition and sustainability.

#### **The Decision at Hand**

The new Bronx Borough President, who won citizens' votes by pledging to address these issues, has appointed a commission to decide how Hunts Point can address the twin problems of health and environmental consciousness. This is a five-party negotiation among the commissioners addressing the need for change within an underserved community.

The Borough President will lead the negotiation, encouraging groups to work together to compromise on a decision to spend the allotted budget, which is \$250,000. The group may mix and match from among the options. In the event of disagreement, any three-person majority wins, *provided* that the President is one of the three people. The other acceptable way to reach consensus (other than unanimity) is for everyone other than the President to agree. If the group cannot reach consensus by the end of the simulation, the commission forfeits the money and the opportunity to introduce positive change to Hunts Point.

#### **The Commissioners:**

The five commissioners are: the Bronx Borough President, the CEO of Hunts Point Cooperative Market, the regional manager of Burger Barn, the Executive Director of Nourish NYC, and the NYC Mayor's Deputy for Food Policy.

### **Proposed Solutions:**

1. Establish a city-funded community garden
2. Introduce city-funded classes in school
3. Reconstitute the Healthy Bodegas Initiative
4. Subsidize a community-supported agriculture (CSA) Program
5. Create a food pantry

#### **Option 1: Establish a city-funded community garden.**

A community garden is a space that grows fruits, vegetables, herbs, and sometimes wildflowers for use by people in a specific area. It takes roughly 20 volunteers or paid staff to maintain every 15,000 square feet of garden, and a garden that size can serve as a supplemental food source for approximately 500 households. Assuming the labor force is volunteer and the land is donated or leased at no cost, the annual costs of running a community garden, which include supplies, equipment, city fees, and insurance are around \$3.50 - \$7.00 per square foot (gardens dominated by herbs and flowers are at the low end, and gardens heavy on vegetables or fruit trees are on the higher end). State government and private foundation grants specific to community gardens exist, but competition for them is steep.

Currently, Hunts Point has five indivisible plots of approximately 15,000 square feet each that could potentially be used for community gardens. One potential problem with proposing to use these plots is that New York City ordinance §1-04(b)(iii) prohibits any person from “remove from the ground any plants, flowers, shrubs or other vegetation under the jurisdiction of the Department without permission of the Commissioner.” Passed over a hundred years ago in an effort to protect public space, the ordinance gives would-be community gardeners choices: 1) apply for an exemption from the Parks Commissioner, a bureaucratic process fraught with paperwork and political favors that takes upward of ten months to complete, 2) lobby the city government for a change in the law (which has been tried unsuccessfully by community groups in the recent past, and even if successful would likely take one to two years), or 3) plant community gardens on barges floating next to the waterline of the Bronx. “Barge gardens” are outside jurisdiction of the NYC Parks Department and thus from the reaches of NYC Ordinance §1-04(b)(iii), but cost triple the amount of a land-based garden. A standard barge has 3,000 square feet of plantable area, and the available waterline space would allow up to 10 barge gardens.

#### **Option 2: Introduce city-funded classes in school.**

Experts have repeatedly pointed to lack of education as a core cause of health problems and poor environmental choices related to food sourcing. Some in the field point to citizen education as the best way to address this shortcoming. Most proposals focus on young people. Hunts Point has six schools that serve approximately 3,100 students:

<b>School Name</b>	<b>School Type</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Enrollment #s</b>
Bronx Charter School for the Arts	Charter	Grades K-5	315 students
Hyde Leadership Charter School	Charter	Grades K-12	950 students

PS 48 Joseph R Drake	Public	Grades PK-5	888 students
The Hunts Point School	Public	Grades 6-8	357 students
Vida Bogart School for All Children	Public	Grades K-8	507 students
St Ignatius School	Private	Grades 6-8	87 students

Classes in school come at different price points per student depending upon the quality of curriculum design and delivery. For example, for \$4 per student, existing classroom teachers can be trained to use simple textbook supplements to teach concepts like nutrition, healthy choices, portion control, and basic home economics. For \$7 per student, classroom teachers and supplemental educational specialists work together to deliver curriculum that covers not only nutrition, but also basic experiential learning like raw food preparation skills (work that can be done in a classroom rather than a cooking lab), higher-level personal finance and budgeting, and some exploration of the environmental impact of food production. For \$13 per student, Hunts Point schools can invest in a multi-year, integrated curriculum that covers human health and biology, personal finance and macroeconomics, and environmental science. This “premium” option builds foundational learning concepts in early elementary school and culminates in college-prep, cross-disciplinary experiential labs. To be clear, these are examples of what is possible at different price points—a program might elect to spend \$50 per student and get something in between the first two example options outlined here. All costs are annual.

### **Option 3: Reconstitute the Healthy Bodegas Initiative.**

A bodega is a small convenience store—typically between 400 and 4,000 square feet—that sells food, lottery tickets, and convenience items. Most food in a bodega is nonperishable, like potato chips and canned soup, and many have a small refrigerated section selling soda. In food deserts like Hunts Point, bodegas comprise a staggering 80% of food retail among residents. The business model of bodegas is not conducive to selling fresh produce—profit margins are thin and bodega owners are usually cash constrained, which makes them unlikely to take risks, especially in neighborhoods where attempts at selling a flat of apples often result in the owner tossing half of the food after it rots due to lack of buyer interest.

In 2005, New York City launched the Healthy Bodegas Initiative, which worked with 100 bodegas across the city including the South Bronx. The Initiative included custom-tailored interventions in individual bodegas, ranging from introducing diet soda and low-fat milk in some bodegas to gifting commercial-sized refrigerators to other bodegas who pledged to sell fresh vegetables. On the higher end of interventions, the Initiative even sent visiting chefs to bodegas with sandwich counters to make healthy sandwich, wrap, and salad options.

Critics have pointed out that bodega owners are businesspeople who are meeting the market demands of their customers, and that creating changes in consumers’ preferences is a monumental social task whose burden should not be borne by small—and often struggling—businesses. They also point out that efforts to educate consumers about healthy choices through advertising healthy food and healthy choices are

often rendered ineffective by the massive advertising budgets of multinational snack and beverage companies who sell to bodega owners and post large advertisements in their stores. Finally, the intervention model works most effectively on bodegas that are already set up with at least some space devoted to fresh fruit and dairy sales, creating a large infrastructure blockade to this solution. The Initiative has run out of money, so if the commission wants to extend this option, it will need to provide funding. Low-end intervention costs approximately \$2,000 per bodega per year, and a higher-end intervention runs up to \$7,500 (and could be more, depending on the level of services and subsidies provided). Hunts Point has 65 bodegas, of which 20 have little or no refrigerated space.

**Option 4: Subsidize a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program.**

Community-supported agriculture is a system that connects the producer and consumers within the food system more closely by allowing the consumer to “subscribe” to the harvest of a certain farm or group of farms. Farmers in upstate New York and other agricultural production areas within 100 miles of New York City would offer subscriptions in their harvest to Hunts Point residents, which would be paid or partially paid by this commission. Subscribing members would receive a bag of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season. CSAs in other cities have been shown to increase a population’s market demand for fresh fruits and vegetables, largely because of the personal connection people feel to their food providers and because of exposure to a greater variety of appetizing healthy foods.

Delivery of the weekly bags increases the chances that consumers actually receive the food (as opposed to paid but unused CSA subscriptions, much like well-intentioned gym memberships), but increase the cost of the program and make food waste more likely. Consumers who receive unfamiliar food (chard or turnips or kale, for example) without instructions on how to prepare and eat them are likely to toss them or let them rot, which exacerbates the negative environmental effects of food waste.

Hunts Point has approximately 8,600 households, of which 80% qualify as low-income. The cost of an annual CSA subscription, which provides one delivery of fresh farm produce per week for the regional growing season (April - November) would run \$14.50 to \$20.00 per household. The higher the price point within that range, the higher the nutrient-to-calorie ratio of the foods in contains (white potatoes on one end of this spectrum and berries and leafy greens at the other). It is important to note that CSAs are shared risk models—in the event of adverse farming conditions (an early freeze, a hail storm that destroys certain crops, etc.) that reduce or eliminate food production, there is no refund or other compensation to subscribers.

**Option 5: Create a food pantry.**

Food pantries come in many varieties. At the lowest cost end of the scale, food pantries are repositories for nonperishable food items that are then given away free to low-income people. At the higher end of the scale, food pantries include perishable foods and “food rescue” programs that redistribute surplus food from restaurants and stores to qualifying programs and individuals. Non-perishable food pantries address food insecurity of low-income people, but don’t do much if anything to address environmental concerns with food production and transportation or nutritional and health concerns. Perishable food distribution and food rescue programs can help with both of those matters, but cost considerably more.

Hunts Point is already served by a number of small food pantries that offer non-perishable items, but more than half of households in the area still report food insecurity. The nonprofit City Harvest, which addresses food insecurity and environmental concerns through food redistribution and food rescue programs, would like to serve Hunts Point if funding were available. One possibility for Hunts Point is to set up a series of small “food pantries” at key points throughout the neighborhood to receive and redistribute food from City Harvest.

A single food pantry location that serves 2,000 households with only non-perishable food would cost around \$35,000 per year. A food pantry with perishable and non-perishable food options that serves approximately 2,000 households would cost approximately \$100,000 per year. Two potential food pantry sites are available, and could be used as either a perishable pantry or a non-perishable pantry.

## **Mayor's Deputy for Food Policy: Confidential Information**

### **Confidential Instructions:**

You are the New York City Mayor's Deputy for Food Policy. Your purview covers everything from agriculture to restaurants to grocery stores, and often overlaps with other fields such as consumer protection and public health. You have been in your current position for 13 years and have been in government for 20. At your very core, you are committed to serving the people of New York. You see yourself as a pragmatist. As a political appointee, you have to think about public perception, but not in the same way an elected official (like your boss) does. On a personal level, the most important thing to you is successful results over the long term. You feel a strong sense of stewardship over the taxpayer money the commission has been allocated and will only support projects that you believe are responsible investments of the money. You would rather see a strong investment in one option than weak investments in multiple options just to appease commissioners. You believe—vocally—that commissioners have a duty to serve the public interest and not whatever business or constituency might be relevant to their day jobs.

### **Your Preferences on the Proposed Solutions:**

**Option 1: Establish a city-funded community garden.** This is your fourth priority. A garden is a “feel good” option but is, in your view, inefficient. It requires a lot of time and resources to cultivate and is generally frequented by only a small number of repeat customers, not a vast swath of the low-income community.

**Option 2: Introduce city-funded classes in school.** This is your third priority. On the one hand, this is the type of systemic, long-term solution you typically advocate for. On the other hand, no one else on the commission seems to appreciate that implementing a program in public schools is not as simple as it seems, and will require cooperation from the local school board. Candidly, the school board is highly likely to acquiesce and in fact to appreciate the help, but it’s important to you to at least raise the matter so that the other commissioners don’t lose sight of the limits of the commission’s power.

**Option 3: Reconstitute the Healthy Bodega Initiative.** This is your second priority. While you acknowledge the infrastructure obstacles to certain types of bodega improvements, it strikes you as foolhardy to ignore the sources of 80% of food retail in the area.

**Option 4: Subsidize a CSA program.** This is a distant fifth in your priorities. Until agricultural technology makes urban farming more realistic, you are painfully conscious of the high investment it takes to get even a small amount of CSA food into the city. That money would be far better spent on one of the other options than a program better left to upper-middle-class hipsters.

**Option 5: Create a food pantry.** This is your first priority. Surely the commission’s first item of business, in your opinion, should be to eliminate food insecurity, and then to do what it can to make the available food healthy and sustainable. The perishable food pantries check all of those boxes and fulfill, in your mind, the most appropriate way to spend taxpayer dollars.

You should try to end the simulation with a solution that incorporates either your first or second priority, although you may need to compromise and construct hybrids and packages out of the proposals. You can be more flexible on matters that are not your top concern.

If an option is listed as unacceptable, you cannot agree to it **unless** the group modifies it so that you benefit in some way. You can always disagree to the terms being negotiated, but **keep in mind** that while this process aims at consensus, agreement among the other stakeholders is enough for the simulation to progress without addressing your concerns.