

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACTS

**\$788,673**

Healthy Food Financing Initiative financing received

**70**

total jobs created in the first two quarters, 40 of which are full-time

**18**

first-time, full-time small businesses supported

**32,670**

square feet of vacant lot reclaimed

**\$3.2 million**

total project costs

**\$1,102,000**

combined total of grants and loans from the Portland Development Commission



## Profile: Portland Mercado

Portland, Oregon



The Latino community in Portland, Oregon, has grown rapidly in the last 20 years, from 3.3 percent of Portlanders to 11 percent, and by 2040 it is estimated that [23 percent of the city's residents will be Latino](#). This growth, however, has not been accompanied by increases in opportunity. More than [31 percent of Latino households in Portland](#) currently live below the federal poverty line, compared to 18 percent of all households in Portland. Latino residents [earn lower wages](#), are [more likely to be overweight](#), and [disproportionately live in neighborhoods](#) without basic amenities and located far from the living- and family-wage jobs found downtown.

Recognizing the important link between access to healthy food, economic opportunity, community building, and culture, Hacienda Community Development Center (CDC) secured a federal [Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#) (HFFI) grant in 2012 to develop **Portland Mercado**, an innovative project which includes a Latino cultural space and public market, bringing fresh food and good jobs to the community. The HFFI grant funded the Mercado's pre-development phase, including design, engineering, and planning, and it helped to generate the momentum that attracted additional investors and partners to the project. Hacienda CDC is the largest Latino-led, Latino-serving community development corporation in the state, best known in Portland for building affordable housing and community development efforts.

The Mercado opened in Southeast Portland in April 2015 and is home to 18 family businesses, of which nearly 75 percent are first-time, Latino business owners. Most of the Latino-themed shops sell food, ranging from fresh meats and produce to baked goods such as hand-made tortillas. The Mercado also houses a variety of community service businesses; a commissary kitchen used by 20-30 additional businesses and mission-based



community partners; and a community space that can be rented for events. In the first two quarters of the Mercado's operations, a total of 70 new jobs were created, 40 of which are full-time. During the peak summer months, the Mercado regularly sees up to 600 customers each day. The Mercado's success can be attributed to the community's enthusiasm for a Latino-themed public market.

The concept of a public market grew out of Micro Mercantes, a multicultural culinary business incubator that Hacienda CDC and a self-organized group of entrepreneurs developed in 2006. "Entrepreneurs tend to lose out during gentrification when they own neither their businesses nor their buildings," said Nathan Teske, Hacienda CDC director of community economic development. Designing the Mercado for a permanent Latino customer base and securing a long-term lease on its location creates long-term economic gains for the community by making the Mercado resilient to future gentrification that more often than not displaces local businesses, particularly those of color.

Since its origins connecting *tamaleras*, or tamale vendors, with church kitchens, Micro Mercantes has evolved into a program with bilingual business development and financial education courses, and now participating entrepreneurs primarily use the Mercado's commercial kitchen to start up or expand their food businesses. The program aims to address the many challenges that Latino entrepreneurs face, such as securing affordable financing, navigating the business-permitting process, and overcoming language barriers. Several graduates have their first permanent locations at the Mercado, like Amalia and Juan Vasquez who operate Tierra del Sol Oaxacan Cuisine, a popular food cart housed within the market's food cart "pod." They began their business in Micro Mercantes in 2012. Hacienda CDC continues to support Mercado entrepreneurs by providing resources and technical assistance to build business and financial skills, offering individual development accounts with savings matched by external donors, and offering a platform for small businesses to learn from one another.

The Mercado also seeded new partnerships with local and state government, community organizations, and residents. For example, La Asamblea, an association of 25 business owners, grew out of the participatory visioning process for the Mercado and played a key role in planning the project and advocating for it to city government and stakeholders. La Asamblea consistently worked in partnership with Hacienda on designing the Mercado's goals, management, physical site, and layout criteria, its committees and elected board of directors now sharing direction of the Mercado with Hacienda staff.

As the market approaches its first anniversary, La Asamblea's original vision of a community-centered food retail space with art, music, education, and cultural events is coming to fruition. A number of new projects are already in the works: a mural project to celebrate the diversity of Latino culture, hiring a one-on-one business adviser to support Mercado vendors, new arts and cultural programming, and more. Hacienda CDC staff, business owners, and residents alike are eager and fully committed to ensuring that the Mercado continues to succeed and grow as an economic and community hub.

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For more information about the Healthy Food Access Portal, contact us at [info@healthyfoodaccess.org](mailto:info@healthyfoodaccess.org).