

Healthy Corner Stores Initiative

A Manchester HEAL Program



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Goal: Make healthy food available and affordable in the center city neighborhoods of Manchester

Primary Strategy: A “Healthy Corner Stores Initiative,” that helped local corner stores carry and promote fresh produce and healthier food choices

Tactics:

- An “audit” of 16 corner stores to find out what kinds of fruits, veggies, and other healthy foods they carry
- Interviews with seven Corner Store Owners to ask them about their needs
- Surveys of 114 people who live and/or shop in the center city neighborhood to assess shopping patterns and what foods they would purchase if made available to them in neighborhood corner stores

Findings:

- While 93% of residents included supermarkets as one of the places they shop most often for food, about 50% said they do shop for food at corner stores/convenience stores
- When residents without cars were given the statement: “It is easy to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables in my neighborhood,” 25% strongly or somewhat disagreed
- Over 96% of residents said they buy FRESH Fruit
- Over 93% of residents said they buy FRESH Vegetables
- The seven Store Owners were asked what challenges they had in carrying fresh produce - the top three answers included 1) spoilage before the fruits/veggies sell; 2) the need for adequate refrigeration equipment; 3) sourcing/getting affordable produce
- Store Owners stated other barriers include space within the store and low sales of produce
- Store Owners reported a desire to becoming a WIC-eligible provider

Selling Points for Healthy Corner Stores in Your Community

- Studies suggest that the availability of nutritious foods at corner stores is an important way to promote healthy eating, particularly in low-income and minority communities with limited access to supermarkets.^{1,2}
- In areas with better access to chain grocery stores, teenagers have been found to have lower BMIs (Body Mass Index) than in areas with a high density of convenience stores.³
- The amount of shelf space devoted to high calorie snack foods was positively, although modestly, correlated with increased BMI.⁴
- America’s inner-city neighborhoods—with \$331 billion in annual retail purchasing power—offer major potential for retail business growth.⁵

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Interview findings...

All Store Owners showed a commitment to their neighborhood and were interested in the idea of the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative

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“In today’s health-conscious world, convenience stores are expanding their menus to include more healthy snacks and meals.”

– John Lofstock

“The Growing Demand for Fresh Foods”
Convenience Store Decisions, 5/3/11

Healthy Corner Stores Initiatives:

Ideas & Resources From Around The Country

Assist Your Community Store

- Help in locating affordable sources of fresh produce
- Training on handling, storing and displaying fresh produce
- Help with promoting fresh produce and other healthy foods
- Store layout, colorful, attractive advertising signs, educational signs on shelves to highlight the healthy food choices, recipe cards
- Help with tracking sales of healthy foods
- Other promotional events like in-store “taste-testing”
- Help in locating loans and grants for new store equipment
- Help in upgrading outside appearance of store and advertising availability of healthy foods
- Engage high school youth to help with store “makeovers”
- Work with elementary schools and after-school programs to promote buying healthy snacks at participating corner stores

Suggest ‘Healthy Corner Store’ Best Practices

- Carry a certain number/variety of fresh produce
- Carry healthy alternatives to snack foods (i.e., nuts, baked instead of fried chips)
- Carry healthy alternative staple foods (i.e., whole grain bread, low fat milk)
- Display Healthy Corner Store marketing materials
- Participate in training for produce purchasing, stocking, handling and marketing
- Actively participate in implementing store changes

Definition of Food Desert

Food deserts are areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk, and other foods that make up the full range of a healthy diet.

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative defines a food desert more specifically as a low-income census tract where a substantial number of residents live more than a mile from a large grocery store in an urban area and more than 10 miles in a rural area.

Resources

- HEAL NH website: www.healnh.org
- Food Environment Atlas provides a spatial overview of a community’s ability to access healthy food /USDA <http://ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas/>
- Healthy Corner Store Network website: www.healthycornerstores.org
- The Food Trust’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/corner.store.campaign.php>

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