

A report of the Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS This report was prepared by Miriam Manon and Jordan Tucker at The Food Trust; it was released November 2012. Members of the Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force, co-chaired by Dr. Paula Johnson and Charles D'Amour, provided valuable input. Support for this report was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Food Trust's Supermarket Campaign in Massachusetts is made possible by generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Kraft Foods Foundation. Photos by Ryan Donnell.





Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force

Dear Neighbors,

As co-chairs of the Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force, we are honored to present this report outlining our task force's policy recommendations for developing healthy, affordable food retail in underserved communities throughout Massachusetts. Despite being one of the most affluent states in the nation, Massachusetts has fewer supermarkets per capita than almost any other state. While supermarkets are not the only answer for promoting healthy eating, they provide the greatest variety of healthy, affordable food for our residents while creating jobs and opportunities for economic development. Residents across the commonwealth have advocated for better food choices over the past few decades, yet we still lack adequate facilities in many of our communities.

Representing leadership from public health, food retail, economic development, government and civic organizations, our 47 members met to explore barriers to supermarket and grocery store development in communities that lack access to nutritious foods. As a group we ultimately identified nine policy recommendations to drive change at both the state and local levels. We are thankful for the dedicated energy of this group, which blended a variety of diverse perspectives to create realistic and effective solutions. We also would like to extend our gratitude to the Massachusetts Food Association, the Massachusetts Public Health Association, The Boston Foundation and The Food Trust for convening our partnership and to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Kraft Foods Foundation for their support.

Every community deserves to have convenient access to high-quality, affordable and nutritious food. We look forward to bringing these policies to fruition and supporting the expansion of healthy food retail across Massachusetts. Implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will require committed, broad-based leadership to attract new supermarkets and to work with retailers to upgrade existing facilities and expand nutritious offerings. Together, we can make healthy, affordable food available for all children and families in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

Dr. Paula Johnson

Co-chair

Executive Director, Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology, Brigham and Women's Hospital

Charles L D'amour

Charles D'Amour

President and COO

Big Y Foods

Task Force Members

Lisa Antoniewicz

Senior Real Estate Representative Wakefern Food Corporation

John Auerbach

Commissioner (former) Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Valerie Bassett

Executive Director (former) Massachusetts Public Health Association

Allison Bauer

Program Director The Boston Foundation

Bill Britton

Director of HR and Real Estate Wakefern Food Corporation, PriceRite Division

Dan Brock

Vice President, Sales Bozzuto's

Christopher N. Buchanan

Senior Manager, Public Affairs and Government Relations Walmart

Laura Canter

Executive Vice President Mass Development

Prabal Chakrabarti

Assistant Vice President and Director of Community Development Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

Elizabeth Chase-Marino

Director of Government Affairs Stop & Shop

Brian Connors

Deputy Director Springfield Department of Planning and Economic Development

Catherine D'Amato

President and CEO Greater Boston Food Bank

Charlie D'Amour

(Task Force Co-chair) President and COO Big Y Foods

John Andrew DeJesus

President and CEO Foodmaster Supermarkets

John Domino

Principal JD Consulting

Dr. Barbara Ferrer

Director Boston Public Health Commission

Chris Flynn

President Massachusetts Food Association

Evelyn Friedman

Director Boston Department of Neighborhood Development

Ronn Garry, Jr.

President **Tropical Foods**

Tim Garvin

President and CEO United Way of Central Massachusetts

Gina Goff

Director of Community Involvement C&S Wholesale Grocers

Jill Griffin

Senior Director The Boston Foundation

Cheryl Hinkson

District Manager Hannaford Bros.

Michael Hunter

Undersecretary Massachusetts Department of Business Development

Dr. Paula Johnson

(Task Force Co-chair) Executive Director Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology, Brigham and Women's Hospital

Judi Kende

Managing Director Low Income Investment Fund

Joe Kriesberg

President and CEO Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations

Howard Leibowitz

Chief of Projects and Partnerships Mayor's Office, City of Boston

Mary Kay Leonard

President and CEO Initiative for a Competitive Inner City

Andrew Morehouse

Executive Director Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

Edith Murnane

Director of Food Initiatives Mayor's Office, City of Boston

Curt O'Hara

Director of Retail Programs Associated Grocers of New England

Ellen Parker

Executive Director Project Bread

Rebecca Regan

President, Capital Market Companies Housing Partnership Network

Maddie Ribble

Director of Policy and Communications Massachusetts Public Health Association

Dr. Frank Robinson

Executive Director Partners for a Healthier Community

Rick Roche

Owner and CFO Roche Bros. Supermarkets

Ronnie Sanders

Executive Director for Community Health Partners Health Care

John Schneider

Vice President MassINC

Liz Sheehan Castro

Program Manager, Hunger Free and Healthy Worchester Food & Active Living Policy Council

Harold Slawsby

Owner Madison Food Corp. (Save-a-Lot)

Dr. Lauren Smith

Medical Director Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Mark Traverse

Region Vice President Kraft Foods

Michelle Volpe

Loan Fund President Boston Community Capital

David Warner

Owner City Feed & Supply

Keith Weeman

Senior Customer Business Manager Kraft Foods

INTRODUCTION

There are too few supermarkets in Massachusetts, and the resulting lack of access to affordable and nutritious food undermines the health and well-being of children and families in many communities across the commonwealth. Despite being one of the most affluent states in the nation, Massachusetts has fewer supermarkets per capita than almost any other state, ranking third lowest nationwide.

A significant body of research has indicated that people who live in communities without a supermarket suffer from disproportionately high rates of obesity, diabetes and other diet-related health problems. In Massachusetts, limited access to nutritious food is a statewide issue that affects urban neighborhoods, in cities such as Springfield, Lawrence and Boston, as well as rural communities in central and western Massachusetts. Meanwhile studies have shown that one-third of Massachusetts schoolchildren are overweight or obese by the time they reach first grade, and many Massachusetts residents rely on corner or convenience stores that do not provide consumers with nutritious or fresh food options. While supermarkets alone will not solve the

childhood obesity epidemic facing the state and nation, public health experts, including the Institute of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, agree that bringing supermarkets and other stores selling high-quality, healthy and affordable foods to underserved communities is critical to the success of any effort to help people eat healthier and live healthy lives.

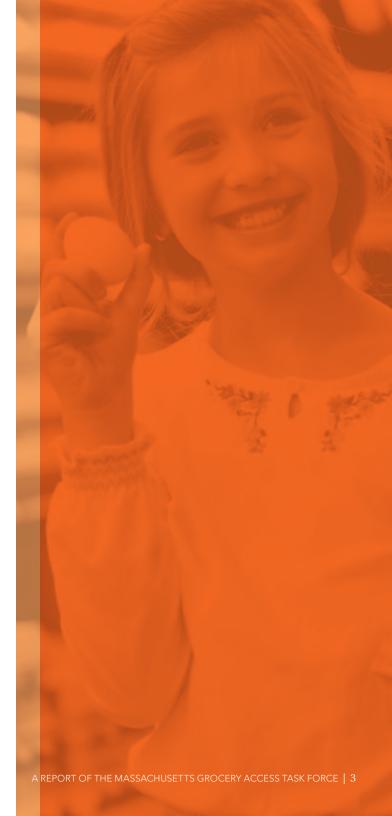
To address these concerns, The Food Trust, a nationally recognized nonprofit, issued Food for Every Child: The Need for More Supermarkets in Massachusetts. By using mapping technology to

Studies have shown that one-third of Massachusetts schoolchildren are overweight or obese by the time they reach first grade.

identify underserved communities across the state, Food for Every Child highlights the gaps in food availability and the relationship between supermarket access, diet-related diseases and neighborhood income levels. The report led to a special convening of key food access stakeholders in Massachusetts to increase access to healthy, affordable foods for residents in underserved areas—both urban and rural—throughout the state.

The Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force, convened by the Massachusetts Food Association, the Massachusetts Public Assistance, The Boston Foundation and The Food Trust, is a public-private partnership of leaders from the grocery industry, state and local government and economic development, public health and civic sectors. Under the guidance of task force members, nine recommendations are presented for action to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and to local governments throughout the state.

continued on next page





These recommendations call upon state and local governments to prioritize access to supermarkets and other stores selling high-quality, healthy and affordable foods for families and children in Massachusetts who reside in underserved communities. It is the responsibility of the public sector to help provide a nutritious food supply in these communities to improve the health of children and families. This situation is pressing: Massachusetts spends an estimated \$1.8 billion each year treating obesity-related diseases. Providing residents with greater access to nutritious and affordable food will help alleviate these public health concerns. Furthermore, supermarkets and grocery stores bring quality jobs and serve as economic anchors, sparking complementary development in the areas that need it most.

Supermarkets and grocery stores create quality jobs and contribute to the revitalization of urban and rural communities.

This task force builds upon the work completed in the past several years by a variety of government, private and civic leaders across the commonwealth. Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the City of Boston has been at the forefront of addressing this issue, successfully attracting supermarkets back into the city over the past 10 years, including several in lower- and moderate-income neighborhoods. At the state level, the Massachusetts Food Policy Council, established by the legislature in 2010, also has advocated for increasing access to nutritious foods in underserved

communities. These efforts demonstrate that Massachusetts is well positioned to address the tangible and overwhelming need for more supermarkets and grocery stores that provide affordable and nutritious foods and create jobs for residents across the state.

The Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force recognizes that increasing access to healthy, affordable foods complements the state's greater economic development agenda. If given the means to overcome the high preliminary costs associated with development, supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy and affordable foods can thrive in lower-income communities as sustainable enterprises thereby increasing the economic vitality of neighborhoods. Supermarkets and grocery stores create quality jobs and contribute to the revitalization of urban and rural communities.

The task force also recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for all communities in Massachusetts. Food retail projects can take on myriad different forms, including new supermarket developments, expansion or renovation of existing grocery stores and alternative models, such as farmers' markets, healthy corner store projects, co-ops and mobile markets. These efforts can also support complementary initiatives to expand the local food system and promote the sale of Massachusetts-grown foods.

Efforts to improve supermarket access also must work in tandem with initiatives to provide nutrition education to increase the demand for healthy foods and to promote the sale of healthy products through innovative in-store marketing campaigns. These efforts are needed to support the task force's broader goals of improving health and promoting sustainable, long-term economic development in Massachusetts.

States and cities across the country have implemented similar recommendations by providing financial and civic support to healthy food retail programs. Successful financing programs in states such as Pennsylvania, New York and Louisiana, among others, have included the strategic investment of public funds to reduce the risks associated with the development and expansion of supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy and affordable foods in lower-income communities. First Lady Michelle Obama has recognized the success of this model as a key pillar of her Let's Move! campaign to prevent childhood obesity, and the Obama administration has confirmed its commitment to making nutritious food available for all with the creation of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a national grants and loans program for projects that increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities.

Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force members and The Food Trust will continue to advocate for better access to healthy, affordable food for individuals and families through their support of these nine recommendations and through other activities in the state.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Massachusetts Grocery Access Task Force—a public-private partnership of leaders from the grocery industry and economic development, public health and civic sectors—came together to call upon the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to prioritize a healthy balance of food retail for the comprehensive development of communities. We present nine recommendations for action to state and local governments in Massachusetts.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES

- Massachusetts should adopt food retailing as a priority during the planning process at the state, regional and local level. State and local governments should streamline the development process to make opening a grocery store more efficient, assist with the land assembly process and expedite permitting for supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy foods in underserved communities.
- Economic development programs and other existing public incentives at the local, state and federal level should be made available and aggressively marketed to the grocery industry for supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy foods in underserved areas.
- 3 State and local governments, in partnership with local residents and community-based organizations, should identify target areas for investment and promote them to real estate developers and the grocery industry with up-to-date and data-driven market research that highlights unmet market demand for food.
- 4 State and local governments, transit agencies and grocery retailers should work together to develop affordable and efficient transportation services for neighborhoods without convenient access to a full-service supermarket.

FRESH FOOD FINANCING FUND

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should develop and seed a flexible financing program that provides grants, loans and technical assistance to support the development, renovation and expansion of supermarkets and other

retailers selling healthy foods in underserved communities. Massachusetts should seek to leverage seed capital from the state with additional public and private investment through a public-private partnership.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

- State and local government and other community development entities should target new and existing resources to support supermarkets and other food retailers that partner with community-based organizations during the development process, promote the sale of healthy and Massachusetts-grown food and participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- State and local public health departments should partner with the food industry and health and community-based organizations to educate, highlight and support best practices for promoting healthy eating and for making it easier for shoppers to select and purchase healthy foods in grocery stores.
- State and local government, local nonprofit organizations, community colleges and vocational education institutions should tailor workforce development programs to ensure that supermarkets and other food retailers develop a skilled staff and to support local hiring.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

State and local governments should engage leaders from the grocery industry and the health and civic sectors to guide the implementation of these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

Massachusetts should adopt food retailing as a priority during the planning process at the state, regional and local level. State and local governments should streamline the development process to make opening a grocery store more efficient, assist with the land assembly process and expedite permitting for supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy foods in underserved communities.

Massachusetts communities would benefit from a strategic outreach plan focused on stimulating new investments and improvements in the food retail sector. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the support of task force members, should engage retailers who are interested in opening stores in high-need areas and address the diverse barriers that arise in developing and opening a grocery store. Regulatory processes should be streamlined to expedite the lengthy permitting and development process and food retail should be considered a priority during the early stages of the city, state and regional planning process.



Success Stories

Illinois: The City of Chicago has made fresh food retail a priority by making the development process for new food retailers more streamlined and less burdensome. The city has designated a single agency, called Shop Chicago, to address the multiple concerns of potential retailers and to coordinate the development process for projects. Shop Chicago's programs simplify the

approval process and identify measures to facilitate land assembly, among many other proactive measures. As a result, the Shop Chicago program has successfully attracted new grocery stores to underserved neighborhoods.

California: The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles developed an incentive package to attract new food retailers to neighborhoods in South Los

Angeles that were underserved by grocery retailers. Recognizing regulatory hurdles to the development of new stores, the Los Angeles City Planning Department and Department of Building Services offered an expedited plan review to new stores. Since its inception, the program has been successful in attracting three new grocers to the Los Angeles area.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Economic development programs and other existing public incentives at the local, state and federal level should be <u>made available and aggressively marketed</u> to the grocery industry for supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy foods in underserved areas.

The food retail industry needs public sector support to overcome the high costs of development, particularly in urban areas. Existing economic development and financing programs are often not available to food retailers or grocers are not aware of how to access these resources. Business tools, such as sales tax abatements on equipment purchases, property tax abatements, tax exempt financing bonds and low-cost financing, can encourage supermarkets to invest in underserved areas. At present, these tools are brought to bear on other forms of real estate development that are considered desirable, such as housing developments, and they also can be applied to the grocery industry. Cities and states across the country have successfully used existing incentive programs to attract supermarkets and other healthy food retailers to underserved communities. While these successes speak to the potential for public incentives to influence supermarket development and help close the financing gap, a comprehensive program is needed to stimulate supermarket development in communities throughout Massachusetts.



Success Stories

Washington, D.C.: Tax exemptions can encourage developers to include supermarkets over other competing retail projects. In Washington, D.C, the Department of Planning and Economic Development approved the Tax Exemption Act in 2000. This act was a part of a citywide supermarket attraction and retention effort, which has resulted in several new store openings and expansions in targeted areas throughout the city. In addition to benefiting from the tax exemption, new

developments received additional incentives from the city, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

Kentucky: In Louisville, a combination of city loans, federal grants and tax credit financing helped to bring First Choice Market to the Park DuValle neighborhood in southwest Louisville, a key priority in the city's redevelopment plan. The \$4.4 million project included a \$3.2 million loan from the city,

funded with CDBG-R (stimulus) funds, two \$100,000 city loans, \$35,000 for infrastructure improvements from a local councilmember and a nearly \$1.2 million New Markets Tax Credit equity commitment by local banks. First Choice Market, an independently operated grocery store, opened in 2012 creating more than 150 construction jobs and 40 permanent jobs and bringing fresh fruits and vegetables to a neighborhood that had been without a full-service supermarket for over a decade.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

State and local governments, in partnership with local residents and community-based organizations, should identify target areas for investment and promote them to real estate developers and the grocery industry with up-to-date and data-driven market research that highlights unmet market demand for food.

Accurate information about the underlying market potential of Massachusetts neighborhoods is crucial for attracting new food retail investment. In the last 10 years, a new consensus has emerged that urban retailers have underestimated the potential of emerging markets in many inner-city areas. State and local governments in Massachusetts should follow the lead of other cities and states by funding and disseminating innovative retail analysis to reveal the unmet demand for food and highlight areas of opportunity for grocers and developers. To build on this data, non-traditional market analysis that incorporates community input can provide an even better understanding of the different fresh food retail models likely to succeed in different communities across the commonwealth. Engaging local residents early on through surveys, focus groups and community meetings can help retailers to meet the unique needs of communities.



Success Stories

Wisconsin: The City of Milwaukee's Department of City Development has successfully used independent data analysis to attract new supermarket chains. Milwaukee utilized a stateof-the-art methodology relating detailed income tax filing data and other current information on residents' spending patterns to map the income concentration, purchasing power and economic assets of all commercial districts in the city. The purchasing power profile reports were then posted on the City of Milwaukee's website. Milwaukee's data showed that some of the strongest retail markets in the city had been ignored in part due to marketing stereotypes promulgated by commercial marketing firms and persistent misconceptions about the income status and absence of workers in inner-city neighborhoods

Massachusetts: In Springfield, efforts are underway to attract a supermarket to an underserved area of the city with the use of data-driven market research and meaningful community engagement. DevelopSpringfield, a nonprofit corporation that supports development and economic improvement projects in the city, has confirmed there is demand for a full-service supermarket in the Mason Square neighborhood of the city. DevelopSpringfield has identified a site for potential development and have promoted the site to food retail developers and supermarket chains. Community residents also have organized in support of this goal through the Mason Square Food Justice Task Force. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts can support these types of projects and encourage other municipalities to form similar public-private partnerships at the local level.

State and local governments, transit agencies and grocery retailers should work together to develop affordable and efficient transportation services for neighborhoods without convenient access to a full-service supermarket.

Good transportation policy should plan for ways to transport area residents to nearby grocery stores and should encourage development of new stores along existing transportation routes. Lower-income households are less likely than other households to own a car and less likely to live in a neighborhood with a supermarket. Many lower-income families, as well as the elderly, disabled and other transit-dependent consumers, have to take multiple bus rides to access the nearest supermarket. Lack of convenient and affordable transportation makes it difficult for these shoppers to purchase fresh, healthy foods. A transportation needs assessment should be conducted to explore transportation barriers in neighborhoods that lack a full-service supermarket.

10 | STIMULATING GROCERY DEVELOPMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Success Stories

Connecticut: In Hartford, the L-Tower Avenue bus route plays an important role in increasing access to major supermarkets for transit-dependent residents. Designed as part of the Jobs Access program to link lower-income residents with jobs, shopping and medical services, the L-Tower Avenue bus route saw its ridership double after a year, with grocery shopping cited as the primary reason to take the bus by one-third of its riders.

Texas: In Austin, Capital Metro, working with the Austin/Travis County Food Policy Council, started a "grocery bus" line in 1996 with the intention of providing improved food access to residents of the primarily lower-income, Latino Eastside. The bus route was designed to run at regular intervals seven days a week and to link neighborhoods with two supermarkets.

Wisconsin: The Madison Metro Public Transit "Ride Guide" includes routes to 20 area grocery stores among other popular destinations and has an arrangement with at least one grocer to drop off and pick up customers right at the door.

Massachusetts: Neighborhood shuttles represent a short-term strategy to address the problem of poor food access, and these efforts are already underway in some communities in Massachusetts. In Springfield, community members, public officials and store management developed a free, once-aweek shuttle service in an effort to ensure that the one supermarket that served 26,000 people did not close.





RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts should develop and seed a flexible financing program that provides grants, loans and technical assistance to support the development, renovation and expansion of supermarkets and other retailers selling healthy foods in underserved communities. Massachusetts should seek to leverage seed capital from the state with additional public and private investment through a public-private partnership.

The state should dedicate funds to bring new and expanded supermarkets and other food retailers selling high-quality, healthy and affordable foods to underserved communities. Grants and loans should be available to support soft costs, including feasibility studies, workforce training and technical assistance and to offset development and construction costs. States across the country have leveraged a small amount of initial seed funding to create sustainable healthy food financing programs that have generated large economic returns. Creating a flexible healthy food financing program in Massachusetts could serve as the lynchpin of a broader strategy to improve the health of children and create jobs in areas of need.



Success Stories

Pennsylvania: In 2004, Pennsylvania created the nation's first statewide program to address the lack of fresh food availability in its communities: the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. Seeded with \$30 million in state funds, a Community Development Financial Institution, The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), leveraged an additional \$146 million of public and private capital from banks, store operators and developers, New Market Tax Credits and other federal, local and philanthropic sources. The Food

Trust, a nonprofit food access organization, partnered with The Reinvestment Fund to co-administer the initiative which was designed to accommodate the diverse needs of large supermarkets, family-owned grocery stores, farmers' markets, healthy corner stores, and other fresh food retailers, whether located in high-density cities, small towns or rural communities. Nearly 90 new and expanded fresh food retail projects across the state have been approved for funding, creating or retaining over 5,000 jobs and serving an estimated 500,000 people.

The success of the Fresh Food Financing Initiative in Pennsylvania influenced the creation and design of similar initiatives, such as the New York Healthy Food & Healthy Communities Fund, the California FreshWorks Fund, the New Jersey Food Access Initiative, the Illinois Fresh Food Fund and the New Orleans Fresh Food Retailer Initiative. This successful model inspired the creation of the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a key pillar of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign to address childhood obesity.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

State and local government and other community development entities should target new and existing resources to support supermarkets and other food retailers that partner with community-based organizations during the development process, promote the sale of healthy and Massachusetts-grown food and participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

The public sector can play an active role in encouraging new supermarkets and other food retailers benefiting from public financing and other economic development incentives to engage in best practices that support the health and economic well-being of the communities they serve. While flexibility is essential in order to meet the needs of the broad range of communities and retailers across the state, criteria for new food retail initiatives should consider priorities including the promotion of healthy and Massachusettsgrown food, presence of community support and participation in the SNAP and WIC programs.



Success Stories

National: The national Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) has funded a broad range of food retail projects across the country including traditional supermarkets as well as the development of alternative models, such

as co-ops, farmers' markets and mobile markets that support both local food growers and lower-income consumers. In Henry County, lowa, for example, Mount Pleasant Farmers Market has used HFFI funds to introduce a new Electronic Benefit Transfer system at the market, thereby providing SNAP participants in this rural community with the option of purchasing local fruits and vegetables. Prior to this improvement, over 800 households who relied on SNAP benefits had limited access to food retail outlets that carried healthy or local foods.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

State and local public health departments should partner with the food industry and health and community-based organizations to educate, highlight and support best practices for promoting healthy eating and for making it easier for shoppers to select and purchase healthy foods in grocery stores.

Studies increasingly demonstrate the important role that the physical store environment and consumer education can play in encouraging shoppers to make healthy choices. Many grocers are already taking steps to promote healthy eating in their stores through product placement, marketing and in-store education. Community organizations and public health professionals in Massachusetts can provide relevant research and/or education models to support these efforts and pilot innovative marketing and nutrition education efforts with local grocery operators. Retailers and public health leaders should jointly explore strategies to identify best practices in this area.



Success Stories

New York: The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF), a Community Development Financial Institution that provides innovative capital solutions to support healthy families and communities, has worked extensively with its partners Goldman Sachs and The Food Trust to promote healthy food options in supermarkets and grocery stores in New York. Supermarket Strategies to Encourage Healthy Eating is a project designed to help food retailers support the health and well-being of New Yorkers. Food retail operators can employ a variety of tools and strategies—including store tours, nutrition education seminars and materials, taste test events and health screenings—to change food environments and incentivize consumers to make healthy choices in their stores. The project's in-store marketing campaign provides consumers with relevant resources and information about healthy food options and makes those options more appealing.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

State and local government, local nonprofit organizations, community colleges and vocational education institutions should tailor workforce development programs to ensure that supermarkets and other food retailers develop a skilled staff and to support local hiring.

The supermarket industry cites the lack of an available workforce as a barrier to supermarket and grocery store development. Industry leaders are cognizant of the value of their labor force and the need to educate that workforce to address issues of shrinkage, effective customer service techniques and employees' rights and obligations. Workforce development programs in Massachusetts could be better coordinated and targeted for grocery retail.

14 | STIMULATING GROCERY DEVELOPMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

Success Stories

Ohio: For Ben Fligner, the answer to how to train employees for his downtown Lorain, Ohio, grocery store came in the form of a \$1,300 matching grant from Project TEN (Train Employees Now). Unveiled in 2007, Project TEN is the result of an effort by Lorain County to leverage workforce development monies distributed by the state. The matching grant made it possible for Fligner to send five employees to an Ohio Department of Agriculture training program which certified the workers in meat handling. This provided the needed workforce training to complement Fligner's recent expansion from a 12,000-square-foot operation to a 32,000square-foot one that included a new full-service meat counter. The grocery store was also able to establish a wholesale meat business and a catering department. The supermarket, which used to employ 32 workers, is now able to support a staff of 90.

Pennsylvania: In Philadelphia's Eastwick community, residents were devastated when the area's only grocery store closed. Many residents had to arrange car rides with family and friends or take multiple buses to shop at stores in neighboring suburbs. Fortunately, things greatly improved when grant and loan assistance from the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative helped to offset higher construction and workforce development costs in the neighborhood, allowing the Brown's ShopRite of Island Avenue to open its doors.

The 57,000-square-foot supermarket has brought 258 quality jobs to the area. Most of the employees are residents of the surrounding community, which is predominantly African American and West African. Through funding from the initiative, a local workforce development agency has developed a customized training program for the Island Avenue ShopRite and five other stores. This program improves employee retention and helps employees advance in their careers—setting employees on the path for long-term success within the grocery industry.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

State and local governments should engage leaders from the grocery industry and the health and civic sectors to guide the implementation of these recommendations.

The active participation of leadership from the grocery retail industry, public officials and the health and civic sectors is essential to the successful development and expansion of supermarkets and other stores selling high-quality, healthy and affordable foods across the state. A small group of committed public and private sector leaders working closely with the Massachusetts Food Policy Council and other permanent bodies of key food access stakeholders can provide guidance and assistance to guide the implementation of these nine recommendations.



Success Stories

Louisiana: Collaboration among public and private leadership has been one of the main drivers of success of projects seeking to increase investment in new and expanded grocery stores for cities and states across the country. In New Orleans, the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative was launched in spring 2011 to increase access to healthy, affordable foods in traditionally underserved neighborhoods in the city. Seeds for the initiative were planted years earlier.

In 2008, the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC), which included public health, economic development and supermarket industry leaders, developed 10 policy recommendations addressing ways that the city and state could support supermarket and other fresh food retail development in underserved communities. At the conclusion of FPAC proceedings, key members continued to work for the implementation of recommendations.

In response to the committed leadership of FPAC members, the city provided \$7 million in Disaster Community Development Block Grant funds to create the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative. These funds were matched 1:1 by local Community Development

Financial Institution Hope Enterprise Corporation. Since the launch, the program has funded a new small grocery, DaFresh Seafood and Produce Store, and the reopening of the iconic Circle Food Store. The Circle Food Store, incorporated in 1938, was a historic mainstay in the community for decades before it closed after Hurricane Katrina. The financing provided by FFRI bridged a critical funding gap for the store's redevelopment and will create an estimated 75 new jobs for the local community.



CONCLUSION

Providing better access to healthy, affordable food is an important strategy to prevent and reduce obesity and improve the health of children and families in Massachusetts. Bringing more supermarkets and healthy food resources to underserved communities also will create needed jobs and economic opportunities, revitalizing neighborhoods across the state.

By working together, we can ensure that all children in Massachusetts grow up with the resources they need to live healthy and active lives.

The nine recommendations developed by the Massachusetts Grocery Access Task force are achievable steps towards creating healthier and more vibrant communities in Massachusetts. States and cities across the country have implemented similar changes to public policies, attracting new and expanded grocery stores to areas of need. The stores built through the successful public-private financing programs in states such as Pennsylvania, New York and Louisiana, continue to thrive, and make the case that after an initial infusion of funds, profitable supermarkets and grocery stores can be operated in lower-income neighborhoods.

We encourage state and local leaders to expedite the implementation of these recommendations. By working together, we can bring quality jobs to our communities and ensure that all children in Massachusetts grow up with the resources they need to live healthy and active lives.

Selected Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States: Implementation and Measurement Guide http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/community_strategies_guide.pdf

Center for Science and the Public Interest; Nutrition Policy http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/nutrition_policy.html#eat

City of Chicago, Shop Chicago http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/shop_chicago.html

City of Milwaukee, Purchasing Power Profiles http://city.milwaukee.gov/PurchasingPowerProfiles.htm

City of Louisville, Economic Growth and Innovation Newsroom http://www.louisvilleky.gov/economicdevelopment/News/2012/FirstChoiceMarketOpensinParkDuValle.htm

Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles http://www.crala.org/internet-site/About/index.cfm

Develop Springfield http://www.developspringfield.com/

 $Food\ Marketing\ Institute,\ Access\ to\ Healthier\ Foods:\ Opportunities\ and\ Challenges\ for\ Food\ Retailers\ in\ Underserved\ Areas$

http://www.fmi.org/docs/health-wellness/Access_To_Healthier_Foods.pdf

The Food Trust http://www.thefoodtrust.org/

Health Affairs, "Policy Solutions to the Grocery Gap" Authors: Allison Karpyn, Miriam Manon, Sarah Treuhaft, Tracey Giang, Caroline Harries, and Kate McCoubrey http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=55729

Institute of Medicine, Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/Local-Government-Actions-to-Prevent-Childhood-Obesity.aspx

The Low Income Investment Fund, New York Healthy Food Healthy Communities Program http://www.liifund.org/programs/healthy-food/

 $PolicyLink, Grocery \ Store \ Attraction \ Strategies: A \ Resource \ Guide for \ Community \ Activists \ and \ Local \ Governments$

http://www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lklXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=6994695

PolicyLink and The Food Trust, The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters, Authors: Sarah Treuhaft and Allison Karpyn http://www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/GroceryGap.pdf

PolicyLink, Healthy Food, Healthy Communities http://www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=lklXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=10958405

Public Health Law & Policy, Getting to Grocery: Tools for Attracting Healthy Food Retail to Underserved Neighborhoods

http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/getting-to-grocery

The Reinvestment Fund, Healthy Food Retail Financing at Work: Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative http://www.cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/FinancingHealthyFoodOptionsResourceBank.asp

Uplift Solutions http://www.upliftsolutions.org/

Ensuring That Everyone Has Access To Affordable, Nutritious Food

The Food Trust, a nationally recognized nonprofit founded in Philadelphia in 1992, strives to make healthy food available to all. Research has shown that lack of access to healthy food has a profound impact on food choices and, therefore, a profound impact on health.

For 20 years, The Food Trust has worked with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers to develop a comprehensive approach to improving the health of America's children. The Food Trust's innovative initiatives integrate nutrition education with increased availability of affordable, healthy foods.

This approach has been shown to reduce the incidence of childhood overweight; a study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that the agency's School Nutrition Policy Initiative resulted in a 50 percent reduction in the incidence of overweight among Philadelphia school children.

For 20 years, The Food Trust has worked with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers to develop a comprehensive approach to improving the health of America's children.

The Food Trust is recognized as a regional and national leader in the prevention of childhood obesity and other diet-related diseases for this and other notable initiatives to increase food access in underserved neighborhoods, including the Healthy Corner Store Initiative and the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, a public-private partnership which has approved funding for 90 fresh-food retail projects across Pennsylvania.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention honored the Fresh Food Financing Initiative in its Showcase of Innovative Policy and Environmental Strategies for Obesity Prevention and Control, and the program was named one of the Top 15 Innovations in American Government by Harvard University. For more information or to order additional copies of this report, visit thefoodtrust.org or contact The Food Trust.

1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. • One Penn Center, Suite 900 Philadelphia, PA 19103 • contact@thefoodtrust.org (215) 575-0444 • Fax: (215) 575-0466



