



HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

in PENNSYLVANIA

BUILDING ON SUCCESS, REINVESTING IN COMMUNITIES, CREATING JOBS



THE GROCERY GAP: LACK OF ACCESS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, 29.7 million Americans live in communities where a healthy diet is out of reach. Lower-income communities have fewer grocery stores and other healthy food retail outlets that provide a wide selection of affordable, nutritious foods. This problem impacts residents in both urban and rural areas—especially those living in communities of color.

Healthier communities create healthier economies, and research shows that the development or presence of a grocery store not only improves access to healthy foods but also creates jobs and stimulates additional investment.

FIRST RESPONSE: THE PENNSYLVANIA FRESH FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE

In 2001, The Food Trust released the report ***Food Every Child: The Need for More Supermarkets in Philadelphia***, finding that many communities across the city had poor access to healthy food. As a result of this research, The Food Trust convened the Philadelphia Food Marketing Task Force in 2003, which met to identify the barriers to healthy food retail development and create a series of policy recommendations to overcome those barriers. The task force published a report, ***Stimulating Supermarket Development: A New Day for Philadelphia***, recommending that the commonwealth create a public-private business financing program to support development of local supermarkets.

In 2004, in response to the task force's recommendations, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The Food Trust, The Reinvestment Fund and the Urban Affairs Coalition launched the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) — **the nation's first statewide healthy food financing program**. Seeded with \$30 million in state funds over three years, the FFFI provided one-time grants and loans to grocery operators and other healthy food retailers to build or expand markets in lower-income, underserved communities. The program concluded in June 2010 when state funds were fully deployed.

The FFFI proved that, with public sector incentives, grocers and other healthy food retailers could overcome the higher costs associated with locating and operating in underserved areas and open profitable stores. **The success of this model in Pennsylvania has influenced the design and creation of similar programs in several states**, including California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio and New York. Momentum for healthy food financing continues to grow with efforts underway in nearly a dozen additional states, including Massachusetts and Virginia. Similarly, the U.S. Departments of Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services launched the federal Healthy Food Financing Initiative in 2011, encouraging healthy food retail development in underserved areas across the country.

The reports *Food for Every Child: The Need for More Supermarkets in Philadelphia* and *Stimulating Supermarket Development: A New Day for Philadelphia* can be found at thefoodtrust.org/Pennsylvania.

Economic and Community Impacts of the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, 2004–2010

PENNSYLVANIA
BY THE NUMBERS

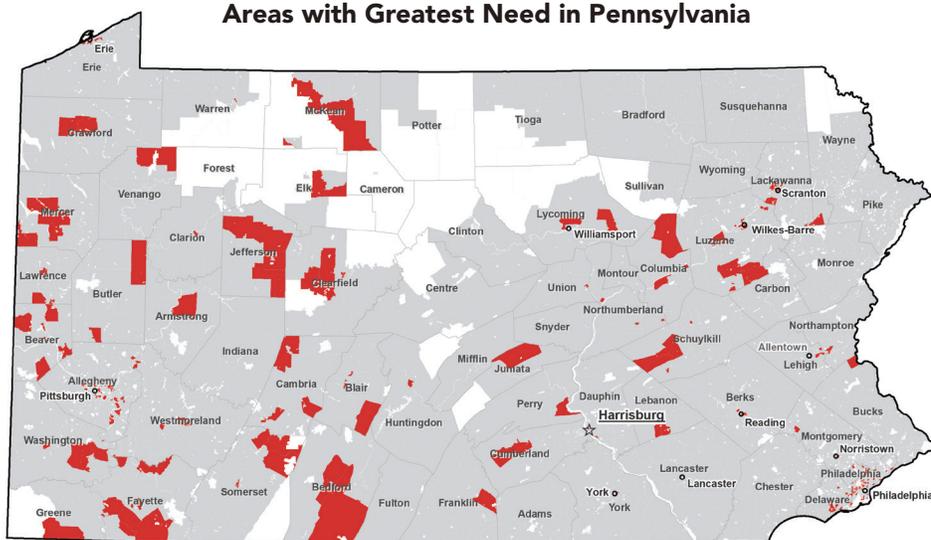
- **88 projects** for fresh food retail financed
- **5,000 jobs** created or preserved
- **400,000 Pennsylvanians** with improved access to healthy food
- **\$145 million** leveraged from the state's \$30 million in seed funding
- **1.67 million square feet** of commercial space developed

A TIME FOR REINVESTMENT: HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS TODAY

Despite the positive impact of the FFFI, inequitable access to healthy food retail continues to have negative effects on Pennsylvanians: **Many lower-income communities across the commonwealth have both poor access to healthy food and high rates of diet-related death.** In addition, towns and neighborhoods without grocery stores miss out on the economic benefits created by local businesses, such as jobs and local tax revenues. The time has come for Pennsylvania to reinvest in the FFFI.

Over 2 million Pennsylvanians, including more than 500,000 children, live in lower-income areas with limited access to a local grocery store.

Areas with Greatest Need in Pennsylvania



Data: Nielsen Retail Database, 2015;
Pennsylvania Department of Health, 2013;
US Census, ACS 5 Year, 2009–2013.

Areas with Greatest Need
■ Low Sales, Low Income, High Deaths
 Not Low Sales, Low Income, High Deaths
 Park, Forest or Non-Residential

KEY MAPPING FINDINGS

- **Access to nutritious food is unevenly distributed in Pennsylvania.** There are significant areas of the commonwealth with few full-service grocery stores and many neighborhoods in which none exist.
- **The uneven distribution of grocery stores in Pennsylvania leaves a disproportionate number of lower-income people without access to nutritious food.** This issue impacts more than 15% of the state's population: Over 2 million Pennsylvanians, including more than 500,000 children, live in lower-income areas with limited access to a local grocery store.
- **There is an association between diet-related disease and access to healthy food.** Bringing supermarkets and other stores that sell high-quality, healthy and affordable foods to underserved communities is critical to healthy eating and reducing rates of childhood obesity.

Voter Opinion Poll: Pennsylvanians Support Healthy Food Financing

In 2015, The Food Trust conducted a voter opinion poll to capture Pennsylvanians' attitudes toward improving healthy food access and investing in public-private partnerships to finance healthy food businesses. The poll found that:

- **Pennsylvania's children should have access to fresh, healthy food.** 79% of respondents believe it is important that children have healthy food access in their neighborhoods.
- **Pennsylvania should invest in healthy food financing.** 70% of respondents are supportive of financial incentives that encourage businesses to open grocery stores in areas where children do not have access to healthy food.

Details about The Food Trust's Pennsylvania voter opinion poll and mapping methodology can be found at thefoodtrust.org/Pennsylvania.



The following publications are available for free download by visiting thefoodtrust.org:

- *Healthy Food Financing Handbook: From Advocacy to Implementation*
- *Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters: A Review of the Research*
- *Moving from Policy to Implementation: A Methodology and Lessons Learned to Determine Eligibility for Healthy Food Financing Projects*
- *Healthy Food Financing Initiatives Around the Country*

For additional resources, visit the Healthy Food Access Portal at healthyfoodaccess.org.

CALL TO ACTION: BUILDING ON SUCCESS, REINVESTING IN COMMUNITIES, CREATING JOBS

Healthy food financing initiatives such as the FFFI represent a proven, economically sustainable solution to the lack of fresh food in underserved communities commonly known as “food deserts.” These public-private partnerships provide one-time grants and loans for the development or renovation of healthy food retail, such as grocery stores, corner stores, farmers’ markets, co-ops, mobile markets and other healthy food businesses.

Healthy food access works for communities by:

- Bringing fresh, affordable food to underserved Pennsylvanians
- Creating and retaining jobs, generating tax revenues and capturing local spending
- Expanding market opportunities for local farmers and grocers
- Serving as an economic anchor to support other retail development

With a track record of success, Pennsylvania is poised to strengthen its comprehensive policy to increase access to healthy food, revitalize communities and create jobs by reinvesting in the FFFI.



The Food Trust

Ensuring That Everyone Has Access To Affordable, Nutritious Food

For more than 20 years, The Food Trust has been working to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions.

The Food Trust’s comprehensive approach includes improving food environments and teaching nutrition education in schools; working with corner store owners to increase healthy offerings and helping customers make healthier choices; managing farmers’ markets in communities that lack access to affordable produce; and encouraging grocery store development in underserved communities.

Learn more about The Food Trust: thefoodtrust.org

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