



Supporting
HEALTHY
CORNER
STORE
DEVELOPMENT
IN NEW JERSEY

A report of the
New Jersey Healthy
Corner Store Task Force



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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Dear Friends,

On behalf of the State of New Jersey, I am pleased to recognize the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative for its efforts to expand healthy eating.

Our Administration is dedicated to making fresh, healthy food widely available through participation in a variety of programs, such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, both of which encourage the purchase of locally grown fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs. As part of our continuing effort to provide improved nutritional opportunities for school children, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, through the Department of Agriculture, provides fresh produce to more than 76,400 students in 14 counties during the school day. Similarly, the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative shares the State's goal of making fresh, healthy food widely available. By increasing access to fresh produce and expanding farm markets into urban areas, efforts such as this recognize that every community deserves access to healthy, affordable foods. I applaud all those involved for furthering the State's efforts to improve the health and well-being of its residents.

Best wishes for continued success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Christie".

Chris Christie
Governor



UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to commend the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative for its commitment to the health and wellness of the people of New Jersey.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative and the members of the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force have made incredible strides in their work to bring access to nutritious foods to every New Jerseyan. As the former Mayor of Newark, and a current resident of the city, I am extremely familiar with the difficulties that so many of our communities endure in accessing affordable, healthy foods. Countless studies have demonstrated that lack of access to nutritious food—particularly severe in underserved communities—manifests itself in all areas of human development, from increased rates of diet-related diseases to reduced academic performance. The importance of the Initiative cannot be overemphasized.

I congratulate the Healthy Corner Store Initiative for this report, which is a product of hard work, a commitment to health equality, and a passion to serve. I am proud to represent New Jersey and am grateful to the agencies and organizations that have come together in service to our state. Please accept my sincere appreciation for all of the incredible work that you do and my best wishes for your continued success in the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. A. B.", with a long, sweeping underline.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senate

New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force

Dear Neighbors,

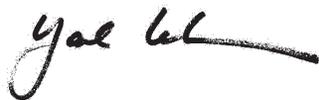
As co-chairs of the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force, we are honored to present this report outlining the growing work of the New Jersey network of healthy corner stores and the task force's policy recommendations to increase the distribution, promotion and sale of healthy products in New Jersey corner stores.

Despite its sizable population and agricultural activity, New Jersey is home to many communities with too few places to purchase healthy, affordable food. Research has shown that healthy corner store interventions can help significantly increase sales of produce and other healthy options. Interventions have also demonstrated an increase in weekly profits as well as foot traffic. A study of the economic impact of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in nearby Philadelphia estimated that it supported 38 jobs, \$1.1 million in earnings and \$140,000 in additional tax revenue in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania during one 30-month period. While offering healthier items at corner stores is not the only answer for promoting healthy eating and communities, this is an important part of a comprehensive approach to the issue, providing healthy, affordable and accessible food for our residents while supporting small businesses and spurring economic development.

Made up of nearly 40 leaders from the health, financial, philanthropic, government, business, distribution and retail sectors, the task force met over the course of a year to explore barriers to offering healthy foods in corner stores in neighborhoods that lack access to nutritious foods. Through the group's conversations, we identified six recommendations to create change at both the state and local levels. The recommendations are built on extensive work by diverse groups across the state and region. We are thankful for the dedicated energy of this group, which blended a variety of perspectives to create realistic and effective solutions.

Every community and every child deserves to have convenient access to healthy, affordable food. We look forward to bringing these policies to fruition and supporting the expansion of healthy corner stores across New Jersey. Implementing the recommendations outlined in this report will require public-private partnerships and broad-based leadership. We deeply appreciate the hard work and commitment of the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force members. Together, we can make healthy, affordable food available for all children and families in New Jersey.

Sincerely,



Yael Lehmann
Co-chair
Executive Director, The Food Trust



Darrin W. Anderson Sr., Ph.D.
Co-chair
State Deputy Director, New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids
Associate Executive Director, New Jersey YMCA State Alliance

Executive Summary

In New Jersey and across the country, corner stores — also known as mom-and-pop shops or bodegas — are an important part of urban and rural landscapes alike. In communities that lack supermarkets, families often depend on these small neighborhood stores for food purchases.

Research shows that corner stores concentrate on high-profit, low-nutritive items such as candy, chips and soda and offer their customers few healthy options.

Recognizing the connection between access to healthy foods and a healthy diet, New Jersey has in recent years been at the forefront of developing innovative solutions to increase the supply of affordable, fresh food in underserved areas across the state. Established in 2014, the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative is a partnership between The Food Trust and the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids that connects corner store owners and community leaders with the resources they need to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods in corner stores and bodegas throughout New Jersey.

In 2014–15, the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids, The Food Trust and the American Heart Association convened a multi-sector statewide task force to enhance the impact of healthy corner store efforts by examining business owner and community needs, as well as policy and program solutions to expand the distribution, promotion and sale of healthy food in New Jersey corner stores.

What Is a Corner Store?

In many city neighborhoods, a corner store is a community gathering spot, a place where residents shop frequently—in some cases, several times a day. While there is no universal definition for corner stores,

The Food Trust generally defines corner stores as having:

- **Less than 2,000 square feet**
- **Four aisles or less**
- **One cash register**

What Is the Healthy Corner Store Initiative?

The goal of The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative is to expand the sale and marketing of affordable, nutritious food in corner stores in lower-income communities, which often have the lowest access to healthy foods and the highest rates of diet-related disease.

Stores progress from a level of basic change, in which they introduce four new healthy products (Phase 1) and implement a marketing campaign (Phase 2), to more in-depth modifications such as owner participation in trainings on business management and the profitable sale of healthy, perishable foods (Phase 3). The highest level of change includes a conversion to help further expand a store's inventory of healthy products (Phase 4).

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative Model

BASIC LEVELS OF CHANGE

Phase 1: Make inventory changes

With support from project staff, stores introduce four new healthy products (two products from two healthy categories, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grain and lean protein). Stores have approximately three months to begin stocking and selling new healthy products from the time of enrollment.

Phase 2: Display marketing materials

Stores display a series of marketing materials, available in multiple languages, designed to guide customers in making healthier decisions; increase awareness of healthy foods in corner stores; and identify a corner store as a participating member of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative. Materials include shelf banners, shelf talkers, refrigerator signs and door decals. Recipe cards are also available. (See Appendix, page 18.)

Completing Phase 1 and 2 satisfies the basic program requirements. Once owners successfully implement the new healthy products and in-store marketing campaign, they are eligible to receive a \$100 incentive check from the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative for the first year of participation.

HIGHER LEVELS OF CHANGE

Phase 3: Participate in business training

Corner store owners are offered one-on-one, in-store training on topics related to selling healthy products, such as how to source, price and display healthy offerings. (See Appendix, page 18.)

Phase 4: Receive a Healthy Corner Store Conversion

Corner stores participating in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative and completing Phases 1–3 are eligible for conversions, which can include the installation of small shelving and refrigeration units to increase the space for and prominence of healthy foods in the corner store. Stores are selected based on owner interest and store potential.

Additional programs such as in-store nutrition education are available to some corner stores at any level of change.

Corner Store Phases & Activities

PHASE	CHARACTERISTICS	BENEFITS & INCENTIVES
1	Inventory Changes	Introduce 4 new healthy products: 2 products from 2 healthy categories
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand healthy options • \$100 participation incentive
2	Marketing Materials	Display a series of marketing materials from the Healthy Food Identification marketing campaign
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase customer awareness • Promote new healthy products
3	Business Training	Participate in at least one training on selling healthy products and business management
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free training and support • Increase profits • Reduce food waste
4	Healthy Corner Store Conversion	Receive equipment to stock and display healthy products
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free equipment (shelving, refrigeration, display materials) • Free training and support • Assistance with product selection and sourcing

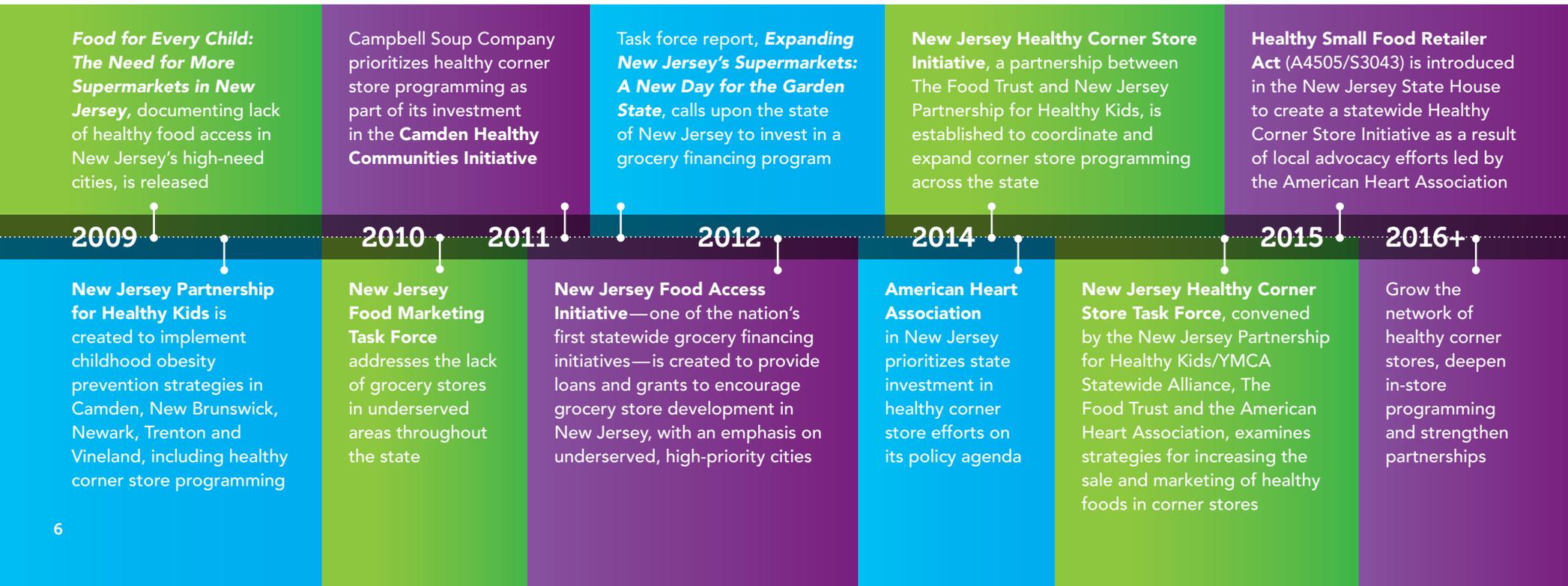
The Need for Healthy Food Access in New Jersey

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in New Jersey, and chronic diseases represent seven of the 10 top causes of death throughout the state.¹ In addition, poor diet is one of the top risk factors associated with death that has been identified as changeable.^{2,3} Recognizing the connection between access to healthy foods and a healthy diet, in recent years New Jersey has been at the forefront of efforts to increase the supply of affordable, fresh food in underserved urban areas. With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Food Trust conducted mapping studies in 2008 that documented the lack of supermarket access in high-need cities throughout the state, such as Camden and Trenton, which the report showed would have to triple their number of supermarkets to adequately serve residents. To address this issue, in 2010, the New Jersey Food Council and the New Jersey Economic Development Agency (NJEDA), in conjunction with The Food Trust, convened the New Jersey Food Marketing Task Force. The Task Force issued a report and a set of recommendations that encouraged the development of supermarkets and other fresh food retail in underserved areas.^{4,5} This work led to a partnership between

the NJEDA and The Reinvestment Fund, the New Jersey Food Access Initiative (NJFAI)—one of the nation's first statewide financing initiatives—which now provides flexible financing to encourage grocery store development in the state, with an emphasis on high-priority cities.

Encouraging healthier options at corner stores complements the NJFAI's efforts to support grocery store development in underserved areas throughout the state. As is true across the nation, corner stores are an important part of the urban and rural landscape, serving as food stores for children and adults in neighborhoods that lack easy access to a supermarket. Research has documented that corner stores concentrate on high-profit, low-nutritive items such as candy, chips, ice cream and beverages, and the higher prevalence of corner stores in lower-income and high-minority neighborhoods is well established. Working to increase healthier food options throughout the retail spectrum—from grocery stores to corner stores—will have a robust impact on the food access landscape throughout New Jersey.

Addressing Food Access in New Jersey: A Timeline



CREATING A STATEWIDE NETWORK IN NEW JERSEY

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative, a partnership between The Food Trust and New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids, was established in 2014 with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is modeled on efforts in Camden and Philadelphia. It seeks to bring together and grow existing efforts and provide common resources and support to communities interested in implementing healthy corner store work throughout the state.

The statewide initiative includes:

- **Training workshops:** Interactive training workshops provide an opportunity for community partners involved in implementing healthy corner store projects to share successful strategies and build their capacity to work with store owners in their communities. For example, a training workshop held in March 2015 at the American Heart Association in New Jersey included 22 participants from 13 partner organizations across the state.
- **Technical Assistance:** Partners are eligible to receive on-site support on a variety of programming phases, including: canvassing and recruiting corner stores, training owners on how to profitably stock and sell healthy products, installing marketing materials and conducting in-store nutrition education lessons. Support is customized based on local needs and designed to build local capacity while expanding the network of healthy corner stores in New Jersey.
- **Marketing Materials:** Free marketing materials, including healthy recipe cards, signage to guide customers to healthy products, window decals and toolkits for store owners, are available for partners and participating stores throughout the state. (See Appendix, page 18.)
- **Mini-Grants:** A mini-grant program was developed to support local partners and corner store owners during various phases of development and to increase the corner store's capacity to sell fresh produce and other healthy foods. Mini-grants of up to \$5,000 per city or \$1,500 for individual stores were awarded in 2014 and 2015.

Approximately \$46,000 was distributed to 19 cities and supported 65 stores through this program. Mini-grant funds were used for a range of healthy corner store programming components, including:

- *Conversion equipment such as refrigeration, shelving, paint and refurbishing of existing equipment*
- *Marketing campaigns that included event promotion, and materials such as fliers, newspaper advertisements, brochures, A-frame signs and logo designs*
- *Increased staff capacity*
- *Materials for in-store nutrition education lessons*



OUR LOCAL PARTNERS

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative partners with various organizations across the state to provide technical assistance to expand their healthy corner store efforts. Partner organizations include:

- American Heart Association
- Camden Healthy Corner Store Network
- Community YMCA in Red Bank
- Cumberland Cape County YMCA
- Hub City Fresh Healthy Corner Store Initiative– New Brunswick
- Live Healthy Vineland
- Montclair Health Department
- New Jersey Department of Health
- New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids– Newark and Vineland
- New Jersey WIC Services
- New Jersey YMCA State Alliance
- Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey
- Shaping Elizabeth
- Township of Bloomfield Department of Health & Human Services
- Trenton Healthy Food Network

Healthy Inventory Changes: Novedades Espinoza (Bridgeton, NJ)

In addition to increasing her healthy product inventory by adding 12 new products, Berta Gomez of Novedades Espinoza changed the layout of her store, moving the fresh produce section to the front. Within a few weeks of the move, she said produce began selling much quicker than before. Novedades Espinoza is one of the few stores that also provide WIC clients with extra support while shopping. According to Gomez, her WIC customers appreciate her help in selecting WIC products and choose to frequent her store because she makes it easy for them to use their WIC check allowances, as compared to a larger supermarket.

Nutrition Education: Vineland Healthy Food Network

The Vineland Healthy Food Network builds relationships with store owners and asks them to make gradual changes with support and training. Relationships are built with consumers to identify their needs and provide them with education such as in-store nutrition education lessons and taste tests. The Vineland Healthy Food Network currently has 19 stores enrolled and plans to reach 25 stores by the end of 2015. Through a partnership with the Vineland Department of Health, the network provided free health screenings in three participating healthy corner stores, and also distributed literature on healthy eating, lowering risk of cardiovascular disease and physical activity.

Marketing Campaigns: Trenton Healthy Food Network

The Trenton Healthy Food Network created four billboard advertisements to highlight participating healthy corner stores. Billboards were placed in strategic areas throughout the city of Trenton and included store addresses and phone numbers. Once billboards were installed, store owners reported an increase in foot traffic.

Healthy Food Incentives: The New Village Supermarket (Camden, NJ)

Jorge Caba, owner of The New Village Supermarket in Camden, reported an 80 percent increase in sales of fresh fruits and vegetables since joining the Camden Healthy Corner Store Network in January 2015. "The customers really benefit from the Heart Bucks coupons," he says. "Once customers try the different fresh fruits and vegetables and purchase them with the Heart Bucks, they continue to purchase healthier items."

New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative: Strategies of Impact

Partners from across the state of New Jersey have created successful strategies to increase access to healthy foods in corner stores. Programming is tailored based on the community and store needs, as partners realize that one size does not fit all. From in-store taste tests to billboards and health screenings, momentum is growing throughout the state.

1. HEALTHY INVENTORY CHANGES

- To date, over 100 healthy corner stores from 19 cities in New Jersey have introduced over 500 new healthy products.
- Cities across the state of New Jersey use the Sell Healthy Guide to train store owners and support healthy inventory changes.
- Participating stores have the opportunity to receive free equipment, such as shelving, baskets and blenders, to highlight and display healthy inventory changes.

2. MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

- In-store materials, such as shelf talkers, recipe cards and banners, are used to guide shoppers toward healthy products.
- Many local partners reach out to the community in order to drive traffic to participating healthy corner stores.

3. NUTRITION EDUCATION

- In-store nutrition education, recipe demos and taste tests help build demand and educate customers on how to identify and cook healthy foods, all of which can be purchased in the healthy corner store.

4. HEALTHY FOOD INCENTIVES

- The Food Trust developed a program called Heart Bucks in 10 stores throughout the city of Camden. Healthy corner stores receive two four-week nutrition education series, which cover topics like fruits and vegetables, fiber and more. Customers who participate in these lessons receive a free taste test, including recipes such as fruit and yogurt parfaits, whole-wheat pizzas, three-bean salads, smoothies and more. These customers also receive four \$1 Heart Bucks coupons that can be used in the store to purchase heart-healthy items like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, lean proteins, water and snacks with less than 100 calories per serving.



Convening Leaders:

New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force

The Food Trust, the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids and the American Heart Association convened a multi-sector, statewide task force to examine the needs facing store owners and communities and identify strategies to increase the distribution, promotion and sale of healthy products in New Jersey corner stores. The task force is composed of a diverse group of leaders, including corner store owners, food manufacturers and wholesalers, public health and community leaders, government officials, foundations and others.

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force held four meetings throughout 2014 and 2015 and included presentations from leadership from the New Jersey Department of Health, the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, the American Heart Association, distributor Jetro Cash and Carry, store owners, The Food Trust and community partners. The group also participated in discussions on a variety of topics including WIC vendor authorization, evaluation and distribution challenges facing small stores.

NEW JERSEY HEALTHY CORNER STORE TASK FORCE MEMBERS

American Heart Association
Corinne Orlando

American Business Solutions
Elizabeth Vinson

Campbell Soup Company
Josh Anthony
Kim Fortunato

**Center for State Health Policy,
Rutgers University**
Michelle Kennedy

**Delaware Valley Regional Planning
Commission**
Amy Verbofsky

Goya Foods
Miguel Abreu

**Housing and Community
Development Network of New Jersey**
Sharon Barker

Irvington Health Department
Atif Nazir

Jetro Cash & Carry
Jack Sagen

**John S. Watson Institute for
Public Policy (Thomas Edison
State College)**
Barbara George Johnson

Johnson and Johnson
Bonnie Petruskas

New Jersey Alliance of YMCAs
Bill Lovett

New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition
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**New Jersey Department of
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New Jersey Food Council
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Marissa Davis

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Jaime Bussel
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Vineland City Health Department
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TASK FORCE PARTICIPANTS

Office of U.S. Senator Cory A. Booker
Bianca Madzarova
Hanna Mori, Esq.

CASE STUDY

Innovative Partnership Strengthens the Healthy Corner Store Initiative

In 2014, the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program—which provides supplemental nutritious foods to pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants and children up to the age of 5—formed a partnership with The Food Trust to increase access to healthier foods in small stores throughout the state.

The first pillar of this partnership provided funding to The Food Trust to conduct 21 training events for corner store owners across the state, covering topics such as WIC stocking requirements, selecting healthy product inventory, buying and handling fresh produce, pricing and promotions, and in-store marketing strategies to promote healthy products.

During the trainings, a total of 197 WIC-authorized stores expressed interest in learning more or receiving additional technical assistance through the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative. NJ DOH and The Food Trust staff then provided additional support and programming around WIC-approved healthy food, with a focus on fresh produce. For example, project staff set up tables near the entrance of the store, inviting customers to participate and engaging them in conversations about how to eat healthier. Following a demonstration on fast and easy ways to add fruits and vegetables to meals, participants received a taste test of recipes using WIC-approved food items, as well as a tour of the store.

This partnership helps to support enrolling WIC stores into the statewide Healthy Corner Store Initiative.



Looking Forward:

Summary of Recommendations to Advance Healthy Corner Stores in New Jersey

New Jersey is emerging as a leader in developing innovative strategies to address healthy food access.

We recommend that cities across New Jersey, along with state and local governments, continue to build on this momentum in order to support and grow the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative as a key strategy to improve healthy food access in lower-income communities.

Based on the discussions and presentations throughout the task force process, six key recommendations emerged from the group to increase the distribution, promotion and sale of healthy products in New Jersey corner stores:

- 1 Enhance evaluation efforts** through the development of a central repository for data and common metrics to document impact on both businesses and communities across New Jersey.
- 2 Explore health care partnerships** for creating community-clinical linkages with New Jersey hospitals, state and local health departments, health insurers and corner stores. Corner stores are gathering places in the community and provide a unique opportunity to engage hard-to-reach populations.
- 3 Strengthen wholesaler and manufacturer partnerships** to address distribution challenges faced by corner stores to stock fresh, healthy inventory. Continue to engage various sectors in regular discussions to develop a strategic plan that makes sense for both business and community health.

- 4 Promote local foods** by working with farmers and distributors to address challenges and opportunities for expanding New Jersey-grown products in corner stores.
- 5 Support programs that build customer demand** for healthy inventory through complementary nutrition education and incentive programs such as Heart Bucks that encourage customers to shift toward healthy food purchases.
- 6 Champion policies** that support healthy corner store programming and funding.

Recommendation 1:

Enhance evaluation efforts through the development of a central repository for data and common metrics to document impact on both businesses and communities across New Jersey.

With statewide corner store efforts underway in dozens of cities across the state, it is essential to develop a coordinated evaluation plan and protocols to measure and refine the corner store program to best meet the needs of New Jersey residents and businesses. Creating a centralized database and common data collection protocols for tracking healthy food inventory and other key measures will allow analysis of program impact on both a city and statewide level.

Recommendation 2:

Explore health care partnerships for creating community-clinical linkages with New Jersey hospitals, state and local health departments, health insurers and corner stores. Corner stores are gathering places in the community and provide a unique opportunity to engage hard-to-reach populations.

Given the evolving policy and health care landscape, health care partners are increasingly interested in playing a key role in connecting at-risk patients to food access resources and programs that can directly improve patient health outcomes.

SUCCESS STORY

The Food Trust created a centralized database to house data from various healthy corner store networks in the region. Staff members are trained on data collection procedures and enter data after each visit to participating stores. The use of one database streamlines reporting processes and tracks store owner trainings, pre- and post-intervention inventory, and marketing material distribution. Staff also collects data on basic store information such as store size, aisles, sourcing channels and store owner contact information.

SUCCESS STORY

In Philadelphia, in partnership with Jefferson Medical Colleges' Center for Urban Health, The Food Trust implemented and evaluated a pilot program that integrates cardiovascular risk screening and referral into the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, with the goal of empowering lower-income adults to reduce cardiovascular risk. This program connects healthy food access and nutrition education with primary care outreach by coupling in-store free nutrition education by The Food Trust with screenings for blood pressure, BMI, stroke and heart disease by Jefferson health educators. Program outcomes include increased knowledge of cardiovascular disease and nutrition, increased access to health care as follow-up to screenings, marketing of healthy foods in corner stores and decreased marketing/sales of tobacco products.

Recommendation 3:

Strengthen wholesaler and manufacturer partnerships to address distribution challenges faced by corner stores to stock fresh, healthy inventory. Continue to engage various sectors in regular discussions to develop a strategic plan that makes sense for both business and community health.

Distribution to smaller format retail models is sometimes a challenge, and it can be inefficient to distribute fresh produce to very small stores. While burgeoning efforts are underway across the country to examine new distribution models, more research and communication is needed to identify and promote successful retail and distribution strategies for providing healthy, affordable foods in New Jersey communities and to support healthier items at corner stores.

Recommendation 4:

Promote local foods by working with farmers and distributors to address challenges and opportunities for expanding New Jersey-grown products in corner stores.

Selling locally grown produce and processed products helps sustain local farms, promotes a vibrant regional economy and makes good business sense. Surveys repeatedly show that U.S. consumers believe fresh and locally grown products are tastier and healthier than their packaged counterparts. In New Jersey, this is particularly pertinent since agriculture is New Jersey's No. 3 industry; New Jersey farms produce over 100 different varieties of fruits and vegetables.

EXAMPLES

Fostering continued communication among wholesalers, manufacturers and government programs such as WIC and SNAP can help mitigate challenges to sourcing and vendor compliance of minimum stocking requirements for these programs. For example, if changes are made to the approved food list (i.e. stores are required to stock whole grain pasta), manufacturers and wholesalers should be given ample lead time and technical assistance to ensure that the supply is available for the implementation of the new policy. Wholesalers such as Jetro can also make sure that the correct items are labeled in their warehouse so that corner store owners can easily identify WIC-approved items when purchasing for their store.

EXAMPLES

New Jersey's local-foods marketing program, New Jersey Fresh, was established in 1984 to help farmers tell consumers about the availability and variety of products grown in New Jersey. Retailers, including corner stores in New Jersey can help consumers identify New Jersey-made and grown products using the New Jersey Fresh logo. Facilitating farmer-to-distributor and farmer-to-retailer relationships and encouraging operators to carry sustainably grown, nutritious and affordable local food would have numerous economic and health benefits for the state of New Jersey.

Recommendation 5:

Support programs that build customer demand for healthy inventory through complementary nutrition education and incentive programs such as Heart Bucks that encourage customers to shift toward healthy food purchases.

National research has shown that individuals have the desire to provide healthy meals to their families, but don't necessarily have the resources and access to retail outlets to do so in a way that is convenient and affordable.⁶ Hands-on education, particularly at the point of access, can support lasting solutions to hunger while supporting local corner stores. Physical store environment can play a large role in encouraging shoppers to make healthy choices, and many corner store owners are already taking steps to promote healthy eating in their stores through product placement, marketing and in-store education. Retailers, community organizations and public health leaders should jointly explore strategies to identify and carry out best practices in this area.

Recommendation 6:

Champion policies that support healthy corner store programming and funding.

Creating public policies to support healthy corner stores can be an impactful public health and economic development strategy that both increases healthy food choices for families and increases profits for small retailers.

SUCCESS STORY

The New Village Supermarket in Camden participates in the Camden Healthy Corner Store Network and the Heart Bucks promotion program. Owner Jorge Caba has reported an 80 percent increase in sales of fruits and vegetables since joining the program and attributes some of that success to the Heart Bucks program: "Once customers try the different fresh fruits and vegetables and purchase them with the Heart Bucks, they continue to purchase healthier items."

SUCCESS STORY

With the leadership of the American Heart Association and its Voices for Healthy Kids campaign, a bipartisan group of legislators is working to expand the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative statewide. A key goal of this effort is to bring healthier food options and economic benefits to more communities in New Jersey with the passage of A4505/S3043-Healthy Small Food Retailer Act, introduced in June of 2015. This impactful legislation would set aside \$1 million in state funds to enable the replication of local New Jersey Healthy Corner Store innovations and bring them to a greater scale in additional communities that lack access to affordable, fresh foods. With an estimated 5,600 corner stores existing in New Jersey, small retailers provide an efficient and cost-effective infrastructure to increasing healthy food options for people living in underserved communities across the state.

Conclusion

The lack of access to healthy food is a problem in many neighborhoods in New Jersey, especially in lower-income communities where the incidence of obesity and other chronic diseases are alarmingly high.

Without supermarkets in many communities, residents must shop at convenience stores and corner stores with higher prices and lower-quality food. Diets that rely on food from convenience stores are often higher in sugar and fat, contributing to the incidence of diet-related diseases.

The consequences are stark for people of lower incomes. Based on studies conducted by The Food Trust and others, access to fresh, affordable and nutritious food plays a role in determining what people eat. People who can only access poor food choices eat poorly.

Healthy corner store programs address this problem by supporting neighborhood revitalization and bringing nutritious food choices to communities that need them most.

Leaders across New Jersey must address the critical need for improved healthy food retail in its underserved communities.

Tremendous progress has been made toward bringing healthy food to small stores in New Jersey. Leaders from across the state should continue to build on this momentum by growing the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative and by investing in strategies to make healthier options available at corner stores. Investing in such efforts not only improves access to healthier foods in lower-income areas, but has a positive economic impact, supporting small neighborhood businesses and jobs.

New Jersey is a national leader in improving access to healthy food through the creation of the New Jersey Food Access Initiative, which supports grocery stores in underserved areas. New Jersey is also one of the only states in the country with a statewide Healthy Corner Store Initiative, improving healthy food access and supporting local businesses. And the momentum is growing, with successful stores in the network leading to increased interest from store owners and community leaders across the state to join the movement. Corner store owners are contacting their local health departments and WIC offices to participate in the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative.

The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative, complemented by the work of the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force and its recommendations, positions leaders across the state to have a tremendous impact in improving the food environment throughout New Jersey. Investing in healthy corner stores throughout the state will not only support local economic activity, generating tax revenue and creating jobs, but will also improve the health and quality of life for New Jersey residents.



Appendix

All materials are available in English and Spanish.

Recruitment Brochure

New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Initiative

**Strengthening local businesses.
Building healthy communities.**

Your Neighborhood Store. Healthier.



Strengthening Local Businesses

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative links community partners with store owners to help stores stock, promote and sell healthy foods.

Participating stores are eligible to receive:

- Small refrigeration and shelving units to stock and display fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy products
- Marketing materials and recipe cards to promote the sale of healthy foods
- Training and technical assistance to make healthy changes and increase profits
- Advertising and community promotion to attract new customers

Get involved today!
Contact The Food Trust at
njcornerstore@thefoodtrust.org

Building Healthy Communities

Corner stores can play a critical role in improving the health of children and families in New Jersey. Corner stores are a frequent destination for children, many of whom stop daily on the way to and from school for snacks—purchasing, on average, 360 calories per visit, often on chips, candy and soda.

The good news is dozens of corner stores across the state are taking steps to sell more healthy foods by participating in a healthy corner store network. Together we can grow the network of healthy corner stores in New Jersey and ensure that all children and families have access to healthy foods in their communities.



"That fridge, it helps out a lot. The kids see the fruits and yogurts in there. They love the fruit cups, and they're choosing the healthy products. That's what makes me feel the best about doing this."

- OWNER, ANDY'S FOOD PLUS, TRENTON, NJ

"The Healthy Corner Store Network has transformed my store. As a WIC store we were required to carry produce, but I had trouble keeping it fresh and displaying it for customers. The Healthy Corner Store Network has helped me with these issues."

- OWNER, FREDDIE'S GROCERY, CAMDEN, NJ

Shelf Banner

Let the colors be your guide to healthy eating

GO
healthiest foods:
enjoy any time

CAUTION
somewhat healthy
foods: enjoy a few
times a week

**STOP
& THINK**
least healthy foods:
enjoy once in a while

Your Neighborhood Store. Healthier.



brought to you by:



**New Jersey Partnership
for Healthy Kids**
COMMUNITY MARKET ENTERPRISES
UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

Recipe Cards

Avocado and Tomato Sandwich

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES SERVES 4



INGREDIENTS:
8 slices whole grain bread
2 medium tomatoes, sliced
1 ripe avocado, halved and pitted
Salt and pepper to taste (optional)
1 teaspoon olive oil (optional)

GET COOKING!
1. Toast the bread.
2. Layer tomato and avocado on a piece of toasted bread. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and drizzle olive oil. Top with another slice of bread.

MIX IT UP!

- Add chili powder or cumin.
- Add herbs to your sandwich such as basil or green onions.

your sandwich.

y through October.

NUTRITION FACTS
serving size:
1 sandwich
200 Calories
7g Fat
1g Saturated Fat
266mg Sodium
29g Carbohydrates
5g Fiber
7g Protein

Your Neighborhood Store. Healthier.



Made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health Services, the Department of Health, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Window Decal

MEMBER STORE

NEW JERSEY HEALTHY CORNER STORE NETWORK



Your Neighborhood Store. Healthier.

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Shelf Talkers

	LEAN & LOW-FAT fish, poultry, eggs, beef, pork	NON-LEAN MEAT steak, ground beef, poultry with skin	PROCESSED MEATS high-sodium/high-fat meats —bacon, deli meat, sausage
	FRESH FRUITS & VEGGIES	CANNED/FROZEN FRUITS & VEGGIES light syrup or less than 290mg sodium	CANNED/FROZEN FRUITS & VEGGIES heavy syrup or more than 290mg sodium
	NON-FAT, SKIM OR 1% LOW-FAT milk, yogurt, cheese	WHOLE MILK/ SUGAR ADDED milk, yogurt, cheese	HIGH-FAT cream, butter, ice cream, cream cheese
	WHOLE GRAINS whole grain listed as the first ingredient —pasta, rice, bread, flour	REFINED/WHOLE GRAIN whole grain not listed as the first ingredient	WHITE/REFINED whole grain <u>not listed</u> as an ingredient
	NO SODIUM ADDED dry beans, nuts, seeds, tofu	LOW-SODIUM canned beans—less than 290mg	HIGH-SODIUM canned beans—more than 290mg

Heart Buck

\$1
\$1



THEFOODTRUST.ORG

Made possible with funding from the Camden Food Innovation Fund of the Community Foundation of South Jersey.



Use this Heart Buck in this store to get \$1 of heart healthy food. Heart Bucks can be used on nutrition days when an educator is in the store. See back for more information.

DATE: _____

STORE: _____



Sell Healthy Guide

Sell Healthy! Guide

**Learn how to sell healthy foods,
increase sales and attract more customers.**

NEW JERSEY HEALTHY CORNER STORE NETWORK

Your Neighborhood Store. Healthier.



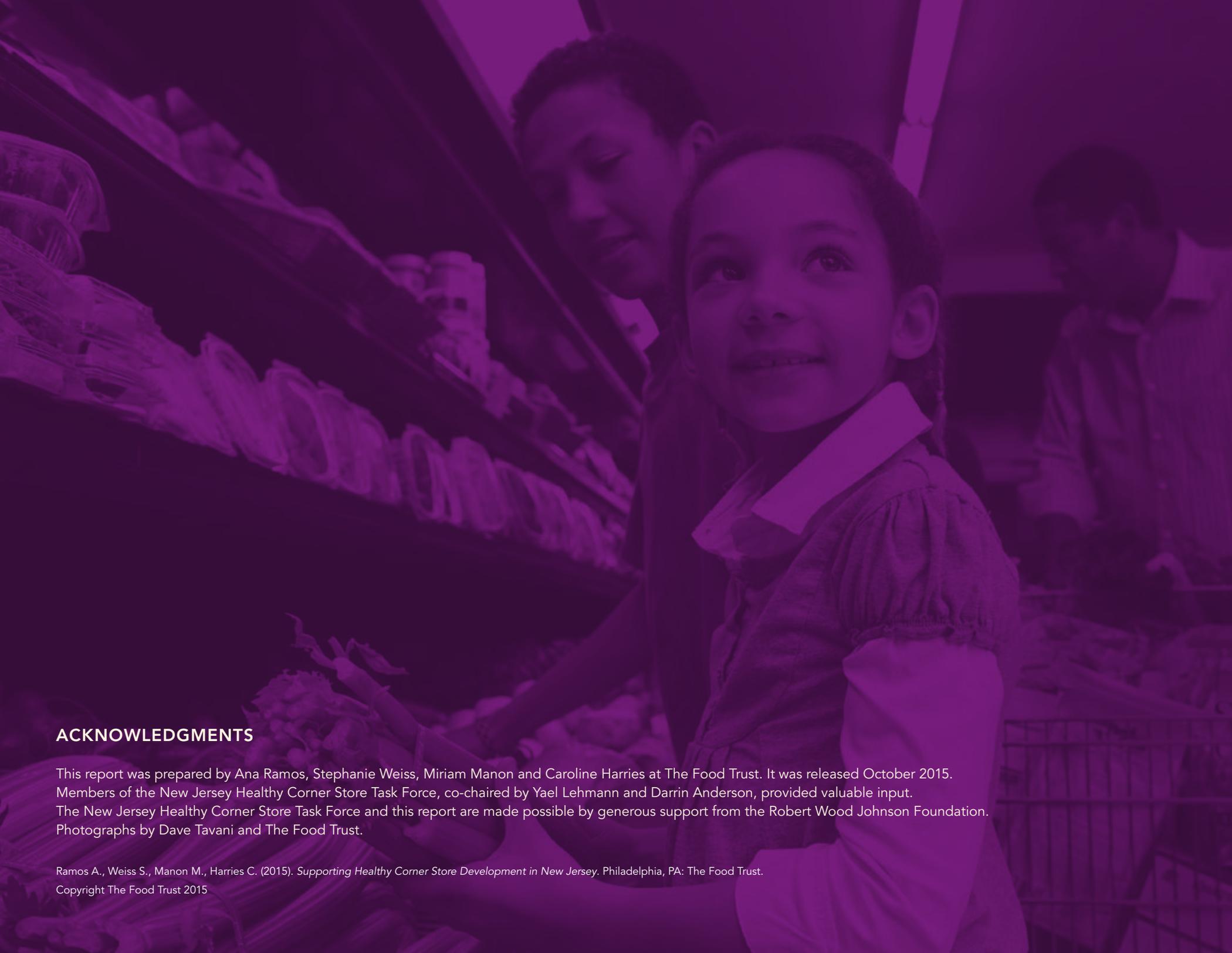
brought to you by:



Made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Pennsylvania Department of Public Health and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

ENDNOTES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by Ana Ramos, Stephanie Weiss, Miriam Manon and Caroline Harries at The Food Trust. It was released October 2015. Members of the New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force, co-chaired by Yael Lehmann and Darrin Anderson, provided valuable input. The New Jersey Healthy Corner Store Task Force and this report are made possible by generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Photographs by Dave Tavani and The Food Trust.

About The Food Trust

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 over 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.

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 neighborhood, including the Healthy Corner Store Initiative and the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, a public/private partnership which has approved funding for nearly 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.

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About New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids

New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids (NJPHK) is a statewide program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) with technical assistance and direction provided by the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance. The goal of the program is to convene, connect and empower community partnerships across the state to implement environmental and policy changing strategies that prevent childhood obesity. Community coalitions in Camden, New Brunswick, Newark, Trenton and Vineland are leading these efforts.

Since its inception in 2009, NJPHK and its community partners have made great strides in grassroots efforts that promote healthier policies and environments to prevent childhood obesity. Our goal is to help children and communities achieve a healthy weight through prevention strategies that support access to affordable healthy foods and increase opportunities for safe physical activity.

From assisting with the development of community and school wellness policies, to renovating neighborhood playgrounds, to securing commitments to provide healthier choices at local corner stores, to creating bike lanes and co-sponsoring fun and fitness events—it's about making the healthy choice the easy choice for everybody.

NJPHK received the prestigious New Jersey Black Issues Convention's (NJBIC) Community Change Award through advances in environment and policy. The award recognized NJPHK's outstanding efforts in Healthy and Human Services. In addition, National Complete Streets Coalition Recognized NJPHK-Trenton's Policy as "8th Best Out of Nearly 130 Communities" nationwide.

For more information, visit njhealthykids.org.

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**New Jersey Partnership
for Healthy Kids**
Communities Making a Difference
to Prevent Childhood Obesity



The Food Trust

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