

HIGHLIGHTS & IMPACTS

10 stores

in Omaha's low-income areas and communities of color are increasing access, availability, and affordability of healthy foods.

75%

(6 of the 8) stores that have fully implemented HNS projects have seen an overall increase in sales.

88%

(7 of the 8) stores implementing HNS projects have seen improvements in the sales of whole grain products and lower-fat milk.

“Our customers are requesting more fresh vegetables and fruit, especially the ones we now cut up and package into smaller portions... The weekly food demos have become a popular addition to helping our customers make healthy lifestyle changes.”

**- Rebecca Johnson,
Co-owner, JNJ Grocery**

Profile: Healthy Neighborhood Store Project Omaha, Nebraska



Many families across the country lacking easy access to conventional supermarkets rely heavily on small, local neighborhood stores as their primary place for grocery shopping. Nebraska's Douglas County, which includes the city of Omaha, is one such community. [The Healthy Neighborhood Store project \(HNS\)](#) is working to improve access to healthy food for the one-third of Douglas County residents lacking access by partnering with small neighborhood stores to improve healthy food offerings and support community health.

HNS is one component of Douglas County Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW), a citywide effort to make Omaha a healthier place to live, work, play, and raise children. The initiative, funded by the federal CPPW and Community Transformation Grants (CTG), includes a broad range of programs geared toward healthy eating, active living, smoke-free multi-unit living environments, and improved management of hypertension.

[Thirteen percent](#) of the Douglas County population live below the poverty line and [two-thirds](#) of Douglas County residents are overweight and obese. In 2009, the Douglas County Health Department conducted a Nutrition Environment Measures Survey (NEMS) to assess access to healthy foods. The areas with inadequate access are also the areas of the city with lower socioeconomic status and more residents of color, including a larger African American population in north Omaha and a sizable Hispanic population in south Omaha.

The HNS program used the survey findings to design an initiative to target north and south Omaha, where residents had to travel more than one mile to shop at a full-service grocery store. Since 2009, HNS has partnered with

anchor community-based organizations such as [The Empowerment Network](#) and [University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension](#) to implement this project. HNS is working with 10 stores ranging in size from three to 45 employees, and reaching 50,000 low-income Omaha residents. Eight stores have implemented the HNS program and two are just beginning to implement the project. These 10 stores share a similar business model, a broad product line, and a commitment to serving their communities. Using three primary in-store marketing strategies of promotion, placement, and pricing, HNS is expanding and enhancing healthy offerings in participating stores. Additionally, HNS conducts nutrition education cooking demonstrations on site that introduce shoppers to healthy items and recipes and promote featured items to allow customers to replicate what they have learned at home.

As a result of these efforts, HNS has improved sales of healthy items in these stores, while changing customers' perceptions toward neighborhood store food offerings. Of the eight stores that have fully implemented HNS, 75 percent reported an overall increase in total sales, with seven of the eight stores citing improvements specifically in whole grain products and lower-fat milk options. With the [recent changes in the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children](#), HNS has helped stores adapt to new criteria, and provide the right product line to meet the needs of their lower-income shoppers receiving these coupons. Through these changes, HNS stores can better serve their communities while maximizing sales. With higher sales from these healthier items, HNS is helping to stabilize jobs for community members employed at these stores, further strengthening the positive impact of healthier change.

“The Healthy Neighborhood Stores project has revitalized JND Grocery with a new look, new products, and has encouraged the neighborhood to start eating healthier. The produce sales in my store have increased greatly... The program has definitely increased the traffic coming into the store, which has resulted in higher sales each month.”

- Dave Adams, Owner, JND Grocery

What is most important about HNS is that these changes in the local food environment are sustainable. Stores owners continue to sell healthy items and host cooking demonstrations with limited financial resources. Neighborhood residents have taken a great deal of pride in the stores, signaling a long-term commitment to patronizing the stores. Neighborhood groups have reached out to participating stores, engaging them as critical partners in local nutrition education programming and other community activities.



For more information about the Healthy Food Access Portal, contact us at info@healthyfoodaccess.org.