Healthy on the Block: Healthy Corner Store Toolkit
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Section I: Introduction and Overview
Objective

Healthy on the Block is a healthy corner store initiative coordinated by the Strategic Alliance for Health (SAH) of the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC). The initiative’s primary objective is to assist corner store owners in East Boston and Mattapan in offering healthier options, including higher quality fruits and vegetables, at a reasonable price to their customers.

Why Healthy Corner Stores?

Widespread evidence shows that low-income communities often have disproportionately less access to healthy food. These communities tend to lack full service supermarkets but have a high number of corner stores or bodegas. Researchers also found that “obesity prevalence increased and fruit and vegetable consumption decreased with increasing distance to a supermarket in metropolitan areas”, which highlights the importance of ensuring access to healthy foods.¹

In Boston, more than half of adult residents are overweight or obese. As obesity and many chronic diseases are directly linked to diet, low-income residents are significantly more likely to suffer from diet-related health problems compared to the population as a whole.² Low-income communities often have fewer retailers that offer high quality, healthy food than higher-income areas, meaning residents who have to travel farther to supermarkets tend to eat fewer fruits and vegetables.³ Poor access to healthy foods contributes to obesity and is seen as an indicator for racial and ethnic health inequities across the United States.

The corner stores that are more prevalent in low-income neighborhoods attract people from all types of backgrounds. The high number of corner stores in Boston, and the popularity of these stores, represents an opportunity to provide better access to nutritious food for residents.

It is commonly believed that corner stores sell only unhealthy snack food and sugar-sweetened beverages; however, these stores often carry healthy options such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grain cereals as well. They also have the potential and capacity to offer healthier options if the community asks for and supports these changes.

Corner stores are usually a place where neighbors frequent, providing consistent and reliable business for the store owners. Neighbors walk, stroll or bike to the corner store for a staple that they just ran out of or for the ethnic products that only their corner store stocks. Relationships forged by familiarity between customers and staff at these stores serve as a major asset in working together to increase healthy food options.
Why Mattapan and East Boston?

Healthy on the Block chose to focus its initial efforts in the neighborhoods of East Boston and Mattapan, given the unique combination of health challenges and community assets that exist in these communities. According to the 2010 Health of Boston Report (BPHC):

- In Mattapan, 40% of adults are obese.
- In East Boston, 30% of adults are obese.
- There are 58,527 residents in these two communities combined.

In addition, the following community characteristics were taken into consideration:

- East Boston has only one grocery store, but over 50 corner stores.
- Mattapan residents report low access to affordable, high quality food options.

Why is Food Access so Important in Boston?

The Boston Public Health Commission's 2010 Health of Boston Report documents neighborhood health disparities with particularly high rates of health-related chronic diseases in low income communities. Due to the prevalence of overweight and obesity within East Boston and Mattapan and the lack of healthy food intake among residents, there is a clear need to promote and increase access to healthier foods. By using the existing infrastructure of the corner stores, Healthy on the Block was able to gain community investment from storeowners and customers.

Who We Are

The Healthy on the Block initiative grew out of a partnership between SAH and the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness (BCFF). Both groups are working to improve access to healthy food in Boston and have demonstrated track records of convening diverse groups of stakeholders from across the city.

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), the country's oldest health department, is an independent public agency providing a wide range of health services and programs. It is governed by a seven-member board of health appointed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino. BPHC's mission is to protect, preserve, and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

The Strategic Alliance for Health (SAH) is a Center for Disease Control and Prevention-funded initiative to create healthier communities through policy, systems, and environmental change. SAH focuses on building local capacity to promote physical activity and nutrition; instituting systems, environmental, organizational, and policy changes related to these health risk factors; and eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities.

The Boston Collaborative for Food & Fitness (BCFF) is a city-wide partnership working to improve community health by addressing issues related to food and physical activity. BCFF's commitment to racial equity is the foundation of its core strategies. The Collaborative is comprised of dynamic individuals representing a diverse group of sectors, including
healthcare, government, education, youth development, food systems, social services and residents. BCFF focuses on: increasing access and affordability of healthy food through school food systems and the community food environments; increasing use of open spaces and active transportation; and building community capacity and increased access to resources.

The **East Boston Neighborhood Health Center** is the lead organization for Healthy on the Block in East Boston. The project is based in the center’s Let’s Get Movin’ program. Let’s Get Movin’ is an obesity prevention and treatment program for children, teenagers, and families that focuses on medical monitoring, nutrition, education, physical activity, and food access.

The **Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC)** is the lead coalition for Healthy on the Block in Mattapan. MFFC draws on the wonderful ethnic and cultural diversity of Mattapan to promote a healthy living environment with a focus on healthy foods and physical fitness for all ages. The project benefits from the deep relationships that the MFFC has cultivated and the goals of Healthy on the Block match well with MFFC’s core mission.

**Health Equity Framework**

The Healthy on the Block project uses a health equity framework (see Figure 1) to inform our work with corner stores. There are many factors that impact the length and quality of one’s life. These factors, called the social determinants of health, include access to food, safe and affordable housing, transportation, and access to health services. Health-promoting resources are distributed unevenly across communities and follow patterns of racial segregation and poverty concentration. The health equity framework illustrates that racism has a direct impact on these social determinants, ultimately influencing health outcomes for communities of color, such as in East Boston and Mattapan.
Figure 1: Boston Public Health Commission’s Health Equity Framework

The Healthy on the Block working group also recognizes that it is important to consider socio-economic and neighborhood conditions in order to fully understand customer behavior. By asking about the challenges and problems that the residents in Mattapan and East Boston experience, we can better understand what influences where and how residents shop for food.

Figure 2 illustrates racial/ethnic differences between median household incomes in Boston. The data show that White residents have a higher annual household income in comparison with Asian, Black, and Latino residents. Income is frequently reported as a barrier for purchasing high quality produce in Boston.
**Figure 2:** Median Annual Household Income in Boston by Race/Ethnicity, 2002-2008.

**Overall Approach**

Healthy on the Block is a collaborative and community-oriented effort. The working group began the corner store initiative by hitting the streets and forming relationships with existing coalitions, community organizers, local leaders, students, community health centers, and corner store owners. This approach encouraged community ownership of and leadership in the project.

The Healthy on the Block team focused on engaging both corner store owners (supply) and residents (demand). This strategy was necessary to understand the current landscape of what options were available in the corner stores, as well as to identify food access barriers in the community.

This toolkit is divided into sections that provide specific details on the community engagement process (Section II), the process for partnering with stores (Section III), and a breakdown of specific program strategies (Section IV).

We recommend that community organizers who are interested in starting a corner store initiative read this guide in its entirety, and refer to the various sections and tip sheets as needed.
Section II: Community Engagement
Building community involvement is an important part of every successful healthy corner store project. Identifying the community members who can serve as champions of the healthy corner store movement is the first step in the community engagement process.

Healthy on the Block recommends the following steps for community engagement:

1. Partner with a local coalition or community organization
2. Develop a community assets map
3. Conduct community surveys

**Partner with a local coalition**

Healthy on the Block began by identifying a community coalition or organization in each target neighborhood that was already working on healthy food access. Identifying and partnering with a lead coalition/organization in each neighborhood provides local knowledge, insight and energy for the initiative.

Working collaboratively with coalitions is a good way to involve local residents in the larger movement, and also helps achieve neighborhood buy-in for the initiative. When selecting a group to partner with, it is important to consider not only interest and commitment to the issue of food access, but also whether the group has the capacity to accept grant funds (if applicable) and manage program activities.

With local partners in East Boston and Mattapan, the Healthy on the Block team started the dialogue around health inequities in the two pilot neighborhoods.
Image 1: Healthy on the Block program manager Javier Gutierrez and Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition Coordinator Cassandra Cato Louis outside a participating store in Mattapan.

**Develop a community assets map**

A positive starting point for any community-based initiative is for community members and organizers to do an assessment of their current resources and assets.

Low-income communities are often viewed and discussed in terms of negative attributes, so the process of developing a community assets map can help to highlight community strengths. This process also helps to give a visual of where the needs and opportunities are in the community, and may spark conversation about potential areas for outreach or partnership near participating stores.

Each community can decide which features to include on the map. Some features you may want to include are:

- Faith-based organizations
- Community centers
- Health Centers
- Libraries
- Schools
- Parks and Playgrounds
- YMCA/ YWCAs
- Boys & Girls Clubs
- Bike paths
- Open spaces
- Farmers Markets
- Community Gardens
- Supermarkets
- Corner Stores

See example maps from East Boston and Mattapan below.
Figure 3: Community Assets Map of Mattapan, 2012.

Figure 4: Community Assets Map of East Boston, 2012.
Community Surveys

As the initiative got underway, the Healthy on the Block team developed a survey to capture the perceptions of community residents. Surveys were conducted at transportation hubs, health centers, WIC offices, inside stores, and within the community at-large. The results of the survey can help guide the approach taken and strategies you decide to pursue. The process of conducting a survey can also be used to introduce residents to corner stores that have agreed to work on the healthy corner store initiative. The survey can help residents start a conversation with a corner store about joining the initiative. Finally, the survey results allow corner store owners to better understand where people shop, what their shopping preferences are, and what types of healthy products their customers would like to see in corner stores.

Types of information gathered:

- Where residents purchase their groceries
- Whether residents purchase food at corner stores, and if so, how frequently
- Food items usually purchased at corner stores
- How often residents shop for fruits and vegetables at corner stores
- Importance of store characteristics: nutritional quality and visual appeal of food, availability of cultural foods, affordability, accessibility, familiarity and interaction with the store owner, and having a variety of options

Although East Boston and Mattapan are two distinct communities, survey responses from residents of both neighborhoods were similar in terms of where they shop, whether they purchase fruits and vegetables, which products they commonly purchase, and relative importance of store characteristics.

Key findings included:

- Forty-two percent of respondents from East Boston and Forty-six percent of respondents from Mattapan shop at a corner store on a weekly basis
- Eighty-four percent of respondents from East Boston and Eighty-one percent from Mattapan purchased fruits and vegetables from a corner store in the past week
- Milk, bread, and candy/snacks are the most commonly purchased food products from corner stores
- Nutritional quality of food, affordability, and accessibility are the characteristics that customers rated as most important

The survey instrument is available in the Appendix.
Community Survey Results

Figure 5: Survey Results - Frequency of shopping at corner stores. At least 40% of those surveyed in East Boston and Mattapan often shop at a corner stores.

When was the last time you visited a corner store?

- Daily: Mattapan 15%, East Boston 19%
- Weekly: Mattapan 43%, East Boston 42%
- Monthly: Mattapan 21%, East Boston 10%
- Other: Mattapan 15%, East Boston 14%
- Never: Mattapan 15%, East Boston 7%

- Today: Mattapan 10%, East Boston 16%
- Yesterday: Mattapan 23%, East Boston 34%
- Within a week: Mattapan 43%, East Boston 38%
- Within last 2 weeks: Mattapan 17%, East Boston 5%
- Within a month: Mattapan 5%, East Boston 2%
- Month ago: Mattapan 5%, East Boston 2%
**Figure 6:** Survey Results - Most recent visit to a corner store. Over 35% of those surveyed in East Boston visited a corner store within a week. Thirty percent of those surveyed in Mattapan visited a corner store within a week.

**Figure 7:** Survey Results – Common purchases at corner stores. Milk, bread, candy/snacks, and fresh fruit and vegetables are items most often purchased at corner stores in East Boston and Mattapan.
**Figure 8:** Survey Results – Fruit and vegetable purchases in the past week. Over 84% of those surveyed in East Boston and over 81% of those surveyed in Mattapan purchased fruit and vegetables at corner stores in the past week.

**When visiting a small food market or corner store, how important are the following to you?**

*That answered "Very Important"*
**Figure 9:** Survey Results – Store characteristics of importance to customers. Nutritional quality of food, accessibility, and affordability were the most important characteristics people considered when visiting a small market or corner store.

**Tips and Techniques for Outreach**

The Healthy on the Block team considered different venues for engaging residents about the importance of healthy eating. Good venues for outreach may include local schools/universities, farmers markets, health centers, local and national agencies, and participating corner stores. It is important to be creative and to continuously be on the lookout for opportunities to promote your initiative.

Healthy on the Block organizers took the approach of having multidimensional conversations when first speaking with community members/customers.

Key topics to be addressed:

- Discuss the **health of the community** (including local rates of obesity and diabetes), and the importance of **healthy eating**. Please consider sharing data with store owners and community coalitions.
- Highlight the **corner store(s) as the backbone of the community**, as well as leaders in the healthy corner store initiative.
- Discuss the **perception of corner stores** in the community, and how this perception can be changed.
- **Corner stores are leading the efforts to provide healthier food options.** Store owners are willing to work with residents in order to combat the community’s health concerns, including diabetes and obesity.
- **Community members can help corner stores** provide more options by asking for healthier foods, and then buying them when they are available. The store will not be able to continue to stock healthy options unless they experience demand from the community.
- Highlight to customers that the **store sells variety of healthier food products**

These tips and techniques can be shared with store owners as well, if they are looking for suggestions on how to engage with customers.
Section III: Corner Store Partnerships
Building and maintaining relationships with corner store owners is the most important components of any corner store project. This process should be continuous and ever evolving, even after the corner store has committed to work on the project.

**Getting Started**

Before hitting the streets to visit corner stores, the Healthy on the Block working group met several times to develop strategies and to consider the best ways to maximize store visits.

After discussing the scope of their outreach efforts, the working group decided to work intensively with a few stores in order to be able to pilot and refine strategies prior to expanding the project.

Once the target areas (see sidebar) and scope of the project were determined, outreach to stores could begin. The partnering process consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial outreach
2. Store Selection
3. Memorandum of Understanding
4. Criteria for participation

**Initial Outreach**

At the first store visit, the organizer would initiate a conversation to learn about the store owners’ experience and/or knowledge about diabetes and obesity. At the second and third visit, the organizer would have a conversation about the store’s potential to make profit from healthy products, and how adding and/or highlighting healthy products could help.

If a store owner already offered healthy items, the organizer would acknowledge this and thank them for their efforts so far, and also highlight to the owner the importance for them to speak about and promote what they already sell. It was helpful for the organizer to have a small budget to purchase healthy items during visits as well.
Establishing a partnership with corner store owners has been integral to Healthy on the Block. General guidelines for creating partnerships with local store owners are:

- Focus on developing relationships with corner store owners during initial outreach visits.

- Keep in mind that the process is fluid. The most important and critical part of this effort is to consistently visit the store and enhance the relationship with every visit.

- Pay attention to body language and the different dynamics that operate within the store. There will be times that the store owner will be busy with customers or just busy moving or stocking items. It is okay for the community organizer to step back and refrain from engaging the individual about the project during those times.

- Remember that it does not all happen in one visit! It is okay to casually visit the store to simply buy water, to say “Hello I was in the area and decided to stop by to buy a drink and say hi”, or to ask “How are things going?” Usually those types of visits have a high impact on the work you are doing.

Tip: Keep in mind that every store is different and that is important to stay flexible!

A majority of corner stores do not make a profit by selling healthy products; however, since the national movement for healthier corner stores is in its infancy, stores that choose to participate are positioned to be leaders in this trend. This is one aspect to highlight to store owners as stores are frequently looking for ways to differentiate themselves from their competition.

Additional selling points for the project may include:

- There are many small, attainable strategies that can be implemented inside the store that will lead to noticeable differences. For example, many stores already carry fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, and water. The project can provide signage and/or display baskets to highlight what the store already sells.

- It is important to congratulate stores for selling the healthy products that they currently do. At the same time, there may be an opportunity to work on a strategy to help a store sell more of a particular healthy option.
• Marketing efforts will increase the store’s visibility in the community and may increase the store’s sales. The project can offer free marketing opportunities for the store in the community, or within the store for specific items that the store sells.

• The store can become a leader in creating a healthier community. Speak about the health problems impacting the community, personalize the issue by asking the owner if they know anyone personally who has any chronic diseases, and finish by saying the store can be a leader in helping to stabilize or diminish those health problems in the community.

• Corner stores may receive expedited assistance from local, municipal & state government offices and your partnering agencies and institutions through their association with the project.

**Store Selection**

Once several introductory visits had been completed, the Healthy on the Block team developed a questionnaire to inform which stores would be selected to participate in the program (see Figure 5 for the full questionnaire). With each store the number of introductory visits will vary.

Some questions that were asked during the selection conversations included:

- How long have you owned this store at the present location?
- Does the owner(s) of the store live in the neighborhood?
- How do you decide to carry certain products?

The goal of this process is to assess the owner’s level of interest in participating in the project. This can be done with focus groups, surveys, questionnaires, or through a combination of these methods. It’s helpful to focus on responses to questions regarding interest in the health of community, level of involvement in community, and willingness to work with community members. The Healthy on the Block working group prioritized stores based the owner’s interest and commitment to the project.
Healthy on the Block
Store Selection Questionnaire

The Strategic Alliance for Health Corner Store Initiative is working with community members and organizations to increase access to healthy affordable food through corner stores. Our goal is to help corner stores in East Boston and Mattapan offer healthier options, including better quality fruits and vegetables at a reasonable price.

To help us learn more about your store, please answer the following questions:

Are you interested in the health of the community?
- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not interested

In terms of your community, would you say your store is:
- Very involved
- Somewhat involved
- Not involved

In terms of your community, would you say your store is:
- Very open to working with community members
- Somewhat open to working with community members
- Not open to working with community members

Is your store interested in the Healthy Corner Store movement?
- Very interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not interested

Figure 10: Questionnaire used to inform selection of stores for participation in Healthy on the Block.
Participation Criteria

The Healthy on the Block team developed detailed criteria for participation that the store would be expected to uphold during the duration of their partnership with the project.

Requirements that were considered included:

- Commitment to stock a specified amount of fresh produce and other healthy options (e.g. a minimum of $20 worth of fresh produce. *Consider WIC standard*)
- Commitment to display marketing materials, program signage and product labels
- Agreement to maintain the cleanliness of the store
- Agreement to participate in technical assistance and training opportunities provided by the organizers
- A minimum time commitment for participation in the project (e.g. 6 – 12 months)
- Commitment to stock healthy snacks. “Healthy Snacks” were defined by the following:
  - Maximum 10 grams of sugar per serving
  - Minimum 2 grams of fiber per serving
  - Maximum 200 calories per serving

Once a store has been selected to participate, the organizer should review the criteria in detail with the store owner to confirm their understanding and commitment.

**Tip:** While it can be helpful to develop specific criteria for store selection and participation, you may find that you need to be flexible in certain circumstances. For example, if a store owner is highly committed to the project, but doesn’t feel ready to stock the specified quantity of produce, you may start with just 1 or 2 other requirements. In a few instances, Healthy on the Block partnered with stores that didn’t initially fit the participation criteria, but worked with them to make incremental changes.
Memorandum of Understanding

The Healthy on the Block team drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that both a representative of BPHC and the store owner would sign prior to initiating any work with Healthy on the Block. The MOU represents an agreement that holds both parties accountable for the success of the program (see Figure 11). It is useful to refer to review the MOU with corner store owners occasionally to remind corner store owners of the agreement. The MOU can be a tool used during the project to initiate conversation with corner store owners if the store is not cooperating.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

This Memorandum of Understanding outlines the activities that will be provided by the Strategic Alliance for Health in a supporting role to implement Healthy on the Block at [Store Name, Store Address]. Through these activities a stronger partnership will be formed between the Strategic Alliance for Health and [Store Name]. The agreement will be effective for the period of at least six months.

[Store Name] is committed to the well-being of the neighborhood in which my store is located and pledges to do the following with the support of the Strategic Alliance for Health:

- **Stock fresh produce and healthier options**
  - Including (but not limited to) fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals, and whole wheat or whole grain breads.
- **Display marketing materials**
  - Such as creating shelf space and posting display boards.
- **Label and promote healthy items**
  - Includes displaying item price/name labels, engaging community members about healthy options, and displaying nutrition information.
- **Maintain cleanliness of store**
  - For example, proper lighting, limiting the use of boxes, and maintaining clean shelf spaces.
- **Participate in technical assistance/ training opportunities provided by SAH**
  - Based on needs identified by store owners, we may offer trainings such as marketing and promotion, in-store display materials, product placement and cleanliness, produce handling and display, inventory systems and getting loans, and energy efficiency and refrigeration.

The Boston Strategic Alliance for Health will support Healthy on the Block by:

- Providing incentives and technical assistance on points of access, product placement and marketing, and strategies to stores.
- Assisting the store in building stronger relationships with current and new customers
- Assisting the store in meeting the goals agreed upon in the store project plan.

The following parties pledge to uphold the standards listed above and will continue to collaborate with community members to make the neighborhood a healthier place to live in.

__________________________________  ______________________________________
[Storeowner Name]  Javier Gutierrez, Project Manager
[Owner, Store Name]  Strategic Alliance for Health

**Figure 11:** Healthy on the Block Memorandum of Understanding.
Section IV: Strategies
Once a store signed on to the project, Healthy on the Block provided ongoing assistance and support, utilizing professional consultants when needed for their expertise, which included:

- Promotional materials
- Display supplies, such as shelving units and produce baskets
- Marketing support
- Technical assistance with produce handling and product placement
- Referral to City Agencies and other programs for business development support

Overall, program strategies fell into two categories: **strategies to increase supply**, and **strategies to increase demand**. Both are critical to developing a sustainable corner store initiative. The following section provides details on various strategies that corner store initiatives may want to utilize to build both supply and demand for healthy options.

**Strategies to Increase Supply:**

1. In-store engagement of owners
2. Environmental strategies: signage, display materials, product placement
3. Farm-to-Store
4. Technical assistance: produce consultant
5. Connect stores to local economic opportunities
6. Business development
7. Sourcing and distribution

**Strategies to Increase Demand:**

1. In-store engagement of customers
2. In-store promotions/incentives
3. Community events
4. Youth & Community engagement
5. Social marketing & advertising
Strategies to Increase Supply

In-store engagement of owners

Frequent store visits and conversations with store owners are critical for building project buy-in, and for eventually increasing the supply of healthy options. Always provide positive feedback when a store owner makes a positive change, and ask for their suggestions for new healthy items or other changes that the store might make.

Work alongside the store owner and encourage him or her to do the following:

- Build personal relationships with customers in order to establish a loyal customer base.

- Collect customer suggestions for other healthy items that the corner store could carry.
  - Corner store owners may want to ask customers questions on what items customers would like to see and how did customers hear about the corner store.

- Start a conversation about healthy eating habits and nutrition.
  - Recommend foods appropriate for the season that fit the needs of customers.

- Create a welcoming atmosphere.

- Recognize that healthy products the store already sells. Take note of those products and ask the store owner if there is interest to sell more of a particular item. The Healthy on the Block project worked closely with the majority of corner stores to first create more demand for one or two healthy product the store already sells. This strategy is a small and tangible strategy that will help build more trust with store owners.

- Make incremental changes to where products are placed in the store. Moving a sample of healthy products to where they are most visible (for example, at the front of an aisle or by the checkout) can be a good starting point.
**Environmental strategies**

Physical changes within the store will make an immediate and visible impact. These strategies signal to the customer that positive changes are happening within the store, and highlight the healthy options that are available for purchase.

Environmental strategies may include:

- Produce baskets and display cases (see Image 2)
- Signage and labels highlighting healthy options (e.g. ceiling hangers, shelf banners, window clings and produce labels) (see Images 3 & 4)
- Designated “healthy section” or “healthy shelf”, preferably in the front of the store or in a highly visible location
- Introducing new fruits and vegetables

*Image 2:* “Before” – Cardboard boxes used to display produce
Image 3: “After” – Boxes replaced by produce baskets, and products clearly labeled.

Image 4: Healthy on the Block signage.
Farm-to-Store

If there is demand in the community for locally grown produce and/or if the store owner is looking for a source to buy produce, a farm-to-store initiative is a strategy to consider.

The purpose of the Healthy on the Block Farm-to-Store pilot was to provide East Boston residents with more access to local produce. The pilot was a partnership between the East Boston Neighborhood Health Center (EBNHC) and World Peas Cooperative/New Entry Sustaining Farming project. This farm was selected because they had an existing relationship with EBNHC due to their participation in the weekly farmers market in Central Square.

The EBNHC coordinator initiated the pilot by connecting the farm to interested stores. Youth were trained to visit stores weekly, collect orders, and call in the order to the farm. The store owners paid for each week’s delivery on the following week. Two Healthy on the Block corner stores participated in the pilot.

This strategy proved to be challenging. Some stores consistently over-ordered, and others needed additional support on produce handling. Owners and customers were sometimes surprised by the appearance of local produce (e.g. leafy romaine lettuce instead of plastic-wrapped iceberg lettuce that the store usually stocked).

In the end, this was not a sustainable strategy in East Boston because the youth were needed to facilitate orders and deliveries (store owners did not have the capacity or ability to go directly to the farm to pick up their produce). In addition,
store owners ultimately did not feel that their customers would continue to purchase local produce.

**Technical Assistance**

Healthy on the Block utilized the services of a consultant to provide specialized expertise to stores in the areas of product placement and produce handling. The consultant worked with individual store owners, generally in a 1-2 hour block of time within the store.

Select recommendations from the consultant are summarized in Figure 12 & 13, and recommendations for specific produce items are found in the produce storage and handling guide below (Table 1).

### Tips for Product Placement

- Place new/featured items at the front of the store to ensure visibility
- Place healthy items at eye level
- Place discounted items or weekly specials by the register to promote purchase during check-out
- Try to hide as much of the display furniture as possible with fresh product
- Make sure display units are cleaned regularly

**Figure 12:** Tips for placement of healthy items within stores to promote purchases.
Tips for Produce Handling

- Use baskets instead of cardboard boxes to hold produce.
- Refer to the produce handling tip sheet for suggestions on how to properly store different types of produce.
- Make sure items that are cold and moisture-sensitive are not refrigerated, such as onions, garlic, tomatoes, and bananas (unless you are selling them green.
- On a daily basis, be sure to remove produce that no longer looks fresh.
- Become familiar with the products you sell. Know what they look like when they are good and bad.
- All greens need to be hydrated to keep them fresh. Using spray bottles can help.
- Keep your produce cases cold. They should be running at 32 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Keep displays neat and well organized. It shows customers that the products are being cared for and that you care about them.
- Talk about the products you are selling, engage your customers.
- Sample your products.

Figure 13: Tips for produce handling to promote quality produce and visual appeal.
Table 1: Produce handing guide.

**FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STORAGE AND HANDLING GUIDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUIT</th>
<th>Will it ripen?</th>
<th>Does it have to be refrigerated?</th>
<th>How long will it stay fresh?</th>
<th>FRUIT</th>
<th>Will it ripen?</th>
<th>Does it have to be refrigerated?</th>
<th>How long will it stay fresh?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apples</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Room temperature: 1 week</td>
<td>Oranges</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Room temperature: 1 week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: 2-3 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocados</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: until ripened</td>
<td>Papayas &amp; Mangos</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: until ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas &amp; Plantains</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: until ripened</td>
<td>Pears</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: until ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator (Plantains only): 2-3 weeks after ripened</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3 days after ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 5 days</td>
<td>Plums/Peaches</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: until ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3-5 days after ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemons &amp; Limes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Room temperature: 3-5 days</td>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 2-5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: 2 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Room temperature: 1 week</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No, can be kept at room temperature until ripened</td>
<td>Room temperature: 3-4 days until ripe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: Whole melon: 5 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Refrigerator: only after ripened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sliced melon: 1 day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEGETABLE</td>
<td>Does it have to be refrigerated?</td>
<td>How long will it stay fresh?</td>
<td>VEGETABLE</td>
<td>Does it have to be refrigerated?</td>
<td>How long will it stay fresh?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-----------------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collards/Kale</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 4-7 days</td>
<td>Radishes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3-4 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 2-3 weeks</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 2-4 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 1-2 days with or without husk</td>
<td>Sprouts</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3-4 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Beans</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 5 days</td>
<td>Summer Squash</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: 3-5 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: Most types: 4 days Iceberg: 1 week</td>
<td>Sweet and White Potatoes</td>
<td>No - store in a cool, dry, dark place</td>
<td>Room temperature: months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>No - store in a cool, dry, dark place</td>
<td>Room temperature: 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>Winter Squash</td>
<td>No - store in a cool, dry, dark place</td>
<td>Room temperature: months</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Refrigerator: Bell: 1 week Hot: 1-2 weeks</td>
<td>Yucca</td>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Room temperature: 1 week Refrigerator: 2 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Connect Stores to Local Economic Opportunities

Participating in a healthy corner store initiative is an opportunity for corner stores to reach a new customer base, as well as to increase sales to their regular customers. There are often financial support programs through local and federal funding through which corner stores may be eligible for small business loans and discounted or free employee training. Becoming familiar with store owner needs beyond the healthy corner store initiative provides another opportunity to build relationships with these local businesses. Some examples of small business support programs in Boston include:

- Boston Business Hub: [www.boston.gov/businesshub](http://www.boston.gov/businesshub)
  - Boston Buying Power program.
- Main Street Partners: [www.mainstreetpartners.org](http://www.mainstreetpartners.org)
- NSTAR: [www.nstar.com](http://www.nstar.com)

For more information about participation in government programs such as WIC or SNAP please visit: [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

Business Development

Owners of corner stores may not have had formal training in small business management. If this is the case, store owners may welcome training in the areas of:

- Business planning
- Setting effective market prices
- Inventory systems

Furthermore, focusing on small business development may help connect a corner store initiative to additional community partners and/or resources that are not traditionally involved with health initiatives.

Remember that many stores are cash only, and may not be willing or able to make changes related to record keeping or computerized systems. As smaller, more tangible changes are made through the course of the project, owners may become more interested in these types of business improvements.

It is important to collaborate from the beginning of the project with agencies and nonprofit organizations that focus on small business development. The Healthy on the Block team collaborated with Main Street Partners, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help small businesses increase their profit. Because of this
collaboration, World’s Best Food Market was able to take part in a 6-8 week accelerated business program during the summer of 2012.

**Accelerated Business Program**

As a result of the Accelerated Program, World’s Best Food Market was able to expand its marketing both online and offline; develop an inventory tracking system; solicit customer feedback; and improve shelf management practices. Please visit the following links:

- [www.worldsbestfoodmarket.com](http://www.worldsbestfoodmarket.com)
- [https://www.facebook.com/WordsBestFoodMarket](https://www.facebook.com/WordsBestFoodMarket)

**Sourcing and Distribution**

Corner store owners may be interested in participating in a corner store initiative, but may not have access to distribution channels for fresh produce and/or healthy snack items.

To address this issue, there are a number of sourcing and distribution models being explored by healthy corner store initiatives across the country. Some options may be better suited to areas with a high density of stores. Others may be more appropriate if communities are located nearby local farms. Some strategies can support buying more sustainably and locally grown produce, furthering local economic development goals. These are a few distribution and sourcing models that may work in your community:

- **Pick-up from a local produce terminal (e.g. Chelsea Produce Terminal in Chelsea, MA)**

This is an option for owners who prefer to personally choose their produce and/or who prefer not to pay extra delivery costs.

- **Receive deliveries from a wholesale produce distributor**

Distributors may be interested and willing to make deliveries to small stores in the area, which is particularly convenient if they’re already delivering in the neighborhood. It may be a challenge to identify a distributor who is willing to deliver small amounts of produce to individual stores (i.e. many distributors...
are unwilling to break up cases of produce for stores that aren’t ready to buy large quantities of single items).

- **Food-purchasing cooperative with other corner stores**
  This option may have economic benefits for the store owners because it allows them to purchase produce for a lower cost and also to save on delivery costs if they enter into an agreement with neighboring stores that are committed to buying from the same distributor.

- **Cooperative buying with schools, restaurants, or other large purchasers**
  The corner store may be able to tap into existing networks such as local schools or restaurants and may be able to “piggyback” on these institutions’ larger orders with produce distributors.

Healthy on the Block has tried most of the above sourcing/distribution strategies. In all situations, the team found that it was more effective to make improvements to the current system (if needed) rather than proposing a new system altogether.
Strategies to Increase Demand

Many corner stores may already be carrying healthy items; however, store owners often say that they do not hear their customers asking for these options. As a result, corner stores carry less nutritious foods. Below are strategies to help increase demand for healthy items within participating stores.

In-store engagement with customers

Talking with customers is important for creating a positive store environment and establishing a loyal customer base. Store owners who are not accustomed to reaching out to customers may benefit from seeing an organizer model this strategy.

- Collect customer suggestions for other healthy items that the corner store could carry.
- Start a conversation about healthy eating habits and nutrition.
  - Recommend foods appropriate for the season and that fit the needs of the customer.
- Ask customers to spread the word about the changes happening in the store.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere.

One of the most effective strategies for increasing demand is in-store engagement of customers. However, this requires large amounts of staff time. If capacity is limited, it may be necessary to spend less time on direct engagement and focus on strategies that are less time-intensive.

Healthy on the Block Success Story

At Tio Supermarket, the Healthy on the Block team and the corner store owner wanted to select a specific item to promote in the store. The corner store owner chose oatmeal as a product to promote, and agreed to mention it to customers using the talking points that she and the working team developed.

The working team and the corner store owner also talked about opportunities to promote items based on what the customer was purchasing. In this case, if a customer was buying bananas and milk, the corner store owner would recommend an oatmeal pairing.

As the corner store owner promoted items, she also pointed out the healthy section that was created in the store by the youth involved in Healthy on the Block.

Overall, the combination of the healthy section, signage (banners, posters, graphics etc.), recipes, and engagement with customers led to the sale of 48 small boxes of oatmeal in two weeks, when she previously sold about 24 boxes a month.
Customer Incentives

There is a lot of value to having stores demonstrate that they are invested in promoting the health of the community. A great way to show this is to provide incentives for customers to buy healthy foods in the store.

Here are some suggestions for product promotions:

- Offer package deals of healthy foods (for example, buy a box of oatmeal and get a bunch of bananas for half price). See Figure 15 for a sample coupon/promotion from East Boston.
- Develop a frequent buyer card, so that customers receive a discount or free item after shopping at the store 10 times (e.g. HOTB’s Healthy Bites card; see sidebar & Figure 14).
- Offer free samples of new products to give customers a chance to try them before making a purchase.
- Hand out recipe cards with recipes highlighting products found in the store. This can be a good way to highlight uses for new products or unfamiliar items. Owners may want to offer a small discount for purchases of items featured in that week’s recipe.

Figure 14: Healthy Bites Card.
Figure 15: Promotional coupon used for stores in East Boston. Stores jointly agreed to participate in this promotion and provided input on the amount of incentive they would like to provide to customers.

Community Events

Hosting an event in corner stores both attracts customers and helps advertise healthy products in the store. There are various types of events that can serve that purpose:

- Host a grand re-opening following a store makeover and invite the whole community.
- Hold a tasting session or cooking demonstration featuring healthy foods from the corner store. Note: Advise corner store owners to follow proper food safety/sanitary code and or check for proper permitting.
Partnering with Institutions:

The partnership with Harborside Community Health Center in East Boston, a 40-year-old institution, has been a key to successful community involvement in the East Boston Healthy on the Block initiative. They have hosted community workshops on food justice, container gardening and cooking to support the project.

In Mattapan, a partnership with the Mattahunt/Wheelock Community Center resulted in further fundraising to support healthy eating & active living in the community through the Healthy Family Fun Friday Food & Fitness Workshops.

- Organize workshops on cooking and food access.
- Coordinate walking tours through the community to identify participating stores and to point out new/healthy products at participating stores.
- Provide shopping tours within stores to give healthy shopping tips and to point out recent store improvements.
- Host a table at a community event.

Tip: In order to bring in larger crowds to corner store events, it may be helpful to coordinate with an already popular local community event.

The Healthy on the Block team in Mattapan hosted and/or participated in several community events. Some events were held at participating corner stores, and others took place at the Mattahunt Community Center. The purpose of the events was to promote the stores and to highlight healthy foods that the stores already carried. These goals were accomplished by giving away recipes and educational materials, as well as by hosting cooking demonstrations.

In addition to encouraging residents to visit participating stores, events in the community can also be a positive way to further the conversation about food justice in general. For example, the East Boston team hosted a Community Food Workshop Series. This was a series of four workshops around the theme of food. Topics included: “The Power of Local”, “Stir a Memory” collaboration with a local artist that encouraged residents to create their own postcards depicting memories about food), “What is Food Justice”, and “Container Planting”. The workshops were held in collaboration with the Harborside Community Center, and many of their adult education students participated.
Image 6: Program coordinators, community residents and staff gather before leading a walk from the Mattapan library to an event at Mama Supermarket.

Image 7: Crowds gather outside a community event in East Boston.
Youth Engagement

Youth can be great supporters of any corner store project. The Healthy Hood Club is a group of East Boston High school students that focuses on food and environmental justice projects. They are an integral part of Healthy on the Block and helped shape the campaign. They have been involved with many aspects of the work, such as conducting store evaluations, assisting with store redesigns, and also conducting workshops for other youth (see sidebar on page 46 for more details about their work with social media). The Vigorous Youth of the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition also helped to support the project in Mattapan and hosted workshops on food justice.
Advertising and Social Media

Promoting healthy corner stores goes beyond the four walls of any given store. Community advertising can change customer and community perceptions about corner stores. Effective marketing helps increase demand and sales.

Strategic marketing of healthy foods:
1. Informs customers of affordable options.
2. Illustrates health benefits.
3. Draws attention to the positive changes occurring in corner stores.

Healthy on the Block has learned that various marketing strategies may be effective for each neighborhood, community and corner store.

Local Media

Local media, like radio, television and local newspapers, provides a means of highlighting the great work of the corner stores in the community. There are different ways to spread the word:

- Write a press release to promote participating stores (see example in Appendix)
- Invite members of the media to your events, and be prepared to answer questions if asked for an interview.
- Create talking points about the initiative for organizers and store owners, so that more than one person is comfortable with responding to interview requests.
- Write an article in a local paper.
- Purchase ad space in community newspapers. Figure 15 provides an example of an ad that was placed in East Boston newspapers.
- Partner with a local radio station to run PSAs advertising the initiative.

Social Media with Youth

A group of high school students in East Boston, the Healthy Hood Club, have started a website and blog describing their work.

The youth are involved in Healthy on the Block and get together to experiment with healthy recipes in addition to supporting the project in other ways. Read more about what they’re cooking up:

http://standup4eastie.weebly.com
Another way to raise awareness of Healthy on the Block is to use the internet. Below are various methods to keep the community connected through the web:

- Create a website (www.bphc.org/healthyontheblock) or join a current website featuring other healthy corner stores (www.healthycornerstores.org) to promote the store. Make sure to include the store(s) location, telephone number and operating hours.

- Collect email addresses from customers and community members. Send out emails regularly featuring recipes, store updates, and invitations to community events.

- Use social media tools such as blogging, Facebook and Twitter to help promote events connected to participating corner stores.

- Create a blog on which to regularly post narrative updates about your progress, or contribute articles to existing blogs. For example, Healthy on the Block was featured on the Boston Public Health Commission’s Healthy Boston Blog: http://healthybostonblog.wordpress.com/2011/12/22/healthy-on-the-block-store-makeover/

- Create a Facebook page for your project. For example, the East Boston team created their own page to share updates and progress (Visit www.Facebook.com and search for “Healthy on the Block”).

Examples of programs across the country that have utilized social media are featured in the appendix as well.

**Word of Mouth**

Don’t underestimate the impact of speaking to friends, family and neighbors about the initiative. People often look to loved ones for tips of places to go and shop and it serves as a reliable way to get the word out:

- Ask volunteers to go out into the community and knock on doors to talk to people about the corner store initiative.

- Use existing informal networks (groups of friends, store owners etc.) to spread the word and excite the community.

- Hand out flyers at health centers, WIC offices, religious gatherings, local schools or other community-based events.
**In-store marketing materials**

If funds or staff time are limited, it may be most effective to think about materials that can be distributed directly to customers in stores. A custom brochure describing the project, or a flyer featuring weekly specials can help to spark a conversation about changes in the store.

*Image 10:* Sidewalk chalkboards are used to create visibility for events.
Section V: Project Evaluation & Sustainability
Importance of Evaluation

Evaluations can provide an abundance of information about the success (and challenges) of your project. Through evaluation you can:

- Identify the customer base and use this information for marketing purposes, as well as community leader recruitment.
- Identify levels of sales and relative product popularity.
- Discover where there are gaps and where adjustments need to be made.
- Interact with the corner store owners to continue strengthening relationships with the program team.
- Communicate with the corner store owners to identify their strengths and to find out how they see their business growing.
- Pass on information that can go to community organizers, storeowners, and the media to highlight your recent successes.
- Identify which strategies are most effective.

Implementation of Evaluation

In addition to weekly informal visits to the stores, Healthy on the Block conducted an initial store survey at baseline, then a follow-up assessment at the three-month and six-month points of program participation.

Two significant outcomes from these visits were:

- Observation of any changes in the quantity of produce and other healthy items being stocked. Since many store owners are hesitant to “open their books” to others, we used the amount of products being stocked, as well as store owner report of sales, as an indicator of increased sales.
- Regular communication with the corner store owners.

The most accurate way to measure the success of this program is to be able to have access to actual store sales. Due to lack of trust and/or lack of consistent record keeping within the stores, it may be difficult for store owners to provide such data. Information gathered through qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions with storeowners and customers) could reveal strategies
that did or did not work for a particular store. Questions used by the Healthy on the Block were:

- Have there been changes in your customer base? If so, how?
- Have there been changes in your overall sales? If so, how?
- Has the project assistance been helpful?
- How can the project assistance and service be improved?
- Have the promotional materials provided been helpful?
- If applicable, have the new Healthy on the Block signs (hanging sign, shelf talkers, “approved” labels, produce labels) been helpful?

Additional measures that might be useful to consider for evaluation include:

- Store sales to measure the percentage of healthy products vs. unhealthy products sold per month, if the corner store owner is comfortable with sharing this information.

- Square footage of shelf space taken up by designated healthy products to measure the change over time of these products being stocked (e.g. Hartford Food Store Evaluation).

- Regular conversations with the store owner using an evaluation form (provided in the appendix) can guide you into collecting this qualitative data.

**Sustainability**

While many stores will be motivated to continue their work with the project based on concern about the health and well being of the community, if they are not meeting their bottom line, the project will not be sustainable. In order to create sustainable change, the store owners need to feel empowered in their ability to provide healthy food to their community and they need to be champions for the movement. In order to do this, it is imperative that the storeowners’ concerns and challenges are addressed throughout the implementation phase. Evaluations can identify gaps that need to be filled to ensure that the corner stores have the skills and tools necessary to continue this work independently.
Section VI: Conclusion
Healthy on the Block’s primary approach was to build relationships at every level within the community. The original goal of the project was to support the creation of a healthier food environment by encouraging healthy eating habits and raising awareness about the prevalence of nutrition-related chronic diseases in the community. Implementing changes in local corner stores is one way to empower the community to take these pressing health issues into their own hands. Corner store owners are already positive economic contributors to the community. Healthy corner store initiatives challenge them to take an active role in the health of their neighborhood as well.

As store owners build a broad customer base and demand increases for healthy products, these types of initiatives can be self-sustaining and will not require outside funding or program support, which is essential for long-term change. Through our work, Healthy on the Block was able to build community vibrancy and show that small, incremental change can have a lasting impact towards forging healthier communities.
Appendices
Appendix A. Success Stories
There are many other cities that have had success with healthy corner store initiatives. The Healthy Corner Store Network has a robust website of success stories and all types of resources. They also have an email listserv that organizers across the country use to exchange up to date information on the Healthy Corner Store movement. Here are a few successful healthy corner store initiatives:

**Baltimore, MD**: The Baltimore Healthy Stores initiative's aim is to prevent obesity and improve health in their communities. They use a culturally focused approach in the stores in order to promote the purchase of healthy foods. [http://www.healthystores.org/BHS.html](http://www.healthystores.org/BHS.html)

**Delridge, WA**: Through funding by the Seattle Foundation’s Healthy Kids Fund and the City of Seattle's Economic Development, the Delridge Healthy Corner Store Initiative launched in the Spring of 2009. By increasing sales and customer base for the corner stores they hope to positively impact the health of the community that has limited access to large grocery stores. [www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/Delridge_HCS_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/Delridge_HCS_Toolkit.pdf)


**Hartford, CT**: Hartford Food System Healthy Food Retailer initiative
Through the Healthy Food Retailer initiative, stores receive promotional assistance and grassroots outreach in return for shifting a portion of their shelf space from junk food to normal groceries. Recent inventory measurements confirm that Healthy Food Retailers have shifted 8% of their junk food inventories to regular groceries since 2007. [http://www.hartfordfood.org/n/programs/stores-n.html](http://www.hartfordfood.org/n/programs/stores-n.html)

**New Orleans, LA**: The New Orleans Healthy Corner Stores initiative aims to help decrease the obesity levels in their city by using the current corner stores in the city. The initiative aims to improve the food environment that has resulted in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which closed down many grocery stores throughout the city. Using the established culture of the corner stores, the program recognizes the important community role of corner stores in the neighborhood, and the impact they can have on improving the health of the community members. [http://www.stepsla.org/home2/section/3-153/the-corner-store-initiative](http://www.stepsla.org/home2/section/3-153/the-corner-store-initiative)

**Washington DC**: Washington DC’s healthy corner store initiative aims to improve the health of residents by increasing healthy food sales in the stores and reducing food insecurity and obesity rates. It is led by the DC Hunger solutions and funded by Washington DC Department of Health. It is modeled after best practices and successes in other cities surrounding healthy corner stores.
Apache Healthy Stores: Diabetes, obesity and heart disease are severe problems among the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache. Most of these problems are related to a changing lifestyle. Eating a diet that is low in fat and sugar and high in fiber is part of improving lifestyle. The Apache Healthy Stores Program was created to address these problems by working to improve healthy food availability and to promote healthy eating. [http://www.healthystores.org/AHS.html](http://www.healthystores.org/AHS.html)

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1Michimi, A., & Wimberly, M. C. (2010). Associations of supermarket accessibility with obesity and fruit and vegetable consumption in the continental United States. *International Journal of Health Geographics, 9*(49)

