



SUPPORTING
HEALTHY FOOD
ACCESS
IN NORTH CAROLINA

*A report of the
North Carolina Healthy
Food Retail Task Force*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by Judy Robbins and Caroline Harries of The Food Trust and Morgan Wittman Gramann of the North Carolina Alliance for Health. It was released March 2019. Members of the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force, co-chaired by Jen Zuckerman of the Duke Sanford World Food Policy Center and Keith Martin of Merchants Distributors (MDI), provided valuable input. This report was made possible by generous support from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. Photographs by Mel Epps and Ryan Donnell.

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North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force

Dear Neighbors,

The North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force offers these policy recommendations for promoting access to healthy food in under-resourced communities through the development and preservation of healthy, affordable food retail in rural and urban communities across North Carolina. These recommendations were derived from many conversations with Task Force members and members of communities across the state. They address multiple barriers to accessing healthy food in communities in North Carolina, including affordability, transportation, reinforcement of systemic barriers, distribution, and workforce retention and training. Composed of a broad range of leaders from the health, financial, philanthropic, government, civic and grocery sectors, the Task Force identified eight policy recommendations to overcome these barriers at the state and local levels.

More than 2 million North Carolina residents, including nearly half a million children, live in under-resourced communities underserved by grocery stores.¹ The resulting lack of nutritious, affordable food is imposing a significant toll on both rural and urban communities throughout the state, affecting their revitalization and the health of children and families. A growing body of research shows that people with convenient access to a place that sells healthy foods eat more fruits and vegetables and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight. Additionally, healthy food retailers can promote the economic wellbeing of neighborhoods by creating jobs and spurring additional development.

These recommendations are built on extensive work by diverse groups across the state. I deeply appreciate the hard work and commitment of the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force members. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation for their support of this effort, as well as convening partners The Food Trust and Self-Help Credit Union, and our co-chairs Merchants Distributors (MDI) and the Duke Sanford World Food Policy Center.

Every community deserves to have convenient access to healthy, affordable food. It will take decisive action from legislators, the retail industry, and economic, health, food access and community advocates to bring healthy, affordable food to the communities that need it most. It will also take commitment to ensuring these policies are implemented equitably, and do not further existing disparities. I look forward to bringing these policies to fruition and supporting the expansion of healthy food retail development across North Carolina. Together, we can make healthy, affordable food available for all children and families in our state.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "M Wittman Gramann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Morgan Wittman Gramann
Executive Director, North Carolina Alliance for Health

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BACKGROUND

North Carolina is home to many communities that have too few grocery stores, farmers markets and other healthy food retailers.

Providing North Carolinians with greater access to healthy, affordable food will not only improve public health, but also promote equity and stimulate local economies.

The resulting lack of access to healthy, affordable food undermines the health and well-being of children and families, and further harms communities that are already struggling economically. A significant and growing body of research indicates that people who live in communities without a supermarket suffer from disproportionately high rates of diet-related health problems, while those with convenient access to a grocery store eat more fruits and vegetables and are more likely to maintain a healthy weight.²

More than **2 million people in North Carolina, including 435,000 children** under the age of

15, live in areas where residents are suffering with diet-related disease and can't easily access healthy food. The areas that are in need of access to healthy food are also in particular need of the **jobs and economic development** that grocery stores and other food retailers bring.

To highlight these concerns, the North Carolina Alliance for Health and The Food Trust issued *Food for Every Child: The Need for Healthy Food Access in North Carolina* in July 2018.³ By using maps to identify areas of greatest need across the state, *Food for Every Child* illustrates gaps in food availability and highlights the relationship between supermarket access, diet-related diseases and neighborhood income levels.

The research study concluded the following:

- **Access to nutritious food is unevenly distributed in North Carolina.** There are significant areas of the state with few full-service grocery stores, and many communities in which none exist.
- The uneven distribution of supermarkets in North Carolina leaves a **disproportionate number of under-resourced people without access to nutritious food.**
- Areas with both low incomes and low sales have **few or no supermarkets**, and people living there are less able to afford to travel to where supermarkets are concentrated.



The report led to a series of convenings of key stakeholders charged with developing recommendations for increasing access to healthy, affordable foods for residents in both urban and rural underserved areas throughout the state. The North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force was convened by the North Carolina Alliance for Health, The Food Trust and Self-Help Credit Union, and co-chaired by Merchants Distributors (MDI) and the Duke Sanford World Food Policy Center, with support from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. The group included leaders from the grocery industry, community and economic development, public health and civic sectors.

As part of this process, the Task Force administered a survey to over 300 North Carolinians to gather input on the proposed recommendations from people across the state. Building upon this survey and the work of various North Carolina organizations and agencies, **the Task Force developed eight recommendations for state and local government that will improve the availability of healthy, affordable food in underserved areas through the development of healthy food retail options.**

Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for communities in North Carolina, the Task Force recommends support for a wide range of healthy food retail projects, including new supermarket development, the expansion or renovation of existing grocery stores, and alternative models such as farmers markets, healthy corner store projects, co-ops, mobile markets and even food hubs that bolster the local food system and promote the sale of local and North Carolina-grown foods. The Task Force also recommends support of a variety of critical efforts and innovations, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), transportation and nutrition education, in order to increase access to healthy food.

The North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force acknowledges that efforts to increase access to healthy, affordable food should fit with the state's greater economic development agenda. The success of efforts to improve healthy food access will depend on coordinated action from state and local government agencies, community development organizations, charitable foundations, the supermarket industry and others.

The recommendations herein are meant to maximize the impact of a public commitment by leveraging it with other cross-sector efforts already under way. The North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force members and the North Carolina Alliance for Health are committed to working with state and local governments to implement these eight policy recommendations for the sake of children and all residents of North Carolina who deserve the opportunity to lead healthier lives.

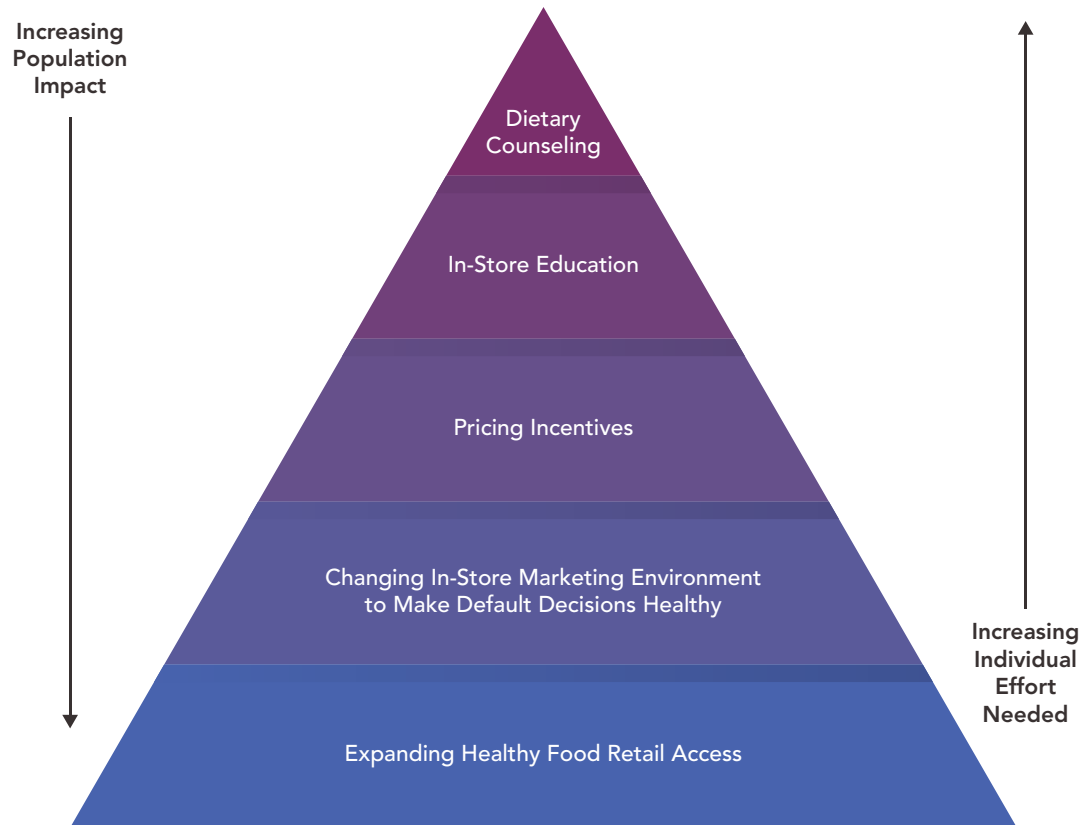
KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEY OF OVER 300 NORTH CAROLINIANS:

- **Approximately 1 in 4 people** responded that it is not easy to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood
- **Affordability of produce and more store options with healthy food** are the highest ranked potential solutions to increasing access to healthy food in North Carolina by survey respondents
- Respondents from suburban areas, followed by those from urban areas, report **better access to fresh produce** than their rural counterparts
- **30% of respondents** who live in rural areas reported that it is not easy to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhood, compared to 27% for urban respondents and 20% for suburban respondents

WHY ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL MATTERS

Research shows that expanding access to healthy food retail is a fundamental component of creating an environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice. These recommendations address the robust impacts of a variety of strategies to increase access to healthy food, as noted below in the Food Access Impact Pyramid.

FOOD ACCESS IMPACT PYRAMID



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The State, in partnership with local governments and community partners, should create a culture of support for purchasing healthy food in under-resourced communities to increase access to healthy food across North Carolina as part of the comprehensive and equitable development of these communities and the health of its residents. Community involvement is integral to the implementation of these recommendations.

Recommendations for state and local government in partnership with communities:

- 1 Public-Private Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)**
Create a public-private healthy food financing fund to stimulate the development, renovation and expansion of new and existing community-supported venues selling and producing a variety of quality, healthy and affordable foods in under-resourced rural and urban communities across the state.
- 2 Supply and Distribution of Fresh, Local Food**
Incentivize the sale of foods that are grown, produced or processed locally within the state of North Carolina by targeting new and existing resources to support venues that source locally and sell North Carolina-grown food. Encourage partnerships and distribution efforts between growers, sellers and buyers to make it easier to do so.
- 3 SNAP and WIC**
Maximize access to SNAP and WIC through effective partnerships that promote opportunities for enrolling in these programs, redeeming benefits, and increasing the use of incentives for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.
- 4 Transportation**
Develop affordable and efficient transportation services for rural and urban neighborhoods without convenient access to healthy food retail venues. Support innovations such as e-commerce solutions, mobile markets and grocery delivery in addition to connecting existing transit lines with healthy food access venues.
- 5 Workforce Development**
Create new and expand existing training programs, including on-the-job training, to create career paths for community residents and to ensure there is a well-trained workforce for healthy food retail venues. Prioritize partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), community colleges and other post-secondary institutions.
- 6 Nutrition Education**
Increase funding for programs that promote healthy eating and make it easier for shoppers to select and purchase healthy foods.
- 7 Existing Programs and Resources**
Leverage and coordinate existing resources that support healthy food access and actively market them to communities, healthy food venues and other relevant partners across the state, including churches, schools and healthcare facilities.
- 8 Continued Collaboration to Support Recommendation Implementation**
Continue to collaborate with members of the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force to guide the equitable implementation of these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Public-Private Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

Create a public-private healthy food financing fund to stimulate the development, renovation and expansion of new and existing, community-supported venues selling and producing a variety of quality, healthy and affordable foods in under-resourced rural and urban communities across the state.

North Carolina's rural and urban communities would benefit greatly from a statewide fund focusing on increasing access to a variety of healthy food retail venues. Prioritization of healthy food retail development would make it easier for stores to open in areas that are currently underserved. There is a considerable gap between the high costs of development and grocers' ability to serve the areas that need them the most. Across the country, healthy food financing programs, created with public funds and leveraged with additional public and private capital, are supporting and promoting healthy food retail in under-resourced communities and having a major impact on residents' ability to access healthy food. Communities also benefit from the job creation and additional economic and community benefits these venues bring.

North Carolina should dedicate funds to a grant and loan program to stimulate the development and revitalization of new and existing community-supported venues selling healthy and affordable foods. Projects should be supported by and be beneficial for the communities where they operate; strategies such as Community Benefit Agreements can help to ensure that retail venues are creating thriving and equitable businesses for residents, as can supporting businesses that are community-owned and reflect the communities they serve. Financing would be used for a variety of purposes such as site acquisition and construction, equipment purchases, workforce development, etc., addressing many barriers faced by healthy food retailers in under-resourced communities. The program should be flexible enough to meet the needs of a range of urban and rural fresh food retailers — from full-service grocery to smaller stores and year-round farmers markets.

This type of program can be modeled off of similar successful programs across the country called Healthy Food Financing Initiatives (HFFI). These public-private partnerships provide one-time grants and loans for the development or renovation of healthy food retail and other projects and revitalize distressed communities by supporting local business development and creating triple-bottom-line benefits with meaningful impacts on community health, job opportunities and economic stimulus. Typically, Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) administer these funds and attract significant additional investment. A Food Access Organization (FAO) often partners with the CDFI to help implement the program and ensure that all applicants meet program and community goals. For more information, visit www.thefoodtrust.org.

Views from North Carolina: In rural and urban areas alike, survey respondents to the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Survey said that **having access to a store that carries fresh produce was one of their top concerns.**

Success Stories

Healthy Food For Ohio: In June 2015, Gov. John Kasich (R) signed the FY 2016–17 state operating budget that included a \$2 million appropriation through the General Revenue Fund to capitalize the statewide Healthy Food for Ohio (HFFO) program. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services selected Finance Fund Capital Corporation (FCAP), a statewide Community Development Financial Institution, to

implement the program and distribute funds to projects. FCAP leveraged the state's seed funding with \$2 million from the federal HFFI program, as well as over \$10 million in additional funding from banks, foundations and other sources supporting healthy food retail development in areas in need across the state.

Massachusetts Food Trust Program (MFTP): This HFFI provides loans, grants and business assistance for healthy food retail projects increasing access to

healthy, affordable food in low-income, underserved areas. Seeded with \$1 million from the Baker-Polito Administration in 2018 and in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR), the MFTP is committed to improving food security and access throughout the Commonwealth. The program launched in October 2018 and within its first 3 months has received over 20 applications from urban and rural areas across the state.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Supply and Distribution of Fresh, Local Food

Incentivize the sale of foods that are grown, produced or processed locally within the state of North Carolina by targeting new and existing resources to support venues that source locally and sell North Carolina-grown food. Encourage partnerships and distribution efforts between growers, sellers and buyers to make it easier to do so.

Selling quality locally grown, produced and processed products helps to 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 North Carolina, this is particularly pertinent, since the agriculture industry contributes \$84 billion to the state's economy—accounting for 17% of the state's income.⁴

Facilitating 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 North Carolina.

Across the state, North Carolinians are producing a range of fresh and healthy products and working to get them into the hands of consumers. Programs like Got to Be NC Agriculture, which has a mission “to promote North Carolina’s agricultural bounty to consumers in our state, across the country, and around the world,” helps connect North Carolina-grown products to consumers.⁵

Facilitating 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 North Carolina, helping to bolster the local economy and increase access to healthy food for the more than 2 million North Carolinians in need.⁶

Views from North Carolina: “Farmers are struggling to make ends meet. Their local, often organic produce can’t price-compete with chain grocery stores. Let’s put more money into the pockets of local farmers and help connect them with local grocers.”
—Survey Respondent, North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Survey, Fall 2018

Success Story

New York: The Pride of New York retail program has assisted hundreds of supermarkets in sourcing local products and incorporating the “buy local” message

into their marketing campaigns. Pride staff work with store and produce managers, distributors and other partners in the food supply chain to develop a variety of customized point-of-sale materials that emphasize participating stores’ “buy local” efforts

with New York farmers. The New York Healthy Food & Healthy Communities grocery financing program encourages applicants to participate in the Pride of New York program.

RECOMMENDATION 3: SNAP and WIC

Maximize access to SNAP and WIC through effective partnerships that promote opportunities for enrolling in these programs, redeeming benefits, and increasing the use of incentives for the purchase of fruits and vegetables.

SNAP and WIC enrollment is an important part of the buying power of economically distressed communities, thereby increasing the projected long-term success of grocery stores entering these neighborhoods. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates \$9 in total community spending, and the use of SNAP benefits directly increases the economic activity of producers, wholesalers, retailers and all those contributing to the food system.⁷ Coupled with programs that promote the sale of locally grown produce, even more of those dollars stay in North Carolina.

SNAP incentive programs, which offer extra dollars for the purchase of fruits and vegetables, are one way to maximize benefits. Nationwide, there is great momentum for such programs, which can be a very effective strategy for encouraging healthy choices at access points once stores enter communities. Several groups in North Carolina are working together to offer similar fruit and vegetable purchasing incentives at a statewide and regional level.

Across North Carolina, groups are already working to incentivize purchasing healthy food for consumers who use SNAP—but their work could reach more people, more effectively with the collaboration and support of the state. Key stakeholders involved with SNAP and WIC should work with existing efforts to improve program accessibility and delivery to better serve both residents and the grocery industry.

1 in 8 North Carolina residents receive SNAP—in 2015, that meant keeping 338,000 North Carolinians out of poverty. Still, 17% of people in the state who are eligible for SNAP are not enrolled.⁸

Views from North Carolina:

When asked about what would make it easier to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables where you live, respondents from across North Carolina said that affordability of produce was one of their top concerns.

“I am on a fixed income. I want fresh, healthy food. The prices go up, but my income does not. I must make choices to make the money last the month. My spouse has cancer, so healthy food is a priority.”

—Survey Respondent, North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Survey, Fall 2018

Success Stories

Olivares Market, Philadelphia, PA: Olivares Food Market, a corner store in South Philadelphia, has led the way in Philadelphia’s produce incentive work. In 2013, Olivares participated in a “Fresh Corner [store]” intervention, which included receiving a produce kiosk and store interior and façade improvements. Olivares currently participates in both The Heart Smarts program starting in 2013 and the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program starting in 2017. Heart Smarts brings nutrition education, health care (blood pressure screenings), social services and Heart Bucks (a healthy food coupon incentive) to the corner store, while FINI supports produce purchases for SNAP participants. With FINI at Olivares, SNAP recipients earn a \$1 coupon for every \$2 spent on fruits and vegetables. As a result, there was a 175% increase in produce items sold from 2016 to 2017. Success is attributed in large part to the store owners who educate their SNAP customers at point of purchase about the various incentive programs.

Michigan: Fair Food Network is a national nonprofit headquartered in Michigan that has been a pioneer in the field of healthy food incentives. In 2009, it started the Double Up program, which provides a one-to-one match for the value of healthy products purchased using SNAP benefits at farmers markets. In 2013, Fair Food Network received permission from the USDA to pilot the Double Up Grocery Project, using incentives in three grocery stores in Detroit. The pilot successfully promoted healthy, Michigan-grown products in grocery stores and it served as a case study that led the 2014 Farm Bill to include support for SNAP incentive programs at grocery stores as part of its Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program. Similar incentive models could be used to benefit both consumers and retailers throughout North Carolina.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Transportation

Develop affordable and efficient transportation services for rural and urban neighborhoods without convenient access to healthy food retail venues. Support innovations such as e-commerce solutions, mobile markets and grocery delivery in addition to connecting existing transit lines with healthy food access venues.

In rural and urban areas across North Carolina, access to healthy food is often limited by a lack of access to public transportation particularly when residents don't own cars. Safe Routes to Healthy Food, a subgroup of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership, shows that increasing safe transportation options to healthy food retail venues increases residents' access to healthy food:

"Low-income people and people of color in urban areas face the most dangerous street conditions and often lack bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, resulting in high rates of injury and fatality.⁹ In rural places, 1.6 million people do not have cars, and so multimodal transportation options are sorely needed to reach healthy food stores."^{10,11}

Views from North Carolina: Nearly 1 in 4 survey respondents said that it is not easy to buy fresh fruits and vegetables in their neighborhoods, with people from across the state, and especially in rural areas, noting transportation as a barrier to accessing healthy food nearby.

"Many people have to rely on a car to get anywhere, and if they don't have access to a car, they are reliant on canned goods for much of their food access. Fresh foods are not really an option."

"Better accessibility through public transportation and better bike and pedestrian facilities would make it easier and healthier for everyone."

"I live in a small rural town. There is no public transportation here. If you have a vehicle, there is a local grocery store and a Walmart fairly close to town, but if you have to walk or ride a bike, it can take hours to get to the store and back. There are places in town that sell some nonperishables, but reliable public transportation not only makes healthy food accessible, but makes more jobs available for people without vehicles so they can then afford more fresh foods."

—Survey Respondents, North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Survey, Fall 2018

Success Stories

North Carolina: Siler City better connected its residents to healthy food outlets through their pedestrian plan. By undertaking a review and assessment of key walkable routes to the location of nine major grocery stores in the area, as well as incorporating important community feedback on accessibility, the City was able to create a master plan that connects 21 neighborhoods in the City to the nine grocery outlets. The plan will improve the safety and convenient walkability to healthy food for residents through such things as sidewalk improvements, crosswalks, curb ramps and greenway trails, with anticipated completion by 2022. Once completed, the city will go from six complete walkable connections to healthy food retail to 189.¹²

Tennessee: In Nashville, the Metropolitan Planning Organization's 25-year Regional Transportation Plan included a staff analysis of how roadways in the Nashville area can better connect residents to food retailers. The analysis used maps to identify low-income, minority and predominantly elderly neighborhoods that would benefit from public transportation routes that provide better access to food retailers. The Metropolitan Planning Organization used the analysis of food environments and community populations when ranking and funding transportation projects as one part of a comprehensive approach to promote the health and wellness of residents in the Nashville area.



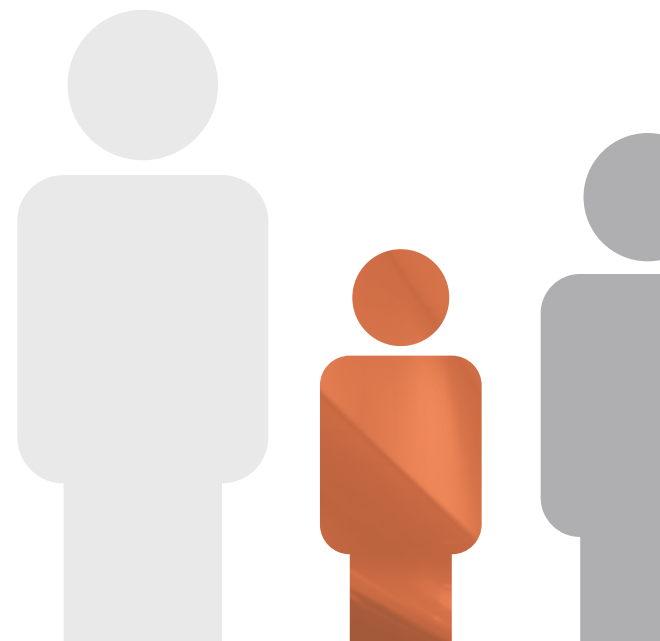
RECOMMENDATION 5: Workforce Development

Create new and expand existing training programs, including on-the-job training, to create career paths for community residents and to ensure there is a well-trained workforce for healthy food retail venues. Prioritize partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), community colleges and other post-secondary institutions.

Many healthy food retailers cite the lack of an available workforce as a barrier to healthy food retail development.

They often struggle to find employees with adequate job training that are “work ready” or that have needed specialized skills such as produce and meat handling. Existing store owners may also lack the management skills to grow and adapt their businesses and ensure that their stores do not close and leave a community underserved. With few educational barriers to entry, the grocery industry is uniquely poised to provide jobs that are entryways to career paths.

Partnerships between the grocery industry, state and local government and groups such as HBCUs, community colleges, vocational schools, local workforce investment boards and nonprofit organizations could support workforce development programs that are better coordinated and targeted for the food retail sector. It is critical that these training programs include on-the-job training, which is invaluable in developing a strong workforce in the grocery industry. On-the-job training programs to educate the public on opportunities for careers in the grocery industry would help to professionalize the field and ensure a stable, quality workforce and skilled management for grocery stores. At the same time, drawing grocery employees from surrounding neighborhoods would strengthen local economies and increase local buying power for healthy, fresh food.



Success Story

Cleveland, Ohio: Cleveland: In Cleveland’s University Circle area, University Hospitals partnered with Towards Employment and Neighborhood Connections, with support from The Cleveland Foundation, to create Step Up to University Hospitals, a workforce initiative to equip local residents with the skills, networks and support they need to begin successful careers while supporting local anchor institutions.

University Hospitals shared information about their job requirements and hiring process, and Towards Employment used that information to create a customized curriculum to train successful candidates. Neighborhood Connections helped with outreach and recruitment, and to date, the program has led to the hiring of 41 neighborhood residents with average wages of over \$10 per hour and enhanced efficiency for University Hospitals due to a significantly reduced

interview-to-hire ratio. With ongoing coaching support provided to new participants for their first six months of employment, the program has resulted in an above-average retention rate of 75%. The program is considering expanding and also replicating its model in other neighborhoods and industries. This type of program could be tailored to the needs of grocers.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Nutrition Education

Increase funding for programs that promote healthy eating and make it easier for shoppers to select and purchase healthy foods.

Lack of access to nutritious, affordable foods, coupled with a lack of information on how to make healthier decisions, is a major contributor to obesity, diabetes and other diet-related diseases. National research has shown that many shoppers would welcome guidance on choosing and preparing foods to help them stay healthy. One report found that 66% of grocery shoppers are looking for ways to improve their health and wellness, and that shoppers are receptive to services to help them make healthy food choices and manage health concerns.¹³

Hands-on education, particularly at the point of access, can help customers make healthier decisions while supporting local grocers and food retail outlets. Physical store environment can play a large role in encouraging shoppers to make healthy choices, and many grocers 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. Together, these groups can provide relevant research and education models to support these efforts and pilot innovative marketing and nutrition education initiatives with local grocery operators.

Views from North Carolina:

"Education on healthy food options could teach individuals how to prepare and properly portion foods and save."

"More affordable [produce] and education are key to helping people understand lifestyle habits."

—Survey Respondents, North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Survey, Fall 2018

Resource

Supermarket Strategies to Encourage Healthy Eating: This toolkit provides resources for supermarket-based strategies to encourage healthy eating, including in-store marketing, nutrition education, tasting events, supermarket tours, community events and nutrition classes, and outreach to the Food Stamps/SNAP population. www.thefoodtrust.org/food-access/publications

Success Story

New York: The Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF), a Community Development Financial Institution, has worked extensively with its partners Goldman Sachs and The Food Trust to promote healthy food options in supermarkets and grocery stores in New York.

Supermarket Strategies to Encourage Healthy Eating is a project designed to help food retailers support the health and well-being of New Yorkers by employing a variety of tools and strategies—including store tours, nutrition education seminars and materials, taste test events and health screenings—to change

food environments and incentivize consumers to make healthy choices in their stores. The project's in-store marketing campaign provides consumers with relevant resources and information about healthy food options and makes those options more appealing.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Existing Programs and Resources

Leverage and coordinate existing resources that support healthy food access and actively market them to communities, healthy food venues and other relevant partners across the state, including churches, schools and healthcare facilities.

Grocers and other healthy food retailers, as well as community partners such as schools and churches, are often unaware of existing state and local resources and how to access them. **Making existing incentives and other funding resources more readily available and accessible to healthy food retailers and community partners can support the development of healthy food retail venues in under-resourced communities.** Cities and states across the country have successfully used existing incentive programs to help attract grocery stores and other healthy food retailers to communities that need them. Existing programs and resources should work in tandem with new efforts in order to maximize healthy food retail options in rural and urban under-resourced areas across the state. For example, existing programs can augment the impact of a state investment in a public-private healthy food financing fund (as described in Recommendation 1).

Success Stories

Simon's Supermarket, Euclid, Ohio: In 2012, a Health Impact Assessment that included surveys and focus groups revealed that residents strongly wanted a grocery store in the neighborhood. Simon's Supermarket is a 27,000-square-foot full-service supermarket was able to fill that need with critical funding support from both new and existing resources. The state's new Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), the Healthy Food For Ohio program, provided funding for in-store construction and equipment costs, and the City of Euclid helped to fund external renovations to the store and parking lot through its HUD-funded Storefront Renovation Program. The store is getting further support through the Cuyahoga County Board of Health's Creating Healthy Communities team which is helping with community engagement and marketing, and there has been strong resident participation through community listening sessions and tours. About a fourth of area households have incomes below the poverty line and lack access to a private vehicle. The new store provides fresh, affordable and nutritious food and approximately 60 jobs for local residents.

Kentucky: In Louisville, the city used multiple existing funding sources to bring a grocery store to the DuValle neighborhood, a key priority in the city's redevelopment plan. The \$4.4 million project was supported by CDBG-R (stimulus) funds, city loans and New Markets Tax Credit equity commitments by local banks. This funding allowed an independently operated grocery store, First Choice Market, to open in 2012, creating more than 150 construction jobs and 40 permanent jobs and bringing fresh fruits and vegetables to a neighborhood that had been without a full-service supermarket for over a decade.



RECOMMENDATION 8: Continued Collaboration to Support Recommendation Implementation

Continue to collaborate with members of the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force to guide the equitable implementation of these recommendations.

The ongoing leadership and collaboration from the grocery industry and the public, philanthropic and civic sectors is crucial for increasing access to healthy food in urban and rural communities across the state of North Carolina. The complementary strengths of the public and private sectors should continue to guide the implementation of these recommendations, and opportunities to connect food access work to other aligned priorities and initiatives in North Carolina should be lifted up and implemented.

“This is not about just providing food; it’s about teaching people that food can be ‘medicine’ that improves their lives, and then helping them discover new ways to prepare the fresh produce. This is one of the best legacies we can leave in our community.”

— ARDIS CREWS, FOUNDER,
GREEN RURAL REDEVELOPMENT
ORGANIZATION



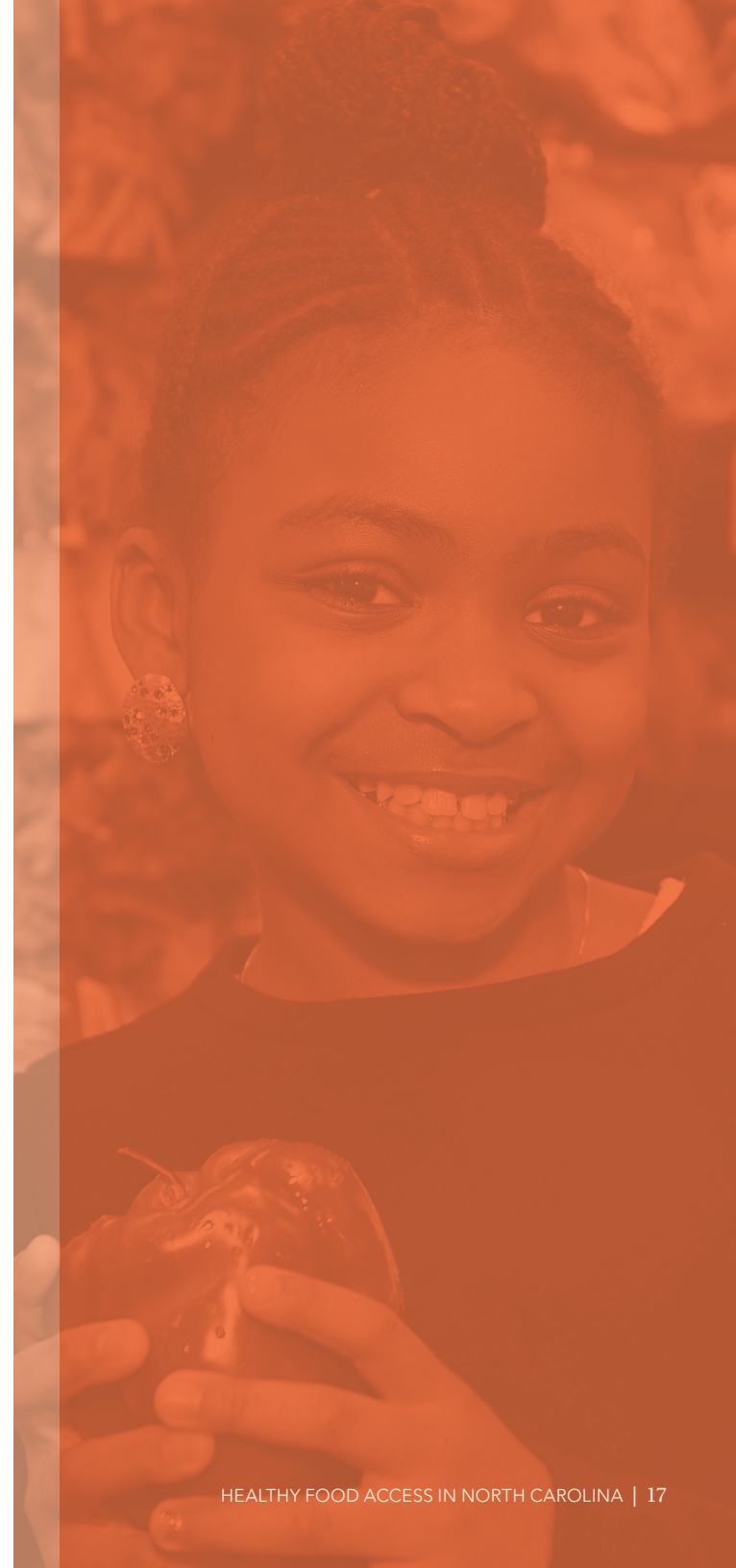
CONCLUSION

Providing better access to **healthy, affordable food** is an important strategy to promote equity, improve public health and stimulate local economies. Having more healthy food retail venues that sell nutritious options in underserved areas will ensure that residents of North Carolina can purchase healthy food for themselves and their families. **Efforts to improve food access in the state will create needed jobs and economic opportunity for North Carolinians and help revitalize struggling neighborhoods.**

The recommendations developed by the North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force are achievable steps toward creating healthier communities in North Carolina. By working together, we can ensure that all children in North Carolina grow up with the resources they need to live healthy lives.

The North Carolina Healthy Food Retail Task Force encourages state and local leaders to expedite the implementation of these recommendations. **The result will be economic development, strong communities and better health for the people of North Carolina.**

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The North Carolina Alliance for Health

The North Carolina Alliance for Health (NCAH) is an independent, nonpartisan, statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that convenes and mobilizes partners to advance equitable health policies that promote wellness and prevent obesity and tobacco use. For more than 15 years, NCAH has worked to ensure all North Carolinians will live healthier lives, protected by strong health policies that prevent chronic disease. For more information about NCAH, visit ncallianceforhealth.org.



The Food Trust

Ensuring That Everyone Has Access To Affordable, Nutritious Food

The Food Trust's mission is to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food and information to make healthy decisions. Working with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers, we have developed a comprehensive approach to improved food access that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable healthy food. To learn more, visit thefoodtrust.org.



Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation with the mission of improving the health and well-being of North Carolinians. Since its founding in 2000, the Blue Cross NC Foundation has invested more than \$133 million in North Carolina communities through more than 995 grants. In our grantmaking, we strive to address the key drivers of health, and we take a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community. In addition, we work closely with our grantees, and other nonprofits, to support their growth through capacity building, training and leadership development opportunities. More information is available at bcbsncfoundation.org.



Endnotes

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