Improving access to healthy foods in underserved communities: The role of corner stores

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Background: Why do corner stores matter?

Policy action influencing corner store offerings

“Healthy Corner Store” programming

Working at the national vs. local level
Who informs whom?

Food access across the US

• All Americans do not have equal access to healthy food.
• There are systematic disparities in healthy food availability and sourcing by race/ethnicity and income.

Small, urban corner stores:
Important food sources, particularly in low-income, racially diverse neighborhoods

Healthy Corner Store Working Group
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Healthy Eating Research
Healthy food in small urban food stores
Comparing four urban areas (2008)

- Healthy foods and beverages (including snack foods and staple items) were not available in a number of stores and selection was extremely limited.
- Significant variability by store size and geography.

Are healthier foods available?
Gebauer and Laska. Journal of Urban Health, 2011. (Twin Cities data only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthy food availability score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single aisle: n=45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 aisles: n=55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6+ aisles: n=8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Small stores need the most help
stocking healthy foods & beverages

Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program
A program of the Minneapolis Health Department

- Phase 1: 2010-11 (n=9)
  - Supported owners in making fresh produce visible and attractive
- Phase 2: 2012-13 (n=30)
  - Expanded reach, partnering with CBOs
- Phase 3: Beginning now
  - Intensive effort on model stores (n=10) coupled with larger dissemination (n=60)

Stages of the program
1. Recruitment & assessment.

http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/living/new%20cornerstores
Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.

Merchandizing and displays to make healthy food visible and attractive.

Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.

In-store advertising and promotion

Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.

Cross merchandizing

Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.

Opportunities for impulse purchasing

Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.

Identifying new sources for distribution and delivery
Stages of the program

1. Recruitment & assessment.
2. Store enhancement.
3. Community engagement.

Sub-study evaluation results

- Objective POS data collection.

Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program

Fruit and Vegetable Sales

Sub-study evaluation results

- Objective POS data and customer intercept surveys

- Fresh fruit and vegetable sales ↑155% in 5 intervention stores vs. ↓22% in 2 control stores (p=0.06).
  - Statistically significant increases also in fruit and vegetable transactions and redemption of WIC produce vouchers (p<0.05).
- More favorable perception of neighborhood fruit and vegetable availability among customers in the intervention stores (p=0.01).

Lessons Learned From Small Store Programs to Increase Healthy Food Access

A case study analysis.

What challenges affect feasibility, acceptability and success of small store interventions?

Lessons learned: Four US cities

1. Baltimore, MD

2. Minneapolis, MN
   - Focusing on produce availability. Led by the Minneapolis Health Department.

3. Burlington, NC
   - NIH-funded RCT in small-to-medium sized Latino grocery stores. Now being replicated in CA.

4. Philadelphia, PA
   - Led by The Food Trust’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative. Expanded to 640+ stores in 2010.
**Key themes: Preparation**

- Allot sufficient time to build a relationship with the store owners/manager.
- Match the cultural and linguistic characteristics of store owners.

**Establishing relationships with owners**

- Recognize complexity of the store owner and customer relationship.
- Consider the store owners’ perspective carefully when designing the program.

**Recognizing existing relationships**

- Begin with formative work. Consider starting slow and building over time.
- Improve both supply and demand.

**Deciding on intervention approaches**

- Provide store owners/managers with assistance to establish an adequate supply of healthy items.

**Getting stores to stock healthier foods**

- Measuring improved product availability and marketing is feasible.
- Obtaining reliable, accurate store sales data and/or measuring changes in customer diet is challenging.

**Evaluating process & effectiveness**

- Recognize complexity of the store owner and customer relationship.
- Consider the store owners’ perspective carefully when designing the program.

**Key themes: Implementation**

**Key themes: Future planning**

- Maintaining changes through continued reinforcement of activities.
- Encourage store owners/managers to adopt infrastructure or systems-based changes when feasible.

**Maintaining changes in stores**

- Reaching academic, policy and food store audiences is key for dissemination.
- Sustainability is challenging.

**Dissemination & sustainability**

**Programs vs. policies**

Building a foundation for sustainability

**Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance**

The history: 2008-present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread, cereal &amp; grains</td>
<td>≥3 varieties of bread or cereal, ≥2 fresh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy &amp; substitutes</td>
<td>≥3 varieties, ≥2 fresh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits &amp; vegetables</td>
<td>≥5 varieties of fresh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance

Examples of ordinance requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread, cereal &amp;</td>
<td>≥3 varieties of bread or cereal, ≥2 fresh</td>
<td>12 containers of WG cereal in ≥6 varieties AND 5# of WGs in ≥3 varieties (including bread, tortillas, rice).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy &amp; substitutes</td>
<td>≥3 varieties, ≥2 fresh.</td>
<td>5 gallons of unsweetened cow’s milk in ≥2 varieties: skim, 1%, 2%, plain soy or other plain milk alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits &amp; vegetables</td>
<td>≥5 varieties of fresh.</td>
<td>30# of ≥7 varieties, with ≥5 varieties fresh.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2008: Also includes meat, fish or vegetable proteins.

Proposed: Also includes meats, fish or vegetable proteins (expanded); eggs; canned beans; dried peas; beans, lentils; 100% juice.

Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance

Anticipated timeline for ordinance revisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Summer '14</th>
<th>Oct '14</th>
<th>Nov '14</th>
<th>Winter/Spring '15</th>
<th>April '15</th>
<th>April '16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mpls Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Public hearing and review by City Council</td>
<td>Mpls City Council</td>
<td>Enforcement of revised ordinance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HECE sub-committee.</td>
<td>expected to have a full council vote on the revision.</td>
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<td>listening sessions</td>
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<td>with industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>representatives.</td>
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Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance

Anticipated timeline for evaluation: The STORE Study

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Spring/Summer '14</th>
<th>Fall '14</th>
<th>April '15</th>
<th>Summer/Fall '15</th>
<th>Spring '16</th>
<th>Spring '17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-baseline</td>
<td>Revised policy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>assessment: store</td>
<td>becomes effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>audits, operator</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interviews, customer</td>
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<tr>
<td>intercept surveys.</td>
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Can this be informed by federal policy?

The WIC Program (2009)

I think it’s positive changes ... our grocery sales improve and are gaining up. Usually the juice are selling more because they have more flavors, so the people can choose....

(Philadelphia, P25)

Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance

What was the retailers’ perspective?

Mixed methods study of small stores (n=52) in 8 cities.

• Many store owners reported that their sales of healthy foods increased 1 year after the federal policy change.
  – 75% reported fresh fruit sales increased.
  – 69% reported fresh vegetable sales increased.
  – 89% reported whole grain-rich bread sales increased.

What was the retailers’ perspective?

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• Many store owners reported that their sales of healthy foods increased 1 year after the federal policy change.
  – 75% reported fresh fruit sales increased.
  – 69% reported fresh vegetable sales increased.
  – 89% reported whole grain-rich bread sales increased.

PI: M. Laska. R01 pending (NIDDK).


Oh, everybody happy! [Laughter] Like people been comin’ in and it’s more easy for them. They don’t have to go too far to get what they need.

(Philadelphia, P25)

Upcoming issue: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP policy
Minimum stocking requirements for retailers
• Current: Must offer 3 varieties across 4 staple food categories, with perishable foods in 2 categories.
  – Meat, poultry or fish
  – Vegetables or fruits
  – Bread or cereal
  – Dairy
• In the 2014 Farm Bill: 7 items across 4 categories; perishable items in 3 categories.
  • USDA can implement other standards around healthy food.

A snapshot of SNAP retailers
Data have been submitted for publication.

Limited healthy food availability
Data have been submitted for publication.

Stay tuned
• USDA is undergoing rulemaking soon for the changes to the SNAP retailer minimum stocking requirements.
  — Public comment on the rule-making expected to be open before the end of 2014.
• USDA also considering a range of “nudging” strategies in food stores to improve the dietary quality of SNAP purchases.

In summary
• Corner stores are important parts of food environments.
• Offer many opportunities and challenges increasing healthy food availability.
• Important to consider systems-based policy approaches to complement programmatic efforts.
**In summary**

- There can be numerous benefits to a successful government-university partnership.
- Local policies and programming can be used to inform national initiatives in important ways, and vice versa.

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