

Meet Me in St. Louis (County?)



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Key Food Access Issues

- **Accessibility:** Can you get to food sources?
- **Availability:** If you can get there, is healthy food available?
- **Affordability:** If you can get there and it's available, is it affordable?
- **Know how:** If you can get there, it's available and affordable, do you know how to cook with it?





View of Old North St. Louis Building Stock, 1950s and 2000

The Usual Suspects

- Food swamps
- Food deserts
- Low supermarket access areas
- Grocery gaps



Does it really matter what it's called?



St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project

- Why corner stores?
- It's basic: supply and demand
 - Where is the current supply of food?
 - Where is the current supply of healthy food?
 - Is there really demand for healthy food?
 - But...what if we're creating a solution without a problem?
- Key partners:
 - City of St. Louis Department of Health
 - St. Louis Development Corporation
 - University of Missouri Extension
 - Community Development
 - Small Business Development
 - Nutrition Education

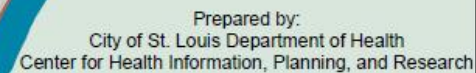


Store & Neighborhood Selection Process

- Call for nominations
 - Store AND community partner = supply AND demand
- Neighborhood support
 - Who is the nominating organization? Are there other health-related initiatives taking place? Is there capacity to engage youth? Is there aldermanic support?
- Store capacity
 - Has the store tried to sell healthy items before? What worked? What didn't? Does the store owner have the capital to purchase healthy food? Is there an existing relationship with the neighborhood?

Store & Neighborhood Selection Process

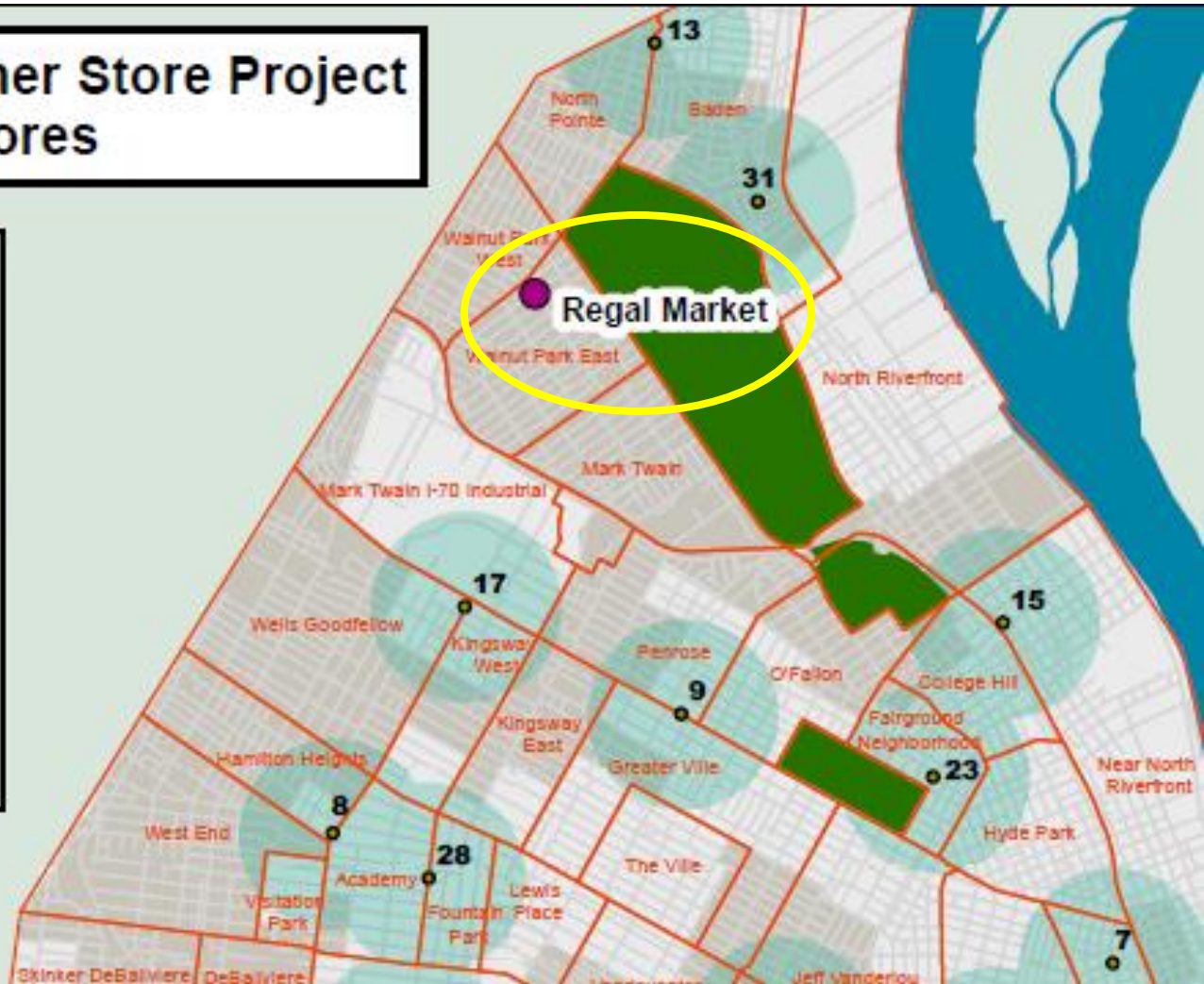
- Data
 - Income
 - Vehicle ownership
 - Rates of diet-related diseases
 - Proximity to nearest supermarket (1/2 mile radius from each supermarket)
 - Geographic barriers to accessing nearest supermarket
 - Location of nominated corner store
 - Is it on a busy street? Is it easily accessible by public transportation?
 - Estimated grocery retail demand
 - Estimated grocery retail leakage – how much \$\$ is being spent outside of the neighborhood



St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project 2012 Program Year Stores

Legend

- Corner Stores
- Supermarkets
- .5 Mile Supermarket Radius
- City neighborhoods
- TRF Supermarket Access Study
- Not LSA
- LSA



Store & Neighborhood Profile:

Regal Meat Market & Walnut Park East

- Community partner: Walbridge Public Elementary School
- Store: Regal Meat Market
 - Same owner for the last 15 years
 - Approximately 1,900 sq. ft.
- Data profile:
 - Health statistics – 4th quartile (highest rates of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, etc.)
 - Low car ownership rate – 25-40% households with no vehicle access
 - Estimated total grocery retail demand (2011) - \$700,000
 - Estimated grocery retail leakage (2011) = \$700,000
 - Leakage rate = 100%

Corner Stores as Cornerstones

- One-on-one technical assistance
 - Mentor (grocery professional)
 - Small business development specialist
- Store layout, merchandizing, pricing, and connecting to vendors
- Resource Guidebook: food safety, handling, and storage
- Stores are provided limited supplies
- Façade improvements when available



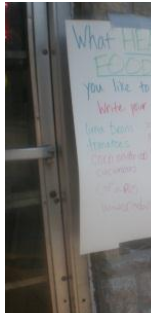


Before



After

Corner Stores as Cornerstones

- What data is most useful to convince a store owner to participate?
 - Estimated grocery demand
 - Estimated grocery dollar leakage
 - Number of food stamp and WIC clients in the area
 - He's signed the MOU...now what?
 - % of inventory that is "healthy" with the goal of increasing by 5% after one year (this is measured at start, 6 months, 12 months)
 - "What healthy items would you like to buy here?"
 - Customer purchasing behaviors/trends
 - Customer surveys
 - Active engagement with community partner
- 



Corner Stores as Cornerstones

- Challenges
 - It's a big risk
 - Prices need to be competitive
 - Store owner's perception of what customers really want...Have you ever really asked?
 - Store owner's perception of the neighborhood
 - Will never be the one-stop shop for all grocery and household goods. But corner stores can fill the gap.



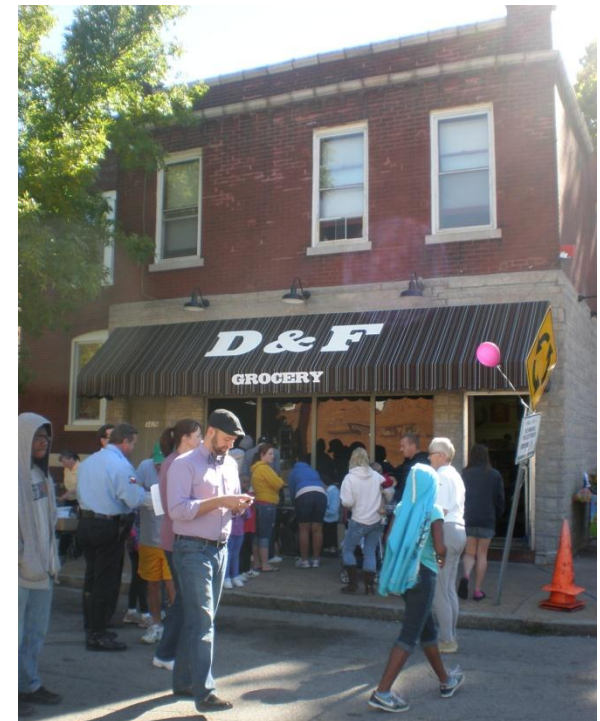
Creating Demand through Community Development

- Community Partners
 - Neighborhood association
 - Public school
 - Nonprofit
- Capacity building
- Build relationship with store owners
- Grant resources to organize community education and outreach activities
- Challenges
 - Changing neighborhood perceptions of the store from a problem to a community asset
 - Marketing and promoting the store as more than just a liquor store



Creating Demand through Community Development

- Challenges
 - May need to address consumer demand factors (i.e., inadequate knowledge of nutritional benefits of certain foods) before increasing supply – start with a health promotion campaign
 - Community-driven outreach is a must!
 - Building a customer base:
 - Attracting new customers
 - Getting people to come back if they've had a bad experience



Improving Health through Nutrition Education

- In-store education
 - Tastings
 - Corner store recipes
 - Point-of-decision prompts
- In the community
 - Variety of classes specific to the needs and wants of the neighborhood
 - Cooking demonstrations at neighborhood events



St. Louis Healthy Corner Store Project

- Data Challenges
 - Our project is *very* localized
 - Zip code level data is too big
- My research wish list
 - Impact on crime
 - Retention of small food businesses
- Nagging questions
 - Did we create a solution without a problem?
 - Does providing access really solve a problem?
 - What happens when we're "finished"?



Contact Information

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