

A Business Plan for the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program

PREPARED BY THE VIRGINIA TECH OFFICE OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mount Rogers Health District proposes a Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program to encourage increased consumption of healthier food at participating convenience stores in the Twin Counties region, comprising Carroll and Grayson Counties and the City of Galax. The Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development conducted a mapping analysis, stakeholder interviews, and a national review of best practices to create the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Store Initiative business plan. The analysis revealed that most of the region does not suffer from a lack of physical access to healthier foods as defined by the USDA. Rather, the region lacks sufficient demand for healthy foods, spurred by limited knowledge of healthier food items and their pricing as well as a comfortable tendency towards well-known snack food items.

The goal of the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Store Initiative therefore is to “Make Healthy Foods Fun, Easy and Accessible” for convenience store customers. To achieve this goal, Mount Rogers will support participating convenience stores in their efforts to stock and sell healthier food items through reorganization and promotion of store products. This business plan hinges on the successful placement and promotion of healthier foods that may lead to behavioral changes in customer purchasing habits. To begin, Mount Rogers will work with two Pilot Stores: Rixey’s Market in Independence, VA and the Hillsville Citgo Family Mart in Hillsville, VA. Below is a monthly synopsis of the eight-month program.



Success of this Initiative will be measured by active participation by pilot stores and increased healthier foods sales.

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INTRODUCTION

As part of a project to improve nutrition and chronic disease in the Twin Counties region, which comprises Carroll and Grayson Counties as well as the City of Galax, The Mount Rogers Health District (MRHD) commissioned the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development (OED) to develop a business plan for their Healthier Corner Stores Initiative. This plan outlines recommended steps for an eight month pilot program based on data from stakeholder interviews, convenience store surveys, a best management case study review, and a mapping analysis.

To determine best practices, OED looked to case studies and available literature that provided a clear picture of how Healthy Corner Stores Initiatives across the US successfully addressed food deserts. Once a basic framework was established, OED gathered local demographic and industry data, coupled with a mapping analysis, to understand and identify food deserts within the Twin Counties region. Finally, OED reached out to convenience store owners to achieve three main objectives:

1. Inventory healthy options already offered at the region's convenience stores
2. Determine barriers/obstacles to selling healthy food options
3. Educate storeowners about the Initiative and elicit participation for the pilot program.

OED found that a lack of education and poor health behavior among the Twin County region's residents are the main barriers to healthier lifestyles, specifically when making purchases at convenience stores. Mapping analysis showed that most of the region does not suffer from a lack of physical access to healthier food options, so OED focused on developing strategies for marketing and promoting healthier food choices in an effort to change the purchasing behavior of convenience store patrons.

The following provides an overview of the region and its access to healthy foods, a synopsis of feedback from convenience stores and other stakeholders in the region, a review of best practices, and finally the resulting business plan. The business plan is a model for how the Twin Counties region may best approach a Healthy Corner Stores Initiative, which can be adapted as the program progresses.

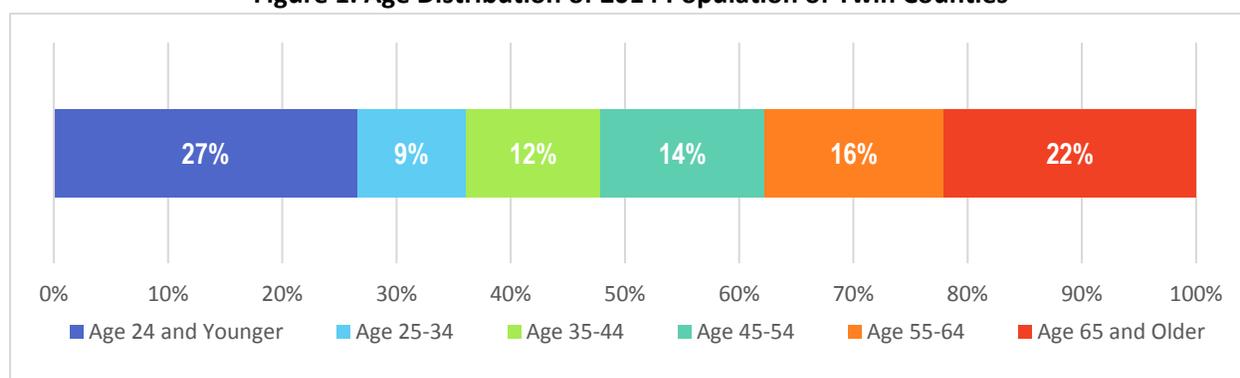
REGIONAL OVERVIEW

The Twin Counties region boasts a population of 51,509 residents according to 2014 data with a fairly even split between males and females. Between 2009 and 2014, the region’s population declined slightly, by 1,153 or 2% (Table 1).

Table 1. Twin Counties Population (2014)¹	
Total Population (2014)	51,509
Males	26,212
Females	25,297
Population Change (2009 – 2014)	-1,153 (-2%)

As Figure 1 shows, population distribution in the region is concentrated among two cohorts: ages 24 and younger and ages 65 and older. The remaining 51% of the population is between the ages of 25 and 64.

Figure 1. Age Distribution of 2014 Population of Twin Counties



Education attainment in the Twin Counties differs from the commonwealth at large. Forty-two percent of Twin Counties’ residents ages 25 and over have received some college education or more compared to 63% of Virginia’s 25 years and older population (Table 2).

Education Level	Population	% of Population	% of VA Population
Less Than 9th Grade	4,258	9%	5%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	4,945	13%	7%
High School Diploma	13,782	36%	25%
Some College	6,662	20%	20%
Associate's Degree	3,406	10%	7%
Bachelor's Degree	3,343	9%	21%
Graduate Degree and Higher	1,629	3%	15%
Total	38,025		

¹ US Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (S0101).

² US Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (S1501).

The Twin Counties region has six percent or more households on food stamps, snap benefits and under the poverty line than Virginia as a whole. The region’s counties and city have greater than ten percent more female run households under the poverty line. The City of Galax, with about half the population of its neighbors, has proportionally more households and families meeting these poverty indicators. The median family income for this entire region does not exceed 80% of Virginia’s median family income, designating the region as low income. A breakdown of the Twin Counties region’s household income, SNAP recipients, and poverty measures is included in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Household Characteristics of Twin Counties (2014)³						
	Carroll County		Grayson County		Galax City	
Median Family Income	\$42,914		\$38,438		\$45,640	
Households with Food Stamp/Snap Benefits	1,930	15.4%	1,259	18.8%	690	23.2%
Percentage of Families below the Poverty Line	14.5%		16.6%		19.8%	
Percentage of Families with Female Householders, No Husband Present below the Poverty Line in the past 12 months	34.6%		49.5%		50.8%	

In terms of health behavior indicators, the region’s three jurisdictions have an average rank of 99 out of 133 Virginia jurisdictions. These rankings are compiled by the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program, a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. The system was developed to build awareness around the different factors that determine community health, to identify opportunities for improvement at the local level, and to connect and empower local leaders with reliable data concerning their community’s health and vitality. This information can be accessed on their website:

<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>.

Measures that affect the “health behavior” ranking for a given jurisdiction include:

- Adult smoking: percentage of adults that are current smokers
- Adult obesity: percentage of adults that report a BMI of 30 or more
- Food environment index: index of factors that contribute to a healthy food environment, 0 (worse) to 10 (best)
- Physical inactivity: percentage of adults aged 20 and over reporting no leisure-time physical activity
- Access to exercise opportunities: percentage of population with adequate access, within three miles for rural census tracts, to locations for physical activity (i.e. parks or recreational facilities),
- Excessive drinking: percentage of adults reporting binge or heavy drinking
- Alcohol-impaired driving deaths: percentage of driving deaths with alcohol involvement
- Sexually transmitted infections: number of newly diagnosed chlamydia cases per 100,000 population
- Teen births: number of the births per 1,000 female population ages 15-19

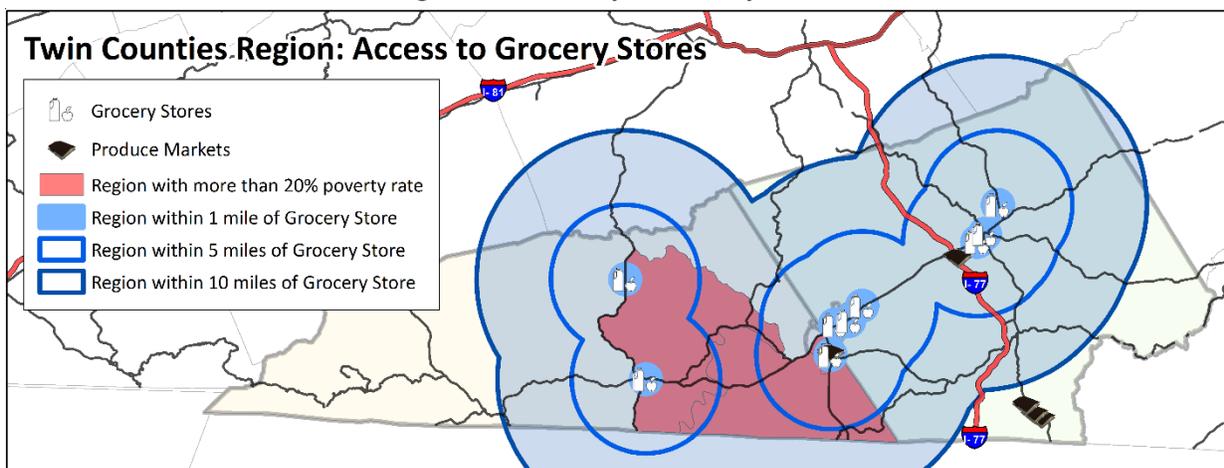
³ US Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (DP03)

For the purpose of this initiative, OED focused on the measures of adult obesity, food environment index, physical inactivity, and access to exercise opportunities for analysis. On average, the region has an obesity rate of 31% compared to 28% for Virginia. Twenty-eight percent of the region’s population report that they do not take part in any leisure-time physical activity, compared to the state average of 22%. Forty-four percent of the population in Grayson and Carroll County live within three miles of some type of park or recreational facility, compared to the state average of 81%. Ninety percent of Galax residents have adequate access to parks or recreation facilities.

Of particular interest in this analysis was the County Health Rankings’ food environment index measure for the region. The index is developed using two indicators: percentage of low income population (annual family income of less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty threshold for family size) that do not live within 10 miles of a grocery store and the percentage of the population that does not have access to a reliable healthy food source (food insecure), such as households that struggle to overcome cost barriers for a balanced diet. The Twin Counties have an average food environment index of 7.9 out of ten, which is only slightly lower than the state average of 8.3.

To understand better the extent to which households have access to healthier foods, OED mapped out grocery stores in the region with one, five and ten mile buffers (Figure 2). This map shows that although some areas of the region do lack access to healthy food products (i.e. grocery stores), a majority of the Twin Counties does enjoy adequate access to healthy foods according to United States Department of Agriculture criteria. The exception is the western portions of Grayson County (Whitetop, Troutdale, Mouth of Wilson) and border regions of Carroll County (Cana, Laurel Fork). The median family income of these regions also does not exceed 80% of Virginia’s median family income, meaning these areas meet the criteria to gain food desert status. It is important to note that Cana residents have multiple produce stands along route 52 that offer a wide variety of healthy snacks and produce. In an effort to reach populations not included in the grocery store five and ten mile buffers, OED targeted convenience stores in regions such as Cana, Laurel Fork, Troutdale, Mouth of Wilson, and Whitetop when conducting surveys (see Surveys and Interviews section below).

Figure 2. Proximity to Grocery Stores

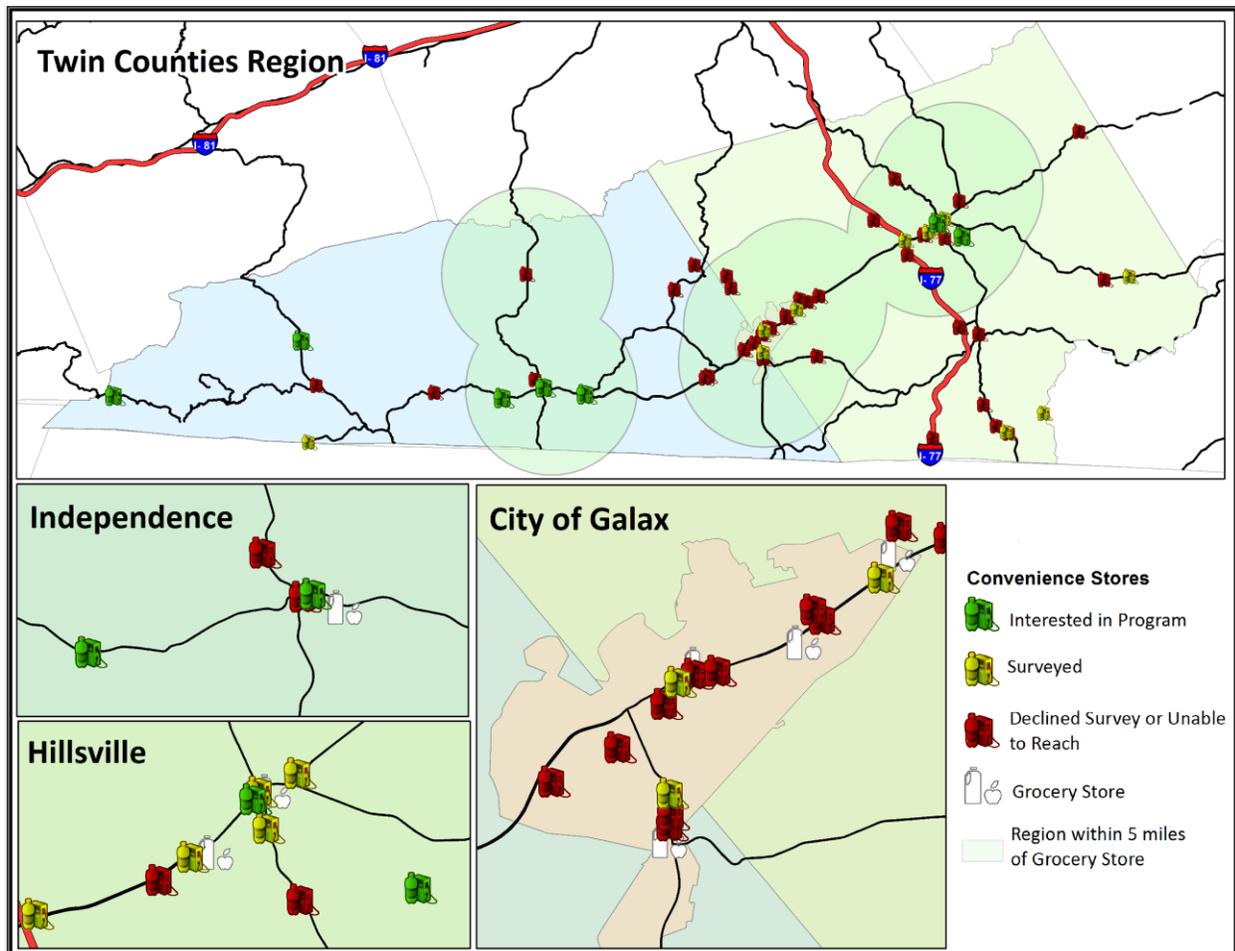


SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

OED conducted both over the phone and in-person surveys of convenience store owners and managers in Carroll County, Grayson County and the City of Galax as part of Mount Rogers Health District's Healthier Corner Stores in the Twin Counties project. OED used surveys to assess the region's geographic accessibility to healthy options at convenience stores, inventory healthy products currently sold at convenience stores, and recruit convenience stores for participation in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative pilot program.

Phone interviews were conducted on September 10, 11 and 14 and on November 13 and 16, 2015. In-person surveys and observations were conducted on October 16, 2015. In total 21 surveys were conducted - 13 over the phone and eight in-person. Respondents were asked approximately 15 questions to gauge the availability and perceptions of healthy foods in corner stores in the area. Survey questions are in Appendix C and an inventory of stores surveyed is included in Appendix D. The map below provides a visual representation of the stores that were surveyed and stores that declined a survey/interview or were unable to be reached.

Figure 3. Convenience Store Locations and Replies to Survey



Most of the convenience stores visited in the region were ten or more years old, often under same family management. Many of these stores were located along or close to US Highways 52 and 58. They had similar store sizes and layouts. Store size typically ranged from 2,500-3,500 sq. ft. Stores usually had 2-4 aisles, with refrigeration units lining at least one wall. Each store had no more than two cash registers.

Stores described their customer demographic in various ways. About half said their clientele is of all socioeconomic levels, the other half said their customers are of lower to middle socioeconomic status, while two noted that their customers are mostly farmers. Most store managers and owners noted their customers as being individuals as opposed to families, while a handful of respondents primarily along US Highway 58 said they received many tourists, including families. Two stores attracted mostly students as they are located next to the schools: Cavalier Express on Floyd Pike and a BP located in front of the Crossroads Institute on US Highway 58. A few owners and managers interviewed pointed out that their younger customers were more likely to buy healthier foods such as granola bars, protein bars and bananas than older customers.

Most owners and managers interviewed observed that the top selling items at their store are soda, energy drinks, snacks (e.g. chips, peanuts and candy bars), and cigarettes. The most common fruits and produce carried are: bananas, apples, tomatoes, potatoes, onions and lettuce. When visiting these stores, OED observed that most convenience stores had the following healthy items in stock: nuts, seeds, granola bars, plain water and 100% juice. Seven out of eight convenience stores observed carried 2% or whole milk, five carried eggs, three carried fresh fruit (bananas or apples) and three carried fresh produce (tomatoes mostly). A few stores also had meat (lunch meat, etc.), V8 vegetable juice, drinkable yogurt, coconut water, oatmeal and dried fruit in stock. No stores interviewed offered organic food items. In three stores there were baskets or boxes of fresh fruit or produce at the front of the store, but for the most part the fresh, healthy foods were located in the back of the store.

When asked about access to healthier food options and barriers to access, stores explained that physical access to healthier options was not the problem for most of the Twin Counties region. Rather, the biggest barrier to buying healthy foods in the region is lack of demand, fueled by perceived notions of healthy foods and price. Convenience store customers do not view healthy food as "convenient". Store managers and owners argued that snack foods were characterized as easier to eat on-the-go than fresh fruit, produce, and healthier snack options. Moreover, customers are not fully aware of healthier options, and often tend to go to the foods with which they are familiar. Finally, healthier foods are more expensive or at least perceived as more expensive. Given these conditions, stores stated that it does not make economic sense for them to stock many of these items. Several cited more education about healthy foods as well as prominent displays and advertising for healthier food options could benefit this effort.

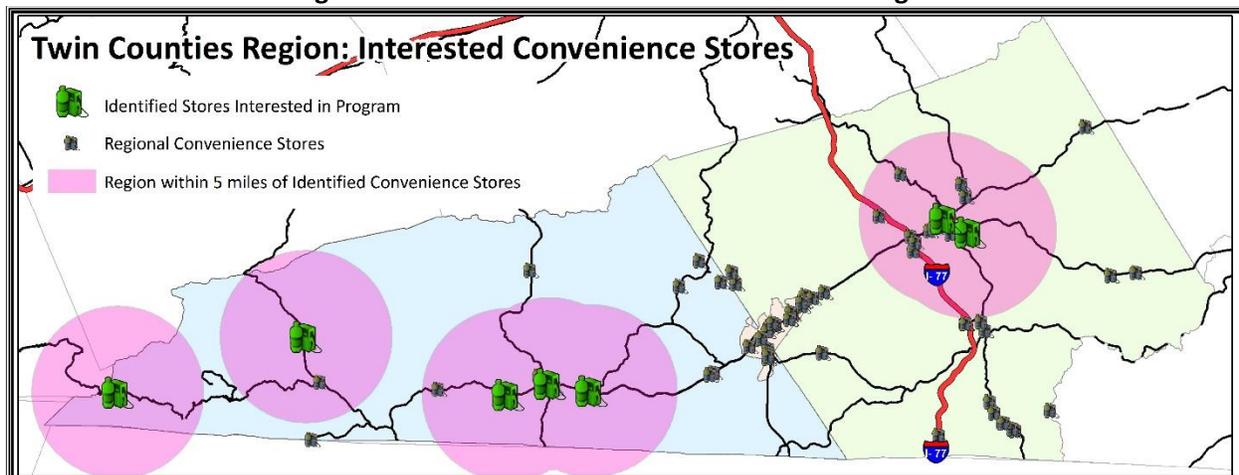
The majority also accept Electronic Benefit Transfers (EBT), but do not accept benefits from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. While not particularly relevant to this effort, it is important to note that, according to survey responses both over the phone and in-person, most convenience store have many customers who use EBT benefits to purchase items at their stores. Several owners/managers took issue with customers spending EBT on energy drinks and candy. OED observed this as possible justification for educating EBT recipients on the beneficial impacts of healthier purchases on their wallets and wellbeing.

Possible Pilot Stores

Seven stores, reaching approximately 25% of the region's population within a five-mile radius of each store, expressed some interest in participating in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative pilot program (Figure 3). Specific stores were targeted for participation due to geography. For example, Fox Creek General Store in Troutdale and Whitetop Food & Gas reside further than five miles from a full-service grocery store. Cavalier Express is near the Hillsville high school, and Cockerham's BP in Galax is located next to Crossroads Institute. Both stores serve a large percentage of younger regional customers, and should be targeted for recruitment into the pilot program. OED has not received consent or a stated interest from these two store owners at this point.

Those that expressed interest in participating in a pilot program also expressed a concern about initial investment costs, a need to "look at the numbers" and receive more details. Lastly, due to the number of respondents who noted they would need approval from corporate headquarters to run a pilot program, it may be beneficial for locally owned, non-chain convenience stores to be initial, or first priority targets.

Figure 4. Location of Stores Interested in Pilot Program



RECOMMENDATIONS: Use the list in Appendix D to reach out to convenience stores that showed some interest in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program. Mount Rogers has to work closely with stores to make participation as easy as possible, making clear what they will gain from the program. The program should focus on changing perceptions of convenience store customers:

- Cluster healthier food snacks together in a very obvious space in the store to show that healthy can also be convenient and "on-the-go"
- Continue to appeal to the younger demographic by showing what snacks provide great energy for hiking and biking in the Twin Counties region
- Show participating stores what they should consider as a healthy food option in their store so that they can pass this information on to their customers

HEALTHY CORNER STORE BEST PRACTICES

This section is a synopsis of key points taken from a review of Healthy Corner Store literature including how-to guides as well as a review of five programs. A summary of the five Healthy Corner Store programs can be found in Appendix B. Healthy Corner Store conversions have had mixed results despite corner and convenience stores being a \$680 billion dollar industry and an estimated 148,125 stores nationwide.⁴ There are many challenges that corner store conversions face, including competing with grocery stores, inexperience and lack of knowledge of handling produce, owner availability, owner turnover, and infrastructure challenges (i.e. lack of refrigeration).⁵ However, these conversions can work if business owners are active participants in the process and they are provided with the right assistance.⁶

Funding

Funding for Healthy Corner Store projects can be obtained from various sources including: private foundations, city funds, private donors, fundraising efforts, business improvement districts, neighborhood councils, and many other sources.⁷ Many corner store campaigns have received funding either at the state or federal level.

On the federal level, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are the primary providers of grants to healthy food initiatives in the nation. The Small Business Administration also provides financing for small businesses which could be used to provide funds for corner store owners to convert their stores.⁸ One example of a pilot corner store conversion program is Richmond's East End, which started out converting 13 stores in the area.⁹ Richmond's Healthy Corner Store Initiative was started with a grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and from the city budget.¹⁰

On the state level, Virginia Community Capital is a good place to begin the funding search. As a Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI), Virginia Community Capital (VCC) is devoted to providing local funding to "[expand] economic opportunity in low-income communities by providing

⁴Hagan, V. & Rubin, V. (2013). *Economic and Community Development Outcomes of Healthy Food Retail*. Retrieved from <http://www.policylink.org/find-resources/library/economic-and-community-development-outcomes-of-healthy-food-retail>

⁵Food Trust for the Healthy Corner Stores Network (2011). [Healthy Corner Stores As An Economic Development Strategy. Healthy Corner Stores Issue Brief, Winter 2011](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/winter2011issuebrief.original.pdf). Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/winter2011issuebrief.original.pdf; The Food Trust. (N.D.a). *Healthy Corner Store Initiative: Overview*. Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/healthy-corner-store-overview.original.pdf

⁶Hagan, V. & Rubin, V. (2013); The Food Trust. (N.D.a).

⁷ Market Makeovers. (2009c). *Tips for Building a Coalition*. Retrieved from <http://www.marketmakeovers.org/mmtv/before/partnerships/tips-for-building-a-coalition>

⁸ ChangeLab Solutions. (2007). *Economic Development & Redevelopment: A Toolkit on Land Use+Health, by Planning for Healthy Places at Public Health Law & Policy*. 49-53. Retrieved from <http://www.marketmakeovers.org/sites/default/files/Financing-EDR8.pdf>

⁹ Clinton Foundation, (N.D.); Smith, T. (2015, June 21). Your Health: Healthy Corner Store Initiative. *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Retrieved from http://www.richmond.com/life/health/article_c1b86490-d018-5aa7-8d0a-beb491230191.html

¹⁰ Smith, T. (2015)

access to financial products and services for local residents and businesses.”¹¹ VCC recently obtained a \$2,600,000 award from the U.S. Department of Treasury’s CDFI fund, of which \$1,000,000 will be devoted to healthy food expansion.¹² They have also launched a Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund which will devote \$11 million to “increase the capacity of urban corner stores to sell and market healthy items and foster the expansion and formation of food hubs, small and medium sized food enterprise, primarily located in rural communities.”¹³ Glade Green Grocer, a whole foods retailer and cooperative in Glade Springs, VA is an example of a successful recipient of a Fresh Food Loan who wished to expand access to healthy foods in the region. Virginia Community Capital has four offices across Virginia, the closest to the Twin Counties being in Christiansburg, VA. Another Virginia-based community development lender, Capital Impact Partners, located in Arlington, has provided over \$132 million in loans and grants to promote access to healthy foods around the country.¹⁴ For more information on funding opportunities and possible contacts, see Appendix A.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Upon successful completion of the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program, if Mount Rogers requires more funding to expand the program, OED suggests reaching out to Virginia Community Capital as a first step. Wayne Waldrop is the principle contact for this program: 804-793-0986 or wwaldrop@vccva.org.

Participants and Incentives

Corner store conversion programs will need to select which corner stores will participate in the program. It is recommended that a criteria for participation be developed, which can include: store size, number of aisles and cash registers, location, infrastructure, willingness to participate, and their consumer base.¹⁵ Many programs suggest using incentives to attract storeowners to the program, including: small business development resources, education, advertising and promotion, training in handling produce, welfare programs authorization aide (SNAP, WIC, etc.), façade and streetscape

¹¹ U.S. Department of Treasury Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. (N.D). *What are CDFI's?*: Retrieved from https://www.cdfifund.gov/Documents/CDFI_infographic_v08A.pdf

¹² Virginia Community Capital (2015, September 24). *VCC Receives \$2,600,000 Award to Help Virginia Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/index.php/news-item/vcc-receives-2600000-award-to-help-virginia-communities>; Virginia Community Capital (2015). *Contact Us*. Retrieved from <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/contact-us>.

¹³ Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.a.) *Policy Efforts and Impact: Virginia*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/policy-efforts-and-impacts/state-and-local/virginia>; Clinton Foundation. (N.D). Retrieved from *Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund*. <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative/commitments/virginia-fresh-food-loan-fund>.

¹⁴ Community-Wealth.org. (N.D.) *Capital Impact Partners (formerly NCB Capital Impact)*. Retrieved from <http://community-wealth.org/content/capital-impact-partners-formerly-ncb-capital-impact>; Capital Impact Partners. (2014). *Creating Access to Healthy Foods*. Retrieved from <http://www.capitalimpact.org/focus/healthy-foods/>.

¹⁵ Ibid; The Food Trust. (2012). *Philadelphia’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative: 2010-2012*. Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/hcsi-y2report-final.original.pdf; Martin, K. & Born, B. (2009). *A Toolkit for Community Organizers & Storeowners*. Retrieved from http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/Delridge_HCS_Toolkit.pdf.

improvements, and connections with government resources (including public health departments) and fresh food distributors.¹⁶ Incentives such as providing refrigeration units, shelving, and other infrastructure changes can also be provided, but this may require capital investment.¹⁷ The City of Philadelphia's Healthy Corner Store Initiative found that each conversion cost \$1,390 on average to provide "infrastructural changes such as shelving and small refrigeration units."¹⁸ One solution is to use a tiered incentive program for the conversion program.¹⁹ This means introducing smaller incentives first, and then offering larger incentives (such as refrigeration units) after a certain time period to storeowners who are committed to the project and meet certain criteria.²⁰ Other options include offering low interest or recoverable loans for the refrigeration units.²¹

After choosing the participating corner stores, it is still important to continue to build relationships with the storeowners as this will make them "feel supported and provides an opportunity to better understand the owner's needs and concerns."²² It is also important to reach out to community stakeholders and community groups to promote and gain support for the program within the community, and to advertise the program and its participating stores in local media.²³

RECOMMENDATIONS: Since most Healthy Corner Store Initiatives have been largely urban-centric, and this pilot program will begin with a learning process for Mount Rogers Health District as well as its participating stores, OED recommends beginning with a small handful of stores who are already eager and driven to participate. These stores should have already made some effort to provide healthier food items, but may require additional assistance to make that next step.

Incentives should be small at first in terms of capital improvements. For instance, help a store to clean and reorganize its healthy food options within the store, offer some marketing paraphernalia (e.g. signage), and begin teaching about healthier food options to community members while advertising the program and participating stores. Upon completion of this initial phase, then move on to larger items (e.g. refrigerators, retail carts, etc.).

¹⁶ Martin, K. & Born, B. (2009).; Change Lab Solutions. (2014). Incentives for Change Rewarding Healthy Improvements to Small Food Stores. Retrieved from <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/small-food-stores-incentives>; Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.c.) *Retail Strategies: Farmers Markets*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/retail-strategies/farmers-markets>.

¹⁷ Change Lab Solutions. (2014).; The Food Trust. (2014). Healthy Corner Store Initiative: Philadelphia 2013-2014. Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/corner-store-year-3-report.original.pdf; Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. (N.D.). *Healthy Corner Store Initiative*. Retrieved from <http://ejlri.org/our-work/healthy-corner-store-initiative/>.

¹⁸The Food Trust. (2012).

¹⁹ Change Lab Solutions. (2014).

²⁰ Change Lab Solutions. (2014); The Food Trust. (2014); The Food Trust. (2012).

²¹ Change Lab Solutions. (2014).

²² The Food Trust (N.D.a).; The Food Trust. (2012).

²³ [Martin, K. & Born, B. \(2009\).; Healthy Corner Stores Network. \(2011\). Healthy Corner Stores Tip Sheet. Retrieved from http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/HCSN_TipSheet_May2011.pdf](http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/HCSN_TipSheet_May2011.pdf); Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. (2008). Marketing Ideas for Healthy Food In Remote Community Stores. Retrieved from http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/uploads/rist/rist_marketinghealthyfood.pdf.

Social Marketing and the 4 P's of Marketing

Marketing for the purpose of eating healthier would follow a strategy of social marketing. Social marketing is defined as “the social application of commercial marketing techniques to social problems.”²⁴ Social marketing can be difficult due to that the fact that the purpose of this form of marketing is to change an individual’s behavior which may run counter to their core belief system.²⁵ The marketing needs to address the customer at the individual, local, and community level, and requires multiple forms of communication.²⁶

All forms of marketing, including social marketing, will also need to follow the four P's of marketing: Product, Price, Placement, and Promotion.²⁷ Product denotes what types of healthy food are you going to sell and what type of behavior needs to be changed.²⁸ Price denotes how much can be charged for these items to encourage consumers to purchase them.²⁹ Placement denotes how the products are arranged within the store, and where consumers can purchase fresh goods.³⁰ Finally, promotion denotes how businesses can increase the purchase of healthier items.³¹ The remainder of this literature review will be addressing ways to market healthy foods based on these four marketing principles.

Product

When deciding what products to market, businesses should include the following: fruits and vegetables, non-fat/skim milk or dairy products with 1% low fat milk products (yogurt, cheese), whole grains, lean cuts of beef and pork, and low fat meats such as fish, poultry, and eggs.³² Businesses should look at a variety of factors when considering which products to market, including having a mix of products, the quality and variety of products, the nutritional value, and the packaging.³³ Another suggestion is to not attempt increasing the sales of every single nutritious product within the store, but focus on products that are already a part of the top 1,000 bestselling items in the store.³⁴

Other strategies for providing healthier products is to sell cut up fruits and vegetables in “ready to go” containers, offer pre-weighed and priced bags of produce, and to label products as low calorie, gluten-

²⁴ MarketMakeovers. (2009b). *Intro to Social Marketing*. Retrieved from

<http://www.marketmakeovers.org/mmtv/during/marketing-and-promotion/intro-to-social-marketing>

²⁵ Dresler-Hawke, E. & Ekant, V. (2006). Making healthy eating messages more effective: combining integrated marketing communication with the behavior ecological model. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Marketmakeovers.org. (2009b).; Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread. (N.D). *Marketing Healthy Foods Tool Kit*. Retrieved from http://meals4kids.org/sites/default/files/MKT_toolkit%20final.pdf

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² The Food Trust. (N.D.b) *Sell Healthy! Guide: Learn how to sell healthy foods, increase sales, and attract more customers*. Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/phcsn-sell-healthy-guide.original.pdf

³³ The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011). *Harnessing the Power of Supermarkets to Help Reverse the Powers of Supermarkets to Help Reverse Childhood Obesity*. Retrieved from http://policylinkcontent.s3.amazonaws.com/harnessingthepowerofsupermarkets.original_0.pdf

³⁴Ibid.

free, etc.³⁵ Preparing fresh foods in-house does require that the store follow Federal Drug Administration and Virginia Law requirements. Virginia Cooperative Extension also assists individuals and groups in small business development for food related businesses through their Food Innovations Program. A helpful breakdown of food considerations from registering a food processing business to labelling and basic regulations can be found at: <http://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/food-health/food-innovations/rules/index.html>. Joell Eifert, Direct of the Food Innovations Program, will also serve as a good resource for learning about and conducting workshops on proper food handling and regulations in a business.

While a few of the convenience stores OED surveyed already prepare fresh foods, most stores do not have enough space for a separate kitchen to prepare fresh foods. Some distributors of fresh cut produce include:

- *Produce Source Partners*: As Virginia's largest independent produce distributor, Produce Source Partners offers a variety of produce from around the world while committing to support local growers. Produce Source Partners sells made-to-order cut fruits and vegetables with next-day delivery. The closest office is located in Roanoke, VA (540-342-3443 or 866-812-1327. Visit their website at <http://producesourcepartners.com/>.
- *FreshPoint*: A subsidiary of SYSCO, FreshPoint is one of North America's largest wholly owned produce distributor. Its nearest office is located in Charlotte, NC and offers a variety of fresh cut produce. Contact FreshPoint's Charlotte office at 704-599-2010 or go to their website at <http://www.freshpoint.com/about-us/services/value-added-services/freshcuts/>.
- Mount Rogers may wish to negotiate with more local stores, for instance, a partnership with a grocery store or helping existing produce wholesalers like the Southwest Virginia Farmers Market or B&B Produce in Cana achieve any needed FDA criteria to be able to process fresh foods.

It may also be worthwhile to consider stocking less non-healthy food items as it was found more efficient to "alter the presence of less healthy foods in a store" rather than only trying to increase the quantity of healthy food available.³⁶ One example maybe stocking lower sodium peanuts to a greater extent than high sodium, roasted peanuts could promote healthier consumer habits.

Price

For store owners looking to sell healthy products, the rule of thumb is to use the Produce Double-Up Rule for individual pieces of produce. When determining the sales price of produce, the storeowner would simply double the cost of goods bought. This method allows for half of the produce to go bad before sales, preventing any loss of investment. Profit margins for healthy food often range from 25% to

³⁵ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread (N.D.); The Fresh Grocer. (N.D.). *Community*. Retrieved from <http://www.thefreshgrocer.com/community/>. The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011).

³⁶Glanz, K., Bader, M., & Iyer, S. (2012). Retail Grocery Store Marketing Strategies and Obesity: An Integrative Review. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 42. Retrieved from <http://healthyeatingresearch.org/research/retail-grocery-store-marketing-strategies-and-obesity-an-integrative-review/>

50%, however, prepared foods, such as pre-cut fruit and salads can have profit margins of 100%.³⁷ Prices should be clearly labelled within the store and kept relatively consistent for the benefit of customers.³⁸

One important strategy for selling healthier foods is price promotion, which plays a large role in what consumers actually buy. As much as 39% of items bought by average consumers are promotional items selected by retailers; this percent is even higher among poor residents and those who read weekly circulars.³⁹ Storeowners can choose from a wide variety of price promotions strategies. One easy example are weekly promotions of a healthy item, putting it front and center in the store and advertising its flavor and nutritional values, as well as its price as “only \$##”. A strategy offered in schools which could be adapted for stores is to offer value meals and to subsidize healthier food options by charging more for unhealthy items.⁴⁰ Other promotions that can be offered include coupons, loyalty programs, discounts (including senior and student discounts), seasonal, and event specials.⁴¹ Several studies found that price promotions have benefits beyond increasing sales. These strategies can also increase the price image of the store, or a consumer’s perceived value of a store due to their belief that its items are of good quality based on pricing.⁴² Shelf signage, the external architecture or façade of the store, and the quality of service can also influence price-image.⁴³

Placement

Placement of products throughout the store plays a large part in what products are purchased. Most of the placement marketing techniques fall under “aisle management”, which is the practice of “dividing the store into clusters or zones (i.e. aisles) and striving to increase traffic, sales, and profits from each of these zones.”⁴⁴ One of the primary marketing techniques is to place healthy foods in prime locations within the store which would include the end-of-aisles and checkout aisles at eye

Figure 5. Centrally Displayed Healthy Foods



Source: The Food Trust. (2013). The Food Trust's Fresh Food Initiative. *Enter for Active Design*. Retrieved from

³⁷Hagan, V. & Rubin, V. (2013).

³⁸ MarketMakeover.org. (2009a). *Map Desired Changes*. Retrieved from <http://marketmakeovers.org/mmtv/during/physical-transformation/map-desired-changes>

³⁹ Cited in Glanz, Bader, & Iyer. (2012).

⁴⁰ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread (N.D.)

⁴¹The Food Trust. (N.D.c); Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.b). *Retail Strategies: Healthy Food Marketing*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/retail-strategies/healthy-food-marketing>

⁴² As cited in Glanz, Bader, & Iyer. (2012).; Hamilton, R. & Chernev, A. (2013). Low Prices Are Just the Beginning: Price Image in Retail Management. *Journal of Marketing*, 77. Retrieved from http://goizueta.emory.edu/profiles/documents/publications_working_papers/hamilton/Price_Image_JM_2013.pdf

⁴³ The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011).; As cited in Glanz, Bader, & Iyer. (2012).

⁴⁴ Larson, R. (2006). Core Principles for Supermarket Aisle Management. *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, 37:1. Retrieved from <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/8554/1/37010101.pdf>.

level.⁴⁵ Healthy food should be placed in high traffic areas, or in special display areas created for healthy items.⁴⁶ Any signage advertising the healthy food should be clear and colorful.⁴⁷ Business owners also should use color to attract children's attention.⁴⁸ This can be done by putting similarly colored fruit together in a display, using bright colors in the display, or employing seasonal and holiday colors during specific times of the year.⁴⁹

Promotion

Finally, marketing healthy foods will require the promotion of these products to effectively increase sales. First, grocery and corner store owners and workers will need to upsell healthy food within the stores. Also, signage in and outside the store can advertise the in-store healthy foods, any available discounts, and the healthy corner store project.⁵⁰ Consumers also note that they want programs to help them shop for healthy products and reward them for purchasing healthy products.⁵¹ As such, grocers and corner stores should offer loyalty and coupon programs which promote certain foods to customers and reward them for buying them.⁵²

Another strategy is to offer sample menus, food tastings, cooking demonstrations, and tours around stores to introduce kids and families to where healthier food options are located.⁵³ The Get Healthy Philly's campaign, for instance, offered nutrition lessons and free blood pressure checks in corner stores, and educated students near the stores.⁵⁴ Healthy corner store programs should use local media to advertise the new initiative and the availability of healthy foods in participating stores.⁵⁵ Manufacturers and retailers use several marketing techniques to influence consumers that could also be used to market healthier food options including: television, magazine, emails, text messaging, and apps.⁵⁶ Traditional retailers and marketing experts have found that testimonials placed in advertisements is a particularly effective strategy in schools and should be adopted in healthy food advertising for corners stores.⁵⁷ More specific market information is located in Appendix E.

⁴⁵ Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.b); Gupta, S. (2014, January 7). Red Light, green light: Food Choice Made Easier. *CNN*. Retrieved from <http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2014/01/07/red-light-green-light-food-choice-made-easier/>

⁴⁶ [Martin, K. & Born, B. \(2009\).](#)

⁴⁷ [Martin, K. & Born, B. \(2009\).](#)

⁴⁸ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread. (N.D)

⁴⁹ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Child Nutrition Outreach Program at Project Bread. (N.D)

⁵⁰ MarketMakeovers.org. (2009a).

⁵¹ The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011).

⁵² The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011); Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.b).

⁵³ The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011); Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. (2008).

⁵⁴ The Food Trust. (2012). *What We Do: In Corner Stores*. Retrieved from <http://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-store>.

⁵⁵ [Martin, K. & Born, B. \(2009\)](#)

⁵⁶ The Food Trust and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2011).

⁵⁷ Australian Medical Association. (N.D). Traffic Light Labelling: Making Healthy Food Choices Easier for Australians. Retrieved from https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/Traffic_Light_Labelling_Making_healthy_food_choices_easier_for_Australians.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS: Following the 4 P's—Price, Product, Placement and Promotion—the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program should consider the following steps:

- Review the top one hundred selling items in stores and find healthier alternatives at a similar price point.
- Contact Joell Eifert at Virginia Cooperative Extension if considering in-house fresh cut foods or workshops on food regulations and handling fresh produce.
- Properly price healthier foods and consider extensive promotional marketing such as weekly specials.
- Place healthy food in prime locations around the store including end of aisles, checkout counters, and location at eye level. Consider a central location for healthier foods with signage and bright colors to attract the eye.
- Consider other promotional strategies for the program: a loyalty program to encourage healthy buying, menus at checkout counters feature in-store products, and events at participating stores or schools that illustrate the ease of cooking with healthier ingredients.

Green Light, Red Light, Eat Right Strategy

Figure 6. Shelf-talker Attached to Cereal Shelf



Source: The Food Trust. (N.D.a.) Healthy Corner Store Initiative Overview. Retrieved from http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/healthy-corner-store-overview.original.pdf

One strategy that has gained popularity is the “Green Light, Red Light, Eat Right” method. This strategy uses color-coded symbols to tell shoppers what food is healthy (green), which food would be best to have in moderation (yellow/amber), and which to avoid (red).⁵⁸ Stores can use shelf-talkers (a printed card or sign meant to get a shopper’s attention) to mark which items are the healthiest.⁵⁹ They can also place colored stickers on the products that mark how healthy they are, such as what was done at Massachusetts General Hospital.⁶⁰ This strategy is an easy and effective alternative to nutritional information on the side of the box, which studies have shown many people find “too technical, difficult to understand, and confusing, if not misleading.”⁶¹ This strategy has seen some success. The Massachusetts General Hospital adopted this system, along with

⁵⁸ City of Melbourne. (N.D). *What’s with the dots?* Retrieved from https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/CommunityServices/Health/Documents/Green_Light_Eat_Right.pdf; National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. (2015). *How ‘traffic light’ labels promote healthier eating.* Retrieved from <http://www.nfesh.org/how-traffic-light-labels-promote-healthier-eating/>

⁵⁹ [The Food Trust. \(N.D\)](#); Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet. (2008); Business Dictionary.com. (2015). *Shelf Talker.* Retrieved from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/shelf-talker.html>

⁶⁰ McGreevey, S. (2013, October 17th). How traffic light labels promote healthier eating. *Harvard Gazette.* Retrieved from <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/10/how-traffic-light-labels-promote-healthier-eating/>

⁶¹Australian Medical Association. (N.D).

placing healthy foods in more convenient locations, in their cafeteria.⁶² They saw a 3% decline in the number of unhealthy foods purchased and 5% increase in the purchase of healthy foods.⁶³ While this strategy has shown some success, most success has been seen in hospitals and larger grocery stores. For smaller stores where health is not readily in one's mind, such an approach may be jarring to customers who see it as a judgement on their lifestyle.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Perhaps adopt the positive attributes of the Green Light, Red Light strategy by market foods along store aisles that fall into the healthier food category:

- *100% whole grains:*
 - *Rolled oats*
 - *Barley*
 - *Wild Rice*
- *Low-fat or skim yogurt*
 - *Falvored*
 - *Unflavored (plain, no sweeteners)*
- *Low-fat milk and milk substitutes: soy milk, almond milk, etc.*
- *Eggs*
- *Nuts, seeds, beans and lentils (reduced sodium or sodium free)*
- *Plain water*
- *100% juice*
- *Meat*

⁶² Guptam S. (2014, January 7).; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (2014, January/February). *Traffic Light Labels and Choice Architecture*. Retrieved from <http://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2014/01/traffic-light-labels-and-choice-architecture.html>; National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. (N.D.) *How 'traffic light' labels promote healthier eating*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfesh.org/how-traffic-light-labels-promote-healthier-eating/>

⁶³ Gupta, S. (2014, January 7).

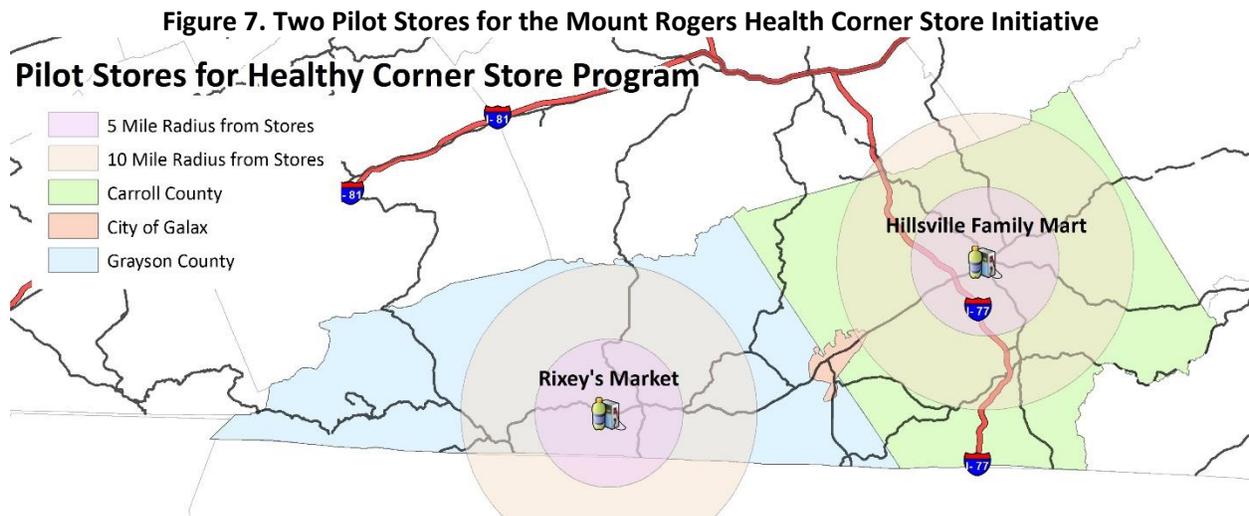
BUSINESS PLAN

After conducting extensive stakeholder interviews and a thorough literature review, OED developed a business plan that focuses on marketing healthier choices to corner store customers. The initial analysis revealed a lack of demand for healthy foods spurred by limited understanding concerning the nature of healthier food items and their pricing as well as a natural inclination to stick with what you know. The goal of the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Store Initiative therefore should be to:

*Make Healthy Foods Fun, Easy and Accessible
for Twin Counties' residents*

To achieve this goal, Mount Rogers will support participating convenience stores in their efforts to stock and sell healthier food items through reorganization and promotion of store products. This business plan hinges on the successful placement and promotion of healthier foods that may lead to behavioral changes in customer purchasing habits.

Rixey's Market and the Hillsville Citgo Family Mart will serve as the two pilot stores for the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative. Population reach estimates for both stores cover 43% of the Twin County region⁶⁴ within a 10-mile radius.



Note that this plan is a framework for proceeding with the Mount Rogers Healthy Corner Stores Initiative Pilot Program. Recommendations are based on feedback from regional stores and a review of existing programs. As the program moves forward, however, MRHD may have to make alterations to the plan based on existing conditions and unforeseen circumstances.

⁶⁴ 2014 American Community Survey Block Group

The pilot program will be divided into two phases, or a two-tiered incentive scheme. Participants in the first phase will receive 2-3 consultation appointments in the first two months to provide technical assistance on optimal placement, marketing materials/signage, baskets for produce, and techniques on how to best handle produce.

Phase two will provide further assistance in the marketing of healthier options. Stores who fully participate in phase one (maintain reorganized layout, use the signs and produce basket in accordance with their agreement with Mount Rogers) and complete one of the following requirements will pass on to phase two:

- Stock one or more additional healthy snacks
- Stock lower sodium canned goods options
- Remove all advertising from entryway except those that they are contractually obligated to have
- Place the healthy corner store initiative decal in entryway
- Offer healthy fresh-cut produce options

Phase two stores will be given additional resources to expand their healthier food offerings, such as a small refrigeration unit, cooler barrel, or shelving unit to stock and display healthy options. MRHD will also advertise these stores as active participants of the initiative throughout the region.

Phase One

Month one: Once Mount Rogers Health District (MRHD) confirms participation of stores, it will contact both stores to formally introduce the initiative, outline the services MRHD will provide to participants, and describe the requirements needed for continued eligibility.

Month two: MRHD will disseminate technical assistance on how to effectively market “foods to encourage.” MRHD will arrange for an initial consultation in **month two** with each participant to identify healthy food options appropriate to the participating store, provide placement advice, relocation services, and marketing materials. Each consultation will take two to three hours and will be individually scheduled with each store. If a pilot program participant has a deli, MRHD will work with them to identify opportunities for value-added processing. For example, stores can sell cut up fruits and vegetables, that they already stock, in ready to go containers. These value added practices can have profit margins of up to 100%. Individual consultations may need to occur after hours or during “low traffic” hours.

- **Product:** MRHD will go through each store’s existing stock and a list of their top 50-100 selling items (depending on each participant’s ability to provide such list) to identify healthy foods already sold or healthier options to those foods. For instance, if peanuts are sold or are a top selling item, MRHD will recommend the store purchase low sodium peanuts as a healthier choice. While other programs have required stores to provide a list of 1,000 items, OED suggests 100 as a more manageable target for potential corner store participants. Recommendations will focus particularly on provision of healthier and affordable, “convenient” snack foods. MRHD will go through each store’s distributor catalogue and identify potential healthier options within a store’s existing distribution network.

If the store is interested in selling fresh produce, currently does not, and has refrigeration, MRHD will work with the store to identify lower selling items that are unhealthy and take up space. Moving, decreasing or eliminating these items from the sales floor will allow for more room to accommodate fresh produce. To buy fresh foods, the store may use their existing distributor or contact distributors mentioned on page 13 of this report.

MRHD will also provide each store with a small whiteboard for customers to write suggestions for healthy foods they would like to see sold at each store. Placement of the board should be near the entrance or cash register, in clear view (optional).

- **Placement:** MRHD will work with each store to relocate healthier snacks and beverages for maximum exposure to customers. Water and juice should be moved to eye level in the beverage refrigerators. Stores should have all available fresh produce next to the cash register. Healthier snack options (nuts, protein bars, dried fruit, whole grains, etc.) should be placed together in a healthy section at the end of aisles or near the cash register with the produce. Each store's placement schematic will need to be tailored to their individual floor design. Relocation should be completed by the end of the beginning of the third month.
 - MRHD will also provide each store with best management practices when handling produce to ensure fruits and vegetables are displayed without bruises or blemishes.
 - Note: MRHD should be aware of any vendor contracts that require the store to keep certain items in the front of the store before suggesting how to move items.
 - As part of this relocation process, MHRD should also work with the store to maintain an uncluttered, clean sales floor. In general but particularly for stores selling produce, customers will have more confidence when buying healthier food options if the store appears clean and orderly: replace unnecessary, cluttered, or damaged signs with attractive signage; show clear pricing on shelf talkers; ensure proper lighting; items appear organized, etc.).

- **Promotion:** MRHD will provide each store with one decal sign denoting their participation in the initiative, two decal signs to mark healthier beverages, and eight signs to be placed throughout the store to label healthy snack products. Stores will also receive baskets to hold produce. These signs should be designed to attract a customer's eye so as to maximize exposure. MRHD will also disseminate promotional brochures and posters around the community to help educate the Mount Rogers region about healthy options and garner support for the initiative. MRHD should visit schools, community

Figure 8. A Healthy Corner Store Sign



Signs such as these were used in Denver's Healthy Corner Store Initiative

centers, and other public spaces to educate residents about healthier food options and the Initiative.

- **Price:** It was assumed that stores would have limited options for competitively pricing healthier food items. MRHD will work with phase one participants to ensure that they order healthy options priced comparably to other less nutritious products sold in each store. MRHD will also work with participants to ensure prices are clearly marked for healthier options, as price uncertainty could potentially dissuade customers from buying the product.

Months three to four: MRHD will visit with each participant at least one to two times a month. They will work with store owners to have at least one weeklong promotional event during which the store promotes a healthy food item to customers. This event will entail:

- MRHD and the participating store to select one healthy food item
- MRHD will work with the store to put the item in a place of high foot traffic and provide two signs: one to put with the food and one to put at the cash register
- MRHD will provide an easy recipe with the selected promotional item as a key ingredient

These exchanges will build meaningful relationships, help MHRD to understand better each store's needs and concerns, and ensure full participation in the pilot program. MRHD will also work with stores to fulfill requirements to enter into phase two of the pilot program. Follow-up visits should answer the following questions:

- How have the store's management and staff acclimated to the new healthier foods layout?
- The store and its healthier foods displays are in what condition? Uncluttered? Displayed clearly?
- What other actions have the store's staff taken as part of the healthy corner store initiative?
- Have sales in healthier food items risen since the beginning of the pilot program?
- How might MRHD and the store improve these results? What might need to be changed?

Phase Two

Month five: MRHD will determine phase two participants. Each participant will be given the option of receiving a small refrigeration unit (similar to a mini-fridge), shelving unit, or barrel cooler to stock and display healthy products in the store. MHRD will provide additional advice on how to store and display products requiring refrigeration. Advice may include workshops or visitations from produce experts including local farmer's market managers, Virginia Cooperative Extension agents or a representative of Virginia Tech's Food Innovations Program. Possible contacts are located in Appendix F.

Months six to eight: MRHD will follow up with each store (in person) one to two times per month. MRHD and each participating store will plan and initiate at least one promotional event for a health food item, similar to the event done in months three and four. This event may include:

- Some sort of item discount e.g. two for one
- Receipt of a coupon or discount for other items or credit for future purchases
- Simply advertising the product as if it were discounted and providing an easy recipe to go with it

Stores will be expected to only use provided refrigerator, cooler, or shelving for stocking healthy options. MRHD will also use local media outlets, such as radio and newspapers, to reach out to the community about healthy options and indicate phase two participants in the program, providing each store with free advertising.

Final success of the program will be measured based on the following questions:

- How have the store's management and staff acclimated to the new healthier foods layout?
- The store and its healthier foods displays are in what condition? Uncluttered? Displayed clearly?
- What other actions have the store's staff taken as part of the healthy corner store initiative?
- Have sales in healthier food items risen since the beginning of the pilot program?
- How might MRHD and the store improve these results? What might need to be changed?

Successful stores are expected to maintain or add to the healthy food layout of their stores, maintain clean and uncluttered sales space, use the products given to them by MHRD for the Healthy Corner Store Initiative only, and monitor their sales of healthy foods. The ultimate indicator of success would be a gradual increase in the sale of healthy food items.

Note: Ideally, at the end of the pilot program, MRHD will be able to offer on-site training services to stores that were unable to commit to the initial pilot program but who are interested in participating in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative.

Time and Financial Commitments

Mount Rogers Health District

To carry out the timeline, MRHD will need to commit approximately four or more hours of initial consultation and three to five hours of monthly follow-up conversations per store. To ensure meaningful engagement, MRHD should personally visit each store. The maximum 28-hours per store estimate includes travel time as well. MRHD will also need to commit a maximum of 10 hours for putting up posters and disseminating educational materials about the Initiative throughout the community.

Financially, MRHD will need to pay for each store's marketing signage, white boards, and refrigeration/shelving (phase two participants) as well as educational materials and advertising to promote the initiative and its participants. Equipment/signage will cost approximately \$220 per store in phase one and \$500 per store in phase two. Promotional materials will cost an estimated \$2,000. Advertisements in print media will vary by newspaper. OED suggests MRHD strategically market this initiative in local papers such as the Galax Gazette, Independence Declaration, and the Carroll News.

To provide a cost framework for print media advertisements, OED contacted the Independence Declaration to ascertain their pricing scheme. The paper circulates to 7,500 people throughout the region and is printed Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The paper charges \$12.79 per column inch (1.56 inches wide by one inch tall). Half page, quarter page, and eighth page ads cost \$450, 225, and 112.50, respectively. MRHD could run an eighth page ad for \$112.50 one day per week for one month. This would cost \$450. Assuming the Carroll News and Galax Gazette have similar pricing structures, for one month of weekly advertising in each paper (to maximize exposure), MRHD would need to budget \$1,350

for print advertising. MRHD could also reach out to local radio stations for advertisement or to high schools to make announcements or run ads at sporting events, concerts, or plays.

Participating Convenience Stores

Participating convenience stores will be expected to dedicate about two to three hours of initial consultation time with MRHD. They will work with MRHD by providing a list of their 50-100 top selling items, a list of identified low selling items, and an understanding of what can and cannot be changed within the store. Stores will then be required to engage in follow-up discussions one to two times per month, which will take a half hour to an hour. To move onto phase two of the project, store will be expected to maintain the healthy food displays, use the items given to them by MRHD to promote healthier food options, and pursue at least one of the following activities:

- Stock one or additional healthy snacks
- Stock lower sodium canned goods options
- Remove all advertising from entryway
- Place the healthy corner store initiative decal in entryway
- Offer healthy deli options

Implementation Plan for Two Pilot Stores

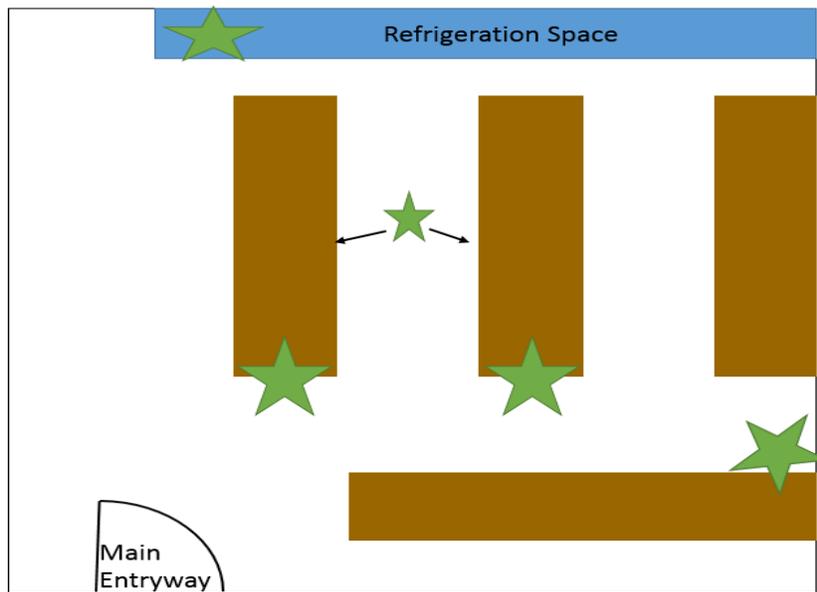
Rixey's Market in Independence, VA

Rixey's Market already offers a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, depending on the season, as well as healthier snacking options. The owner stores fresh produce in attractive baskets outside of the store (weather permitting) near the front entrance, providing customers with easy access to fruits and vegetables. However, healthy, packaged snack options and beverages are stored away from main customer thorough-fares, which limits customer exposure and ultimately consumption.

Product: Once provided with a list of top selling items (ideally 100) by Rixey's, MRHD can work with the store to identify any healthy items already selling well or opportunities for substituting a top-selling item with a comparable healthier version (i.e. finding a lower sodium option for snack nuts). This process would be done within the confines of the same national distributor, H.T. Hackney. It is important to note that many convenience stores in the region use national distributors. A list of the top 25 nation distributors can be found at: <http://mrcheckout.net/top-25-convenience-store-distributors/>. MRHD should also ensure that Rixey's does not stock products past their expiration date.

Placement: Rixey's should aim to place their healthier snack options up front, near the register. They should also aggregate healthy options at the end of one of their aisles, ideally the end of the aisle that you can see as soon as you walk in the door. For beverages, water and milk should be placed at eye level in the refrigeration units at the back of the store. They may also group healthy options in the aisles, placing healthy food signs or labels near those foods. The green stars in the following store diagram indicate possible placement options to maximize customer exposure. If room is needed to make these groupings, Rixey's should move less-healthy options to more out of the way locations.

Figure 9. Rixey's Store Layout with Healthy Food Product Placement Recommendations



Promotion: Signage would be placed to ensure that customers' eyes are drawn to healthy option groupings. If possible, Rixey's should remove other signage from their entry door or make enough space to fit a Healthy Corner Store's Program decal. Signage should also be incorporated throughout the store to denote a healthy options grouping. Decals should be placed on the door of the refrigeration unit that holds healthy beverages. MRHD could work with Rixey's to incorporate LED lighting around these groupings to further grab customers' attention. If possible, signage at the gas pump highlighting the store's participation in the program and encouraging customers to come in for healthy snacks would be beneficial, both for Rixey's business and for the program. For sign design best practices, refer to Appendix E.

Price: MRHD should ensure that all healthy options' prices are clearly marked. When exploring new/substitute options to order from H.T. Hackney, Rixey's should aim to stock items with prices that are comparable to less-healthy options in the store.

Once initial product, placement, promotion, and price actions are completed, MRHD will check in twice monthly, in-store, to gauge owner participation and adjust the 4 P's depending on reported issues or success (refer to previous section for follow up questions). For added benefit, MRHD and Rixey's may consider planning promotional events for certain health food items (See description in above section). This will continue for the two months following initial changes. If participation is adequate, MRHD will work with Rixey's to determine which display product (barrel cooler, shelving, or refrigeration unit) to supply the store and discuss how it could most effectively be used. Once this new product is in place, displaying healthy food options, MRHD will meet twice monthly, in store, for two months to ensure appropriate participation and take note of what is observed as working or not working.

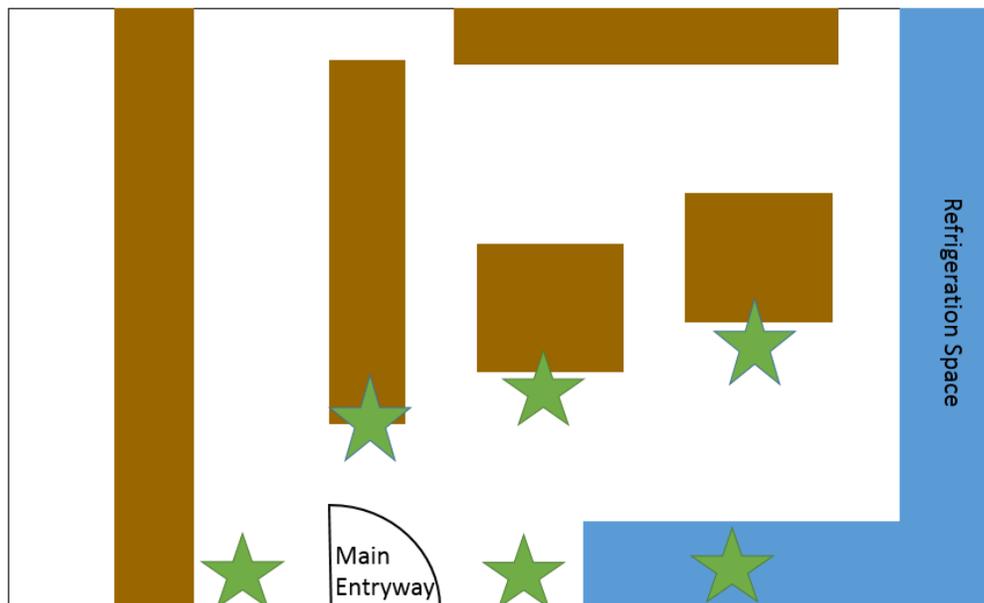
Hillsville Citgo Family Mart

The Hillsville Citgo Family Mart, located near the middle of the Town of Hillsville, already offers limited fresh produce and a relatively wide variety of healthy snacks and beverages. The owner is ready and willing to rearrange her store, providing a perfect opportunity for MRHD to work with the owner to incorporate changes to increase consumption of healthy snack options by customers.

Product: As with Rixey’s, MRHD should work with the owner and a list of top-selling items (ideally 100), to identify what healthy items sell well or potential substitutes to order. Hillsville Citgo Family Mart also uses H.T. Hackney as their national distributor. MRHD should also emphasize the importance of removing items that have passed their expiration dates, particularly healthy option products.

Placement: The following layout suggestions are visually represented in the layout diagram below. Green stars mark potential locations for healthy food groupings. The Family Mart has square shelving “pods” in the middle of the store. One of these, or rather, one/two sides could be used for grouping healthy options together. There is also room for grouping displays directly next to the cash register, if baked goods (fudge, cakes, etc.) are moved elsewhere in the store. As you first walk in, the store could place a small sampling of healthy snack options at the very end of their candy aisle or on shelving directly to your right as you walk in (currently the location of cakes and candy treats). In terms of beverages, the owner is limited in what refrigerators she can move products around in. However, the owner can move healthier drink options (water or milk) to eye level- or about adult chest height.

Figure 10. Hillsville Family Mart Layout with Healthy Food Product Placement Recommendations



Promotion: The Hillsville Citgo Family Mart should place window decals at the main door or windows indicating their participation in the Healthy Corner Stores Program. The store should limit other advertisements to ensure that the decal is prominent and highly visible to customers. Signage should

also be placed within the store to identify healthy choice groupings. Signs could also hang from the ceiling, over one of the square “islands” throughout the store. Decals should also be placed on the refrigeration units holding healthy beverage options. For design best practices, refer to Appendix E.

Price: As with Rixey’s, MRHD should ensure that all healthy foods products’ prices are clearly marked. Also, when looking for new products to substitute or add to in-store offerings, MRHD and the Hillsville Family Mart should target items with competitive prices. Customers will be less likely to buy healthy food items that are significantly more expensive than other products sold in the store.

Consultation and rearranging products in the Hillsville Family Mart may take as much as a full day considering the amount of product the store has. Consolidating products into key areas in the store and moving excess product to storage will provide a clean and orderly appearance that appeals to customers’ inclination to buy healthier foods.

Once these initial changes are made, MRHD will check in twice monthly with at the Hillsville Family Mart with the owner. This will be done over the course of two months and designed as a series of informal check-in meetings to assess adequate participation and to discuss what is working well/needs to be changed to maximize the success of the program (refer to previous section for follow up questions). If participation is deemed adequate after two months, the store will enter into phase two and receive a display item (barrel cooler, shelving, or refrigeration unit) depending on their preference/need. Bi-monthly check-ins will continue for another two months.

***** OED suggests a “final” meeting with each storeowner to conclude the program, discussing challenges and successes with a specific focus on how the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative can evolve or grow in the future. *****

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APPENDIX A: FUNDING SOURCES FOR HEALTHY CORNER STORE PROJECTS

Federal Government

Healthy Food Financing Initiative

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative is an initiative by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Treasury, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.⁶⁵ This provides funds for the development of grocery stores, small retailers, corner stores, and farmer markets to provide access to healthy foods for underserved communities.⁶⁶ Since 2011, the program has provided over \$167 million to increase access to healthy foods throughout the country, and leveraged \$1 billion from other organizations in order to finance 200 projects.⁶⁷ The last grant announcement was in January-April 2015. A 2016 round has not yet been posted.

For more information on this program, go to:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/community-economic-development/healthy-food-financing>

U.S. Department of Treasury

The U.S. Department of the Treasury offers financial assistance to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) who wish to expand healthy food networks to economically distressed communities through their CDFI Fund.⁶⁸ These awards offer loans, grants, equity investments, deposits, and credit union shares to match funds gained through non-federal organizations.⁶⁹ Another program from the Department of the Treasury which has been used to finance healthy food projects include the New Markets Tax Credits program. This program allows for private and corporate individuals to receive a federal income tax credit for making an equity investment in a Community Development Entity (CDE) in low-income communities.⁷⁰ Essentially, they are coaxed into funding healthy food projects and similar. A governmental entity may apply for designation as a CDE, provided the entity is classified as a corporation or partnership for federal tax purposes and would meet the legal entity requirement (which

⁶⁵ Let'sMove.gov. (N.D.) *Healthy Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.letsmove.gov/healthy-communities>

⁶⁶ Let's Move.gov. (N.D.); Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.) *Healthy Food Financing Funds*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/funding/healthy-food-financing-funds>.

⁶⁷ Healthy Food Access Portal. (N.D.) *Policy Efforts and Impacts*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/policy-efforts-and-impacts/federal>

⁶⁸ For more information, visit the New Markets Tax Credit Program page at <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Treasury Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. (N.D.) *CDFI Program*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/cdfi-program/Pages/default.aspx>

⁷⁰ A CDE is any duly organized entity treated as a domestic corporation or partnership for federal income tax purposes that: (a) has a primary mission of serving, or providing investment capital for, Low Income Communities (LICs) or Low-Income Persons; (b) maintains accountability to residents of LICs through their representation on any governing board of the entity or any advisory board to the entity; and (c) has been certified as a CDE by the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (the Fund) of the United States Department of the Treasury.

is subject to legal interpretation by the CDFI Fund). Recently, CDEs which use part of their award to invest in healthy food projects have been given priority.⁷¹

For more information, visit <https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/New-Markets-Tax-Credit--1>

U.S. Department of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers several programs which could be used for healthy corner store conversions. One of them includes the Community Food Projects Grant Program to “meet the needs of low-income people by increasing their access to fresher more, nutritious food supplies.”⁷² Private nonprofit organizations are eligible for this program which will match financing using other resources.⁷³ Mount Rogers Health District would have to partner with a public food program service provider, tribal organization or private nonprofit to be eligible for this grant. Description of the grant and its RFA is in the following link: <http://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program>.

Also, the Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program, the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, and the Rural Business Enterprise Grant program provide financing resources for small businesses to acquire capital and develop small businesses. These financing options could be used to purchase equipment, provide technical assistance, or renovate corner stores. Business and Industry Loan Guarantee program receives applications from lenders such as chartered banks, farm credit banks, or credit unions.⁷⁴ The Rural Business Enterprise Grant program is meanwhile available to local and state governments and non-profit organizations.⁷⁵ Finally, the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program provides loans and grants to Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs), which can include nonprofits or institutions of higher learning, to provide loans to businesses with 10 or fewer full time employees.⁷⁶ In terms of area eligibility, rural areas outside a city or town with a population of less than 50,000 are automatically eligible, whereas exceptions may be made of larger localities.

For more information go to: <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-microentrepreneur-assistance-program>.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention offers two programs that have contributed to healthy corner store projects before: Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) and Racial and Ethnic

⁷¹ Healthy Food Access Portal (N.D). *Funding: Incentives*. Retrieved from <http://healthyfoodaccess.org/funding/incentives>

⁷² United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (N.D.) *Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP)*. Retrieved from <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/community-food-projects-competitive-grant-program-cfp-cgp>.

⁷³ United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture. (N.D.)

⁷⁴ United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. (N.D.a) *Business & Industry Loan Guarantees*. Retrieved from <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees>.

⁷⁵ United States Department of Agriculture. (N.D.) *Rural Business Enterprise Grant*. Retrieved from http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=kyf_grants_rd6_content.html

⁷⁶ United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. (N.D.b). *Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-microentrepreneur-assistance-program#MDO>

Approaches to Community Health (REACH). Both programs aim to reduce the following risk factors within communities: tobacco use and exposure, poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and lack of access to opportunities for chronic disease prevention, risk reduction, and disease management.⁷⁷ Both programs have given awards to projects that have included healthy corner store projects.

PICH is a three year initiative to support “evidence-based strategies to improve the health of communities and reduce the prevalence of chronic disease.”⁷⁸ In fiscal year 2014, it has awarded \$49.3 million to 39 communities throughout the United States. Awardees include both governmental and nongovernmental organizations including school districts, local governments, hospital and health systems, community based organizations, public health offices, and American Indian tribal organizations. Awardees can be large (population of 500,000+) or small (population of 50,000-499,999) cities/counties. Some funding was given to localities to implement healthy corner store initiative programs.

For more information go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/partnershipstoimprovecommunityhealth/index.html>.

REACH is another three-year CDC program which aims to improve the health of African –Americans, American Indians, Hispanics/Latinos, Asian Americans, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders.⁷⁹ The program’s primary goal is to “reduce racial and ethnic health disparities.” REACH funds state and local health departments, tribes, universities, and community-based organizations to address these health gaps in communities throughout the United States. In fiscal year 2014, the program gave \$34.9 million to 49 awardees.

For more information, visit

http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/reach/current_programs/index.html.

*****These programs should be re-offered in the next two years. MRHD should check in periodically for renewed funding opportunities*****

*U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*⁸⁰

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development offers the Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), which could be used to support healthy food projects. However, funding for Hillsville would come from state-administered CDBGs, which would come from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).⁸¹ The funds must be used to address one of following

⁷⁷ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (N.D.). *Summary – Partnerships to Improve Community Healthy and Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/pdfs/00-pich-reach-focus-areas-priority-interventions.pdf>

⁷⁸ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015a). *Partnerships to Improve Community Healthy (PICH)*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/partnershipstoimprovecommunityhealth/index.html>

⁷⁹ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015b). *Reach 2014 Awardees*. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/reach/current_programs/reach.html

⁸⁰ http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/CDBG_FINAL_20150504_0.pdf, <http://healthyfoodaccess.org/funding/grants>, <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/blighted-structures/community-development-block-grant-cdbg/76-community-development-block-grant-cdbg-competitive-grants.html>.

⁸¹ For more information, visit: <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/business-va-assistance/blighted-structures/community-development-block-grant-cdbg/10-community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html>

three national objectives: benefit persons of low or moderate income, prevent or eliminate slums or blight, or meet an urgent community development need because existing conditions pose a serious or immediate threat to the healthy or welfare of the community and other financial resource are not available.⁸² Healthy Corner store projects would most likely be eligible for the CDBG Competitive Grant, which aids localities in projects that will address a community's most urgent needs.⁸³ According to Virginia's DHCD website, units of local government in Carroll and Grayson Counties, along with the City of Galax would be eligible for CDBGs.⁸⁴ Uses of the block grants that would be CDBG eligible would include: façade improvements, financial incentives such as loans and grants, technical assistance, retailer outreach, production and distribution of marketing materials, interior renovations.⁸⁵ Considering the health of many of the Twin Counties residents, MRHD could frame this problem as an urgent community need to justify funding from a CDBGs. For immediate funding, proposals must be submitted by 5:00 pm on March 23, 2016.

For more information and links to the request for proposal, please visit:

<http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/76-community-development-block-grant-cdbg-competitive-grants.html>.

Small Business Administration

The Small Business Administration provides a guarantee on loans made to small businesses from partners. This could be used for the purchase of new equipment and infrastructure for corner stores, specifically under the Microloan Program.⁸⁶ This program provides up to \$50,000 in loans to help small businesses and is administered through an "intermediary" (typically nonprofit community-based organizations with lending experience). The money can be used for working capital, inventory/supplies, furniture/fixtures, or machinery/equipment. Maximum repayment terms are six years and interest rates are generally 8-13%. The microloan provider for the Twin Counties region is Andrea Lerace and can be reached by email at AWeissier@accionusa.org or by phone at (212) 387-3077.

For more information about the program, visit: <https://www.sba.gov/content/microloan-program>.

⁸² ChangeLab Solutions. (2015). *Community Development Block Grants: Linking Health & Economic Development through Food Retail*. Retrieved from http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/CDBG_FINAL_20150504_0.pdfhttp://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/CDBG_FINAL_20150504_0.pdf

⁸³ Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development. (N.D.) Retrieved from <http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/index.php/community-partnerships-dhcd/76-community-development-block-grant-cdbg-competitive-grants.html>

⁸⁴ For more information:

http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov/CommunityDevelopmentRevitalization/PDFs/CDBG_EligibleLocalities.pdf

⁸⁵ ChangeLab Solutions. (2015).

⁸⁶ ChangeLab Solutions. (2007). *Economic Development & Redevelopment: A Toolkit on Land Use+Health, by Planning for Healthy Places at Public Healthy Law & Policy*. 49-53. Retrieved from <http://www.marketmakeovers.org/sites/default/files/Financing-EDR8.pdf>

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)

Virginia Community Capital

Virginia Community Capital (VCC) is a CDFI based in Richmond, VA with three other offices located in Christiansburg, Norfolk, and Springfield. It offers lending to small businesses and real estate and small business assistance in order to promote economic and community development within the state of Virginia.⁸⁷ VCC started the Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund in 2013 to address urban/rural food deserts, strengthen Virginia's food system, and share knowledge/experience in fresh food financing.⁸⁸ This \$10,000,000 fund is meant to offer loans for the purchase of real estate and equipment, capital improvements, and working capital.⁸⁹ These funds are available for: food hub operators, retail and wholesale distributors, value added processors and producers, and food business incubators.⁹⁰ They were also awarded a \$2,600,000 from the CDFI fund from the U.S. Department of Treasury.⁹¹ Around \$1,000,000 came from the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) fund, and these funds will be devoted to healthy food expansion.⁹² VCC also was a partner in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in Richmond, VA, and the Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund was an expansion of this program.⁹³

Contact

Christiansburg Office
Teresa Walker
540-260-3502
twalker@vccva.org

Virginia Fresh Food Loan Program
Wayne Waldrop, Chief Lending Officer
804-793-0986
wwaldrop@vccva.org

For a fund summary, visit <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/uploads/VFFLFproduct.pdf>.

Capital Impact Partners

Community Capital Impact Partners is CDFI based in Arlington, Virginia. They provide a variety of loans including bridge loans, equipment loans, and working capital loans, and offer technical assistance and capacity building.⁹⁴ They have provided over \$132 million in loans in order to improve access to healthy foods for underserved communities.⁹⁵ They seek to add supermarkets or other healthy food retailers to neighborhoods by "financing new stores, expansion of existing stores, and innovation such as mobile

⁸⁷ For more information, please visit: <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/>

⁸⁸ Clinton Foundation. (N.D). Retrieved from *Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund*.

<https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative/commitments/virginia-fresh-food-loan-fund>

⁸⁹ Virginia Community Capital. (N.D.) *Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund (VFFLF)*. Retrieved from <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/uploads/VFFLFproduct.pdf>

⁹⁰ Virginia Community Capital. (N.D.)

⁹¹ Virginia Community Capital (2015, September 24). *VCC Receives \$2,600,000 Award to Help Virginia Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.vacommunitycapital.org/index.php/news-item/vcc-receives-2600000-award-to-help-virginia-communities>

⁹² Virginia Community Capital (2015, September 24).

⁹³ Smith, T. (2015, June 21). Your Health: Healthy Corner Store Initiative. *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Retrieved from http://www.richmond.com/life/health/article_c1b86490-d018-5aa7-8d0a-beb491230191.html; Clinton, (N.D.)

⁹⁴ For more information, please visit: <http://www.capitalimpact.org/>

⁹⁵ Capital Impact Partners. (2014). *Creating Access to Healthy Foods*. Retrieved from <http://www.capitalimpact.org/focus/healthy-foods/>

markets and distribution centers.”⁹⁶ You can contact Ian Wiesner, who specifically works new community lending at (313) 230-1116.

For more information visit: <http://www.capitalimpact.org/>.

⁹⁶ Capital Impact Partners. (2014). *Creating Access to Healthy Foods*;

APPENDIX B: RESOURCES FOR CASE STUDIES OF HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVES

Richmond, VA

Richmond Virginia, with one of the largest food deserts nationally for a city its size, started the Richmond Healthy Corner Store Initiative to provide healthy food options in the East End Neighborhood.⁹⁷ The project is a collaboration of the Richmond City Health District, Virginia Community Capital, and Tricycle Gardens, and was started with \$57,000 from a Center for Disease Control and Prevention Grant and \$50,000 from the City from Richmond.⁹⁸ The Richmond City Health District was the primary organizer of the project whereas Virginia Community Capital and Tricycle Gardens performed most of the community outreach.⁹⁹ Tricycle Gardens also grew and distributed most of the produce that was provided in the corner stores.¹⁰⁰ They also provided education to customers on how to cook healthy foods, as well as refrigeration and marketing tools to the corner stores.¹⁰¹ As of 2015, there were 13 stores in the East End Neighborhood that are a part of the Initiative, however they would like to expand the program throughout the City of Richmond, and would like the corner stores to be WIC vendors.¹⁰²

Philadelphia, PA

In 2004, the Food Trust in Philadelphia, started a pilot program of their Healthy Corner Store Initiative. This program targeted corner stores located in the poorest areas of Philadelphia to provide and market healthier foods to improve the overall health of the community. The initiative identified the areas of the city by zip code and prioritized areas with the highest poverty rates as “Tier 1” areas and designated other, slightly lower priority areas as “Tier 2” and “Tier 3.” The Food Trust then assisted business owners in providing and marketing healthier products, and also provided business training to store owners. For stores that met certain criteria, they helped to provide equipment and made infrastructure changes that would allow them to keep and sell healthier food. They have also begun offering free health screenings, nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, and free taste tests at participating corner stores. Since launching in 2010, 660 corner stores are now members of the Philadelphia Healthy Corner Store Network, which has provided over 1,200 hours of training to store owners, and completed 300 store conversions. The Healthy Corner Store Initiative has spread

⁹⁷ Virginia Community Capital. (July 19, 2013). *VCC Attends Clinton Global Initiative America meeting, Commits to Healthy Foods Programming*. Retrieved from <http://www.vacomunitycapital.org/index.php/news-item/clinton-global-initiative-healthy-foods>.; Clinton Foundation. (N.D). Retrieved from *Virginia Fresh Food Loan Fund*. <https://www.clintonfoundation.org/clinton-global-initiative/commitments/virginia-fresh-food-loan-fund>.

⁹⁸ Smith, T. (2015, June 21). Your Health: Healthy Corner Store Initiative. *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Retrieved from http://www.richmond.com/life/health/article_c1b86490-d018-5aa7-8d0a-beb491230191.html.

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Tricycle Gardens. (N.D.) *Healthy Corner Store Initiative*. Retrieved from <http://tricyclegardens.org/vision/healthy-corner-store-initiative/>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Smith, T. (2015, June 21).

throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. For more information, please visit <http://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-store>.

Spokane Washington

In 2010, residents and health officials in Spokane, Washington created the Spokane Healthy Corner Store project in the West Central Neighborhood.¹⁰³ This low-income neighborhood lacks adequate access to a supermarket, but has several corner stores located in the area, making it an ideal location to start the program.¹⁰⁴ This program was administered by the West Central Healthy Neighbors Committee and Spokane Regional Health District, and was sponsored by a grant from Washington Department of Healthy Communities Prevention to Work and funding from the Spokane Regional Health District.¹⁰⁵ Organizers pulled ideas from best practices in other areas, specifically the Delridge Healthy Corner Store Project in Seattle, Washington.¹⁰⁶ After receiving applications from several stores in the area, they choose two stores for the start of the program: Dairy Mart and Bong's Grocery and Deli.¹⁰⁷ The stores needed to adhere to several guidelines to qualify as members of the Spokane Healthy Corner Store Project, including: agreeing to stock healthier food, accept EBT and WIC, market healthy foods and the Spokane Healthy Corner Store project, and follow tobacco and alcohol law.¹⁰⁸ In return, the program provided assistance with store layout and display, marketing and promotional materials, business training and consultations.¹⁰⁹ This included providing a "Healthy Corner Store Area" with a produce rack as well as shelving to hold whole grains and recipes. They also provided labels on the shelf to mark healthy food.¹¹⁰ Additionally, they connected the corner stores to two gardens in the area in order to provide fresh local produce.¹¹¹ The Spokane Healthy Corner Store Project established a toolkit which can be assessed here for more information: <http://www.srhd.org/documents/PAN/Spokane-Healthy-Corner-Store-Toolkit-Final.docx>.

¹⁰³ Tazuin, N., & Stewart, C. (2011). Spokane Healthy Corner Store Project: A Toolkit for Neighborhood Organizers. Retrieved from <http://www.srhd.org/documents/PAN/Spokane-Healthy-Corner-Store-Toolkit-Final.docx>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Tazuin, N. & Stewart, C. (2011).; Spokane Regional Health District. (March 1, 2011). *Bong's set to unveil its progress as a Spokane Healthy Corner Store March 5*. Retrieved from <http://www.srhd.org/news.asp?id=199>

¹⁰⁶ Tazuin, N. & Stewart, C. (2011).

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Regional Health District. (March 1, 2011).

¹¹¹ The Fig Tree. (October 2011). *Healthy Corner Stores Crop Up in Neighborhoods that are considered to be in a 'food-desert'*. Retrieved from <http://www.thefigtree.org/oct11/100111healthystores.html>.

Watsonville, California

Located in Central California, Watsonville, California is a city of 51,544 people, primarily Hispanic.¹¹² Due to its high rate of obesity, the United Way of Santa Cruz County established the youth advocacy group Jóvenes SANOS devoted to alleviating childhood obesity.¹¹³ Despite the presence a healthy food program for restaurants and Metro transit stations in the area, Jóvenes SANOS began a healthy corner store program in 2013.¹¹⁴ The city had originally attempted a healthy corner store program, but store owners had stopped adhering to the guideline and customers were unaware of the changes.¹¹⁵ It was determined that corner stores primarily needed help marketing their healthy food options.¹¹⁶ The group initially received funding from Healthy Eating Active Communities (HEAC) of the California Endowment and Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to promote healthy living and fight childhood obesity.¹¹⁷ Corner stores participate in the Healthy Corner Market Project for six months.¹¹⁸ Jóvenes SANOS provides a stipend to participating corner stores to purchase healthier items, and provides grocery store consultations, training, and marketing material to the store.¹¹⁹ Their business model is unique in that they “use short term incentives funded through local grantors to build a bridge from the existing business model to a new, healthier model.”¹²⁰ At their first corner store, Vicky’s Produce, Jóvenes SANOS also cleaned the store’s façade, and worked with local artists and muralists to paint a new mural on the storefront.¹²¹ So far, five corner stores have agreed to participate in the Healthy Corner Store Market Program.¹²²

Apache Healthy Stores

The Apache Healthy Stores program was a pilot program initially developed by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.¹²³ This program was started as a way to improve

¹¹² United States Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009-2013. (2014). *EasyStats*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/easystats/>.; Salud America!. (2014). *Latino Brother’s Corner Store Markets*. Retrieved from http://www.communitycommons.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Healthy-Marketing_JovenesSanosCornerMarkets.pdf.

¹¹³ Salud America!. (2014).; United Way of Santa Cruz County. (N.D.) *JÓÓvenes SANOS*

¹¹⁴ Salud America!. (2014).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities. (2014). *HKHC Case Examples: Healthy Corner Stores*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org/node/675>.; Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities. (2014). *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org/>.

¹¹⁸ Salud America!. (2014).

¹¹⁹ Salud America!. (2014); Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities. (2014).

¹²⁰ United Way of Santa Cruz County. (N.D.) *Healthy Corner Market Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.unitedwaysc.org/news/healthy-corner-market-project>.

¹²¹ Salud America!. (2014); United Way of Santa Cruz County. (N.D.)

¹²² Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities. (2014).

¹²³ Lipschultz, A., Semler, I., & Stabenau, A. (2013). *Healthy Corner Stores: A Food Justice Solution Model*. [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://pitweb.pitzer.edu/redfordconservancy/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2015/01/Healthy-Corner-Stores.pdf>.

the eating habits and healthy food options for members of the Apache Nation.¹²⁴ The original program was administered in the White Mountain and San Carlos Apache reservations, which are located in eastern Arizona.¹²⁵ The program, which was administered over one year (from June 2003-June 2004), provided fifteen food stores with marketing through flyers, posters, shelf labels, cooking demonstrations, radio messages, and cartoons in local newspapers.¹²⁶ After completion of the pilot program, a study was done to assess the effectiveness of the program in promoting healthy eating in the community. The results showed an increase in the purchase of fruits, vegetables, and high fiber cereals by household.¹²⁷ However, they did not find a significant decrease in the consumption of less healthy snacks and fast foods.¹²⁸ They took this to mean that the program helped the intervention group's diets from deteriorating further, but that the changes need to continue over time.¹²⁹ The pilot program, which started in the Apache Nation, has expanded due to partnership with the supermarket chain Bashas, and they are working to bring the program to the Navajo nation as well.¹³⁰ For more information, please visit: <http://healthystores.org/projects/archive/apache-healthy-stores/> or http://www.nnsdp.org/Healthy_Stores.aspx.

¹²⁴ Ethelbah, B. Gittelsohn, J. (N.D.). *Apache Healthy Stores: Results of the Main Trial and Future Directions*. Retrieved from <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/AHSreport.pdf>.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.; Healthystore.org. (2006). *Apache Healthy Stores*. Retrieved from <http://healthystores.org/projects/archive/apache-healthy-stores/>.

¹²⁷ Ethelbah, B. Gittelsohn, J. (N.D.).

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Ibid

¹³⁰ Healthystore.org. (2006).

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONS FOR CONVENIENCE STORE OWNERS/MANAGERS

Questions for Convenience Stores Owners/Managers

Hello, I am (your name) with the Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development. We are working for the Mount Rogers Health District to develop a business plan for “healthier corner stores” in the Twin Counties. The goal of the project is to improve access to nutritious foods in the region.

I would like to speak to you about your store and discuss the healthy foods you already sell.

This a brief survey and should not take more than 15 minutes.

(Ask to speak with the owner or manager. If neither are available, ask to call back at another time. Also, make a note of who you are talking to... owner or manager.)

Background

1. How long has your store been in operation?
2. (If owner/manager) How long have you owned/managed the store?
3. How would you describe your store?
 - a. Is it a grocery store, neighborhood corner store, etc.?
 - b. Small, medium, large in terms of annual revenue and number of customers?
 - c. Location: On a main street? Surrounded by neighborhoods? In a commercial center?

Operation

4. How would you describe your customer demographic?
 - a. Socioeconomic status?
 - b. Families/individuals
 - c. How do they arrive at your store (drive/walk)?
 - d. Stores customer radius? Where are they coming from? E.g. Inside town, inside the county, passersby, adjacent neighborhoods only
5. What are your top selling items?
 - a. Top selling food items?
6. Do you sell fresh fruits/produce?
 - a. If so, what?
 - b. Who is your supplier?
 - c. Are they delivered to you, or do you pick them up?
 - d. How often are fruits/produce delivered?
 - e. How would you describe the clientele that purchase these items?
7. Do you sell any of the following products (indicate all that apply):
 - a. 100% whole grains:
 - i. Rolled oats
 - ii. Barley
 - iii. Wild rice
 - b. Low-fat or skim yogurt
 - iv. Flavored
 - v. Unflavored (plain, no sweeteners)

- c. Milk substitutes: soy milk, almond milk, etc.
 - d. Eggs
 - e. Nuts, seeds, beans and lentils (sodium free)
 - f. Plain water
 - g. 100% juice
 - h. Meat
8. Do you sell any organic food products? Any “local” food products?
 9. How would you describe the clientele that purchase these items?
 10. Do you group healthier foods and stock them in a specific place in the store?

Discussion

11. How would you promote the consumption of healthier food options in this region?
12. In your opinion, what are the major barriers to buying healthier foods in this region?
13. Do you think that if your store offered more healthy food options and were provided assistance with marketing those items, that customers would be more prone to buying these foods?
 - a. Why? Why not?
14. If you'd like to learn more, there will be a meeting in December that will present the findings and proposed businesses plan to increase the number of Healthier Corner Stores in your area. Would you be interested in attending this meeting?
15. As we move forward, do you think your store would be open to participate in a possible pilot program to introduce more healthy food options?

APPENDIX D: SURVEY INVENTORY

Convenience Stores

Each convenience store was called up to three times. Seven convenience stores were surveyed and expressed interest in attending a meeting to learn more about the Healthy Corner Store Initiative. One store asked for more information. Thirteen stores provided survey responses, but were not interested in the pilot program or cannot participate without permission from their own or corporate headquarters. OED is still in contact with six other stores who have not provided responses, but who have also not declined the survey. OED was unable to reach six stores due to language barriers or the phone was disconnected. OED marked twenty stores as having declined taking the survey. These stores were either not interested in the survey or program, expressed they were too busy, or told OED to call back later each time OED staff called.

Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
Citgo-Hillsville Family Mart	206 W Stuart Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-5423	Yes	Yes	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Fox Creek General Store	7116 Troutdale Hwy, Troutdale, VA 24378	276-579-6033	n/a	n/a	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Grayson Express	2686 Grayson Pkwy, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-9173	Yes	Yes	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Quik Chek	335 E Main St, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-3451	Yes	No	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Rixeys Market	2449 Wilson Highway Rt.58 West, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-3991	Yes	Yes	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
TNT Grocery	310 Stag Ln, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-7220	No	No	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Whitetop Food & Gas	16164 Highlands Pkwy, Whitetop, VA 24292	276-388-3465	Yes	Yes	Surveyed; expressed interest in program
Marathon-Race In	1067 W Stuart Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-3939	Yes	No	Surveyed, mail info to manager
Nester Store	13055 Danville Pike, Laurel Fork, VA 24352	276-398-2521	Yes	Yes	Surveyed but need to check with owner
Cockerham Food Mart-BP	45 Kelly Rd, Fancy Gap, VA 24328	276-728-2143	Yes	No	Surveyed but need to check with owner
Cockerham's BP	1115 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-3036	Yes	No	Surveyed but need to check with owner

Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
Cockerham's	315 S Main St, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-5780	Yes	No	Surveyed but need to check with owner
Cockerham Food Mart-Gulf	7766 Fancy Gap Hwy, Fancy Gap, VA 24328	276-728-5681	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed; need to check with owner
Cockerham-Gulf	603 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-6173	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed; need to check with owner
Cockerham-Chevron	900 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-7161	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed; need to check with owner
Kangaroo Express	62 Kelly Rd, Fancy Gap, VA 24328	276-728-7077	Yes	Yes	Surveyed, Corporate Approval Required
Kangaroo Express	2662 Old Galax Pike, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-5011	Yes	Yes	Surveyed, Corporate Approval Required
Cavalier Express	155 Floyd Pike, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-3621	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
Tilley's Grocery	3432 Wards Gap Rd, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-3368	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
Kangaroo Express-S Main	806 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-4144	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
E-Z Stop	105 W Stuart Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-0101	Yes	No	Surveyed
State Line Store	3979 Jefferson Hwy, Mouth of Wilson, VA 24363	276-579-4562	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
Sunoco Gas Station	14314 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-4893	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
Wilco Hess	509 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-7282	Yes	Yes	Surveyed
E & R Oil	624 N Independence Ave, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-3633	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
Log House Trading Post	4013 Troutdale Hwy, Mouth of Wilson, VA 24363	276-579-4440	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
Marathon	9345 Elk Creek Pkwy, Elk Creek, VA 24326	276-655-4780	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
New Riverside Store	5785 Fries Rd, Galax, VA 24333	276-744-3002	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
On the Run-Exxon	26 Airport Rd, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-5021	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
Roadrider Market	958 S Main St, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-7220	n/a	n/a	Awaiting Response
Coon Ridge Grocery Gulf	4157 Poplar Camp Rd, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-4235	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach
Gulf	177 U S # 58 58, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-4194	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach
La Esmeralda	E Main Street, Independence, VA	276-773-2200	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach

Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
Shell	7526 Carrollton Pike, Galax, VA 24333	757-238-3668	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach
Tienda Mexicana	404 N Givens St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-2128	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach
Tienda Hispana La Estrella	114 Hanes Rd, Galax, VA 24333	276-238-0561	n/a	n/a	Unable to Reach
58 Grocery	10009 Grayson Pkwy, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-2588	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Baywood Market	10405 Grayson Pkwy, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-0827	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Cana Country Store	14314 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-4893	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Coleman's Store	450 Winding Rd, Fries, VA 24330	276-744-7471	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Country Convenience	4787 Fries Rd, Galax, VA 24333	276-744-7876	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Dugspur Deli Mart	10287 Floyd Pike, Dugspur, VA 24325	276-728-2488	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Galax Food Mart	812 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-8741	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Gladeville Grocery	8308 Carrollton Pike, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-6934	Yes	Yes	Declined Survey
Hershberger's Country Market	231 Farmers Market Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-0275	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Hillsville Deli Mart	301 Sylvatus Smith Hwy # 1, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-9214	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Lil Country Store	3408 Pipers Gap Rd, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-3207	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Love's Travel Stop	227 Old Pipers Gap Rd., I-77 Exit 1, Lamsburg, VA 24351	276-755-3117	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Marathon	12178 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-3601	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Marathon	Kelly Rd, Fancy Gap, VA 24328	276-728-7077	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Old Town Market	406 W Oldtown St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-3280	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Star Market	2406 Scenic Rd, Fries, VA 24330	276-744-2501	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Stuart Drive Mini Mart	1012 W Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-2562	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Ted's Market, Marathon	6853 Wilson Hwy, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-2210	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
The Pantry - Kangaroo Express	532 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-7474	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey
Wolfe Glade Grocery	2918 Glendale Rd, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-9544	n/a	n/a	Declined Survey

Grocery Stores

Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options at Store?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
21 Grocery	9345 Elk Creek Pkwy, Elk Creek, VA 24326	276-655-4780	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Horton's Supermarket	1009 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-6662	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Food City	955-A East Stuart Drive, Galax, VA 24333	276-238-0700	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Walmart Supercenter	1140 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-7113	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Grant's Supermarket	544 E Stuart Dr, Galax, VA 24333	276-238-1561	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Super Dollar Discount Foods	845 W Stuart Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-2155	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Food Lion	125 S Main St, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-9111	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Red Hill General Store	1035 Sylvatus Smith Hwy, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-3456	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Food City	568 E Main St, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-2751	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed

Dollar Stores

Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options at Store?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
Family Dollar	14494 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-2181	Yes	No	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	7218 Fancy Gap Hwy, Fancy Gap, VA 24328	276-728-2232	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	806 E Main St, Fries, VA 24330	276-744-0023	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Family Dollar	202 Grayson St W, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-6471	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	820 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-235-7003	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	949 E Stuart Dr # D, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-9601	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar Tree	1130 E Stuart Dr, Ste C, Galax, VA 24333	276-236-3464	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	845 W Stuart Dr # 1, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-4289	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed

Family Dollar	117 N Main St, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-4643	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed
Dollar General	572 E Main St, Independence, VA 24348	276-773-2758	n/a	n/a	Not Surveyed

Produce Markets

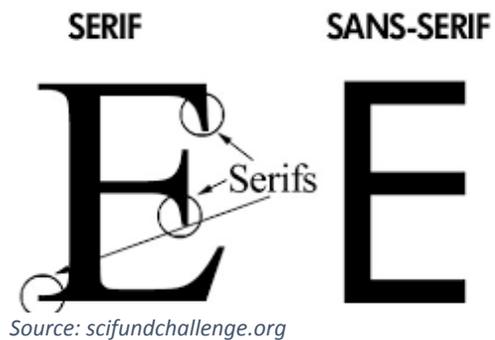
Store Name	Address	Phone Number	Healthy Food Options at Store?	Fresh Fruit or Produce?	Survey Input Provided
B & B Produce	12902 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-4441	Yes	Yes	
Mountain Man	13142 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-3871	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Rambo's Fresh Market	15455 Fancy Gap Hwy, Cana, VA 24317	276-755-1101	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Superior Produce	808 S Main St, Galax, VA 24333	276-238-0022	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed
Virginia Produce Co.	227 Industrial Park Dr, Hillsville, VA 24343	276-728-7525	Yes	Yes	Not Surveyed

APPENDIX E: BEST PRACTICES IN SIGN DESIGN

The first thing that should be decided when designing a sign for advertising is what is the primary message and purpose of the sign.¹³¹ A motorist may only have a few seconds when driving by to read, so it is important that the sign have a simple message than can be read and understood quickly.¹³² It is also important that it is obvious to the reader what business or enterprise the sign is advertising.¹³³ The logo for the business or organization should also be “modern, relevant, and suitable for any demographic [they] are trying to reach.”¹³⁴ An effective technique is to incorporate a “call to action” such as asking readers to visit a website, call a telephone number, or scan a QR code.¹³⁵

Figure 1: Serif vs. San-Serif Fonts

Another important attribute when designing a sign is visibility and legibility. A sign for any type of business or organization needs to be visible, especially when being viewed from a parking lot or the street.¹³⁶ One way to ensure that the sign is visible is to use the right size of lettering and font. It is suggested that the size of the letters is determined before the size of the sign, and that the size of the sign be determined by the size of the letters.¹³⁷ Also, use uppercase and lowercase letters instead of all uppercase letters as a font in all caps is actually less visible at a distance.¹³⁸ Different types of font also affect the legibility of the sign.¹³⁹ For example, script style fonts are difficult to read from a distance and should only be used for signs that will be read up close.¹⁴⁰ It is suggested that only two (no more than 3) fonts should be used for the sign, and that the fonts should be from related font



¹³¹ Anonymous. (2016). *How to Design A Sign*. Retrieved from <http://www.thesignchef.com/how-to-design-a-sign#Secret6>.; Linchpinseo. (N.D). *10 Tips for Creating Effective Print and Advertising Designs*. Retrieved from <http://linchpinseo.com/10-tips-for-creating-effective-print-advertising-designs>.

¹³² Ibid; International Sign Association. (2013). *Signs as Marketing*. Retrieved from <http://www.signs.org/Resources/Signage101/SignsasMarketing.aspx>.; Shashi Bellamkonda. (June 12, 2013). 5 Reasons Why Signs Work For Your Small Business. *Small Business Trends*. Retrieved from <http://smallbiztrends.com/2013/06/business-signs-work.html>.

¹³³ Anonymous. (2016).

¹³⁴ Linchpinseo. (N.D).

¹³⁵ Ibid; Brackett, E. (2009). *Graphic Design 101 for Marketing Professionals* [Powerpoint Slides]. Retrieved from <http://www.slideshare.net/visiblelogic/graphic-design-101-for-marketers-and-business-owners>.

¹³⁶ Ready Training Online. (March 13, 2015). *How Outdoor Signage Impacts Sales*. Retrieved from <http://www.readytrainingonline.com/2015/03/13/outdoor-signage-marketing/>.

¹³⁷ Anonymous. (2016).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Fell, J. (May 21, 2014). 3 Design Tips for Creating Signs That Attract Customers. *Entrepreneur*. Retrieved from <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/233961>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

families.¹⁴¹ Bolder fonts should be used for the main information on the sign such as the business name, phone number, and/or web address.¹⁴² Also, when deciding between Serif and San Serif fonts, Sans Serif fonts are best for communicating “quick bursts of information” whereas Serif is best for large bodies of text, so Serif fonts are ideal for signs.¹⁴³ Finally, it is important to ensure the font is not copyrighted.¹⁴⁴

Another important feature in designing a successful sign is the use of space on the sign. A sign should have centers of interest which focus the viewer’s attention.¹⁴⁵ Any keyword, graphic, or logo should be at the top of the sign, and the sign should be read from left to right like how people read a book.¹⁴⁶ Also, if the designer would like to place the logo in the middle, then it is suggested that the logo or text be placed slightly above the center of the sign as this is where a reader’s “optical center” is located.¹⁴⁷ Otherwise, the logo will appear too low on the sign.¹⁴⁸ Another effective technique is to group similar elements together on the sign.¹⁴⁹ This will “guide the viewer to different parts of the message”, and will make the sign easier to read.¹⁵⁰ Filling the sign with text and graphics will only make the sign seem cluttered.¹⁵¹ Another use of space is “kerning”, or to change the spacing between each letter.¹⁵² A designer can adjust the spacing to put two thin letters closer to each other which will make the sign easier to read.¹⁵³ Finally, the sign needs to line up in a “visual and readable arrangement.”¹⁵⁴

Figure 2: Optical Center Example



Source: <http://www.thesignchef.com/how-to-design-a-sign#Secret6>

Color is another important factor in marketing. One study found that 80% of the recognition of a trademark was due to its color.¹⁵⁵ However, it is important to be aware that, while there are

¹⁴¹ Anonymous. (2016).; Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (No Date). *A Basic Guide to Sign Design for Signmakers*. Retrieved from <http://www.signwarehouse.com/blog/sign-design-101-or-sign-design-made-simple-more-or-less/>.

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Anonymous. (2016).

¹⁴⁴ Linchpinseo. (N.D).

¹⁴⁵ Engle, Chad. (March 23rd, 2010). *The Lost Principles of Design*. Retrieved from <http://www.fuelyourcreativity.com/the-lost-principles-of-design/>.

¹⁴⁶ International Sign Association. (2013).

¹⁴⁷ Anonymous. (2016).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Brackett, E. (2009).; Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (N.D.); Anonymous. (2016).; Chavanu, B. (November 25, 2014). 5 Basic Principles of Graphic Design You Take for Granted Everyday. Retrieved from <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-basic-principles-graphic-design-take-granted-everyday/>.

¹⁵⁰ Chavanu, B. (November 25, 2014).; Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (N.D.)

¹⁵¹ Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (N.D.)

¹⁵² Ibid; Anonymous. (2016).

¹⁵³ Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (N.D.)

¹⁵⁴ Chavanu, B. (November 25, 2014).

¹⁵⁵ Fell, J. (May 21, 2014).

some attributes that people associate with different colors, the interpretation of a particular color to each person will be different due to a variety of factors (environment, culture, gender etc.).¹⁵⁶ However, Table 1 provides a summary of all the colors' basic associations and how they are used in advertising. It is also suggested that the sign be colorful as the Pennsylvania College of Optometry found that an extra color increases reader's retention of a sign by 78%.¹⁵⁷ One effective use of color in sign design is the use of contrasting colors. This means using a light-colored lettering on a dark background (or vice versa), as legibility of the lettering will increase with an increase in contrast.¹⁵⁸ The most versatile background therefore is white.¹⁵⁹ Another proper use of color or imagery would be to include a graphic or photograph on the sign.¹⁶⁰ A photo increases the recall of signs by 300%, but all photos and graphics should be high quality images.¹⁶¹ It is also recommended that signs that will be appealing to automobile traffic should have a border since a border increases reading speed and brings focus directly on the sign.¹⁶² Finally, if the business or organization has a logo, then the logo should have a similar color scheme.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁶ Ibid; Kaminska, P. (October 14, 2014). The Impact of Color in Advertising, Marketing, and Design. Retrieved from <https://www.blurgroup.com/blogs/group/the-impact-of-colour-in-advertising-marketing-and-design/>.

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous. (2016).

¹⁵⁸ Fell, J. (May 21, 2014).; Anonymous. (2016).; Signwarehouse.com Sign College. (N.D.)

¹⁵⁹ Anonymous. (2016).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ Ibid

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Linchpinseo. (N.D).

Table 1: Color Associations and How They Are Used in Advertising¹⁶⁴

Color	What It Symbolizes	When It's Used in Advertising
Red	Energy, Strength, Power, Passion, Desire, Love	Red is used to try to get people to make quick decisions. It enhances metabolism and has very high visibility. It is also used to advertise products associated with energy, including energy drinks, sports, and high physical activity.
Orange	Joy, Sunshine, Citrus, Fall	Orange is often associated with healthy food and stimulates appetite due to its citrus color. It also is an eye-catcher due to its high visibility and can be used to market food products and toys.
Yellow	Sunshine, Happiness, Cheerfulness	Yellow is used to promote children's and leisure products and to grab attention. However, it should not use if you are trying to suggest stability and safety. It contrasts well with a dark color to ensure visibility.
Green	Nature, Growth, Harmony, Freshness	Green is used to advertise drugs, medical products, "green" products, and anything associated with nature.
Blue	Sky, Sea, Wisdom, Tranquility	Blue is the most popular color among both men and women. Blue slows down the metabolism, and therefore should be avoided when advertising food products. It is often used when marketing products related to cleanliness, air and sky, and the ocean. It is also frequently used when advertising "tech products."
Purple	Nobility, Luxury, Creativity, Independence, Magic	Purple is viewed by some as an artificial color as it does not appear frequently in nature. It is used to advertise women's and children's products.
White	Light, Goodness, Purity, Cleanliness	Due to its association with cleanliness, coolness, and purity, it is often used when advertising tech products, charitable organization, and healthcare. It is also often used when advertising low-weight, low-fat food, and dairy products.
Black	Power, Elegance, Authority	Using a black background can diminish readability. However, it contrast's well with bright colors, and can make the colors stand out more.

Source: www.color-wheel-pro.com/color-meaning.html

¹⁶⁴ QSX Software Group. (2015). *Color Meaning*. Retrieved from <http://www.color-wheel-pro.com/color-meaning.html>.; Brackett, E. (2009); Fell, J. (May 21, 2014).

APPENDIX F: CONTACTS FOR HEALTHY CORNER STORE WORKSHOPS

RESOURCES FOR HEALTHY CORNER STORES: INFORMATION AND WORKSHOP CONTACTS

Regulations and Food Safety for Stores

- Joell Eifert, Direct of the Food Innovations Program through Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension
Joell.eifert@vt.edu; 540-231-2483

The Food Innovations Program offers assistance to Virginia's food processing industry to produce high quality, safe and innovative food products. It works to increase awareness of food safety issues, pertinent food regulations, and general concerns associated with starting a food business. Joell Eifert would be a good first contact to gain access to the expertise of this program and possible food-related workshops.

- Renee Boyer, rroider@vt.edu
Robert Williams, Rowill3@vt.edu
Meliss Chase, mechase@vt.edu

These three extension agents offer food safety trainings, including the National Restaurant Associations ServSafe Manager Food Protection Certification, ServSafe Food Handler Certification and Cooking for Crowds. For more information, you can visit <https://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/food-health/food-safety/index.html> or call one of the three extension agents.

Healthy Foods – What they are

- Dr. Elena L. Serrano, Associate Professor at Virginia Tech and Family Nutrition Program Project Director under Virginia Cooperative Extension
serrano@vt.edu; 540-231-3464

Dr. Serrano's research focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of programs, policies and practices to address childhood obesity including community food systems programs such as farmers markets, food delivery programs and farm-to-fork dining. As an extension specialist in human nutrition, foods and exercise, she is operates programs under the Family Nutrition Program.

- Smart Choices in the Grocery Store
<https://www.ext.vt.edu/topics/food-health/family-nutrition-program/index.html>

Virginia Cooperative Extension offers a monthly program centered on buying affordable, healthy food from grocery stores. The program targets grocery stores with high SNAP redemption to better reach low-income Virginians, encouraging them to eat smart. The program is "a "point-of-purchase" grocery store experience to provide a taste test, recipe ideas, nutrition information displays and handouts, and store intercom messages about a different topic each month."

Contact Pattie Fields, VCE Grayson County to learn more about the program and how it may be adapted to the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative.

pfields@vt.edu; 276-773-2491

Marketing

- Donne Wertalik, Director of Marketing at Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business
wertalikd@vt.edu; 540-231-3096
Donna Wertalik teaches upper level undergraduate classes in Advertising, Marketing Communications and Marketing Management. She also runs her own firm, Innovative Marketing Strategic Consulting, which focuses on market research, strategy, tactics, ROI and social media and analytic assessments. She and her students may be able to offer assistance closer to the summer or fall of 2016

- Dr. Theresa Nartea, Assistant Profess at Virginia State University and Extension Specialist in Marketing and Agribusiness
tnartea@vsu.edu; 804-524-5491
Dr. Nartea leads a Small Farm Marketing and Business Program, providing educational curriculum and direct technical support to projects including Direct Consumer Marketing, Value Added Enterprises, E-commerce and social media for small farms. She has offered workshops in Carroll county on how to create, market and operate a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Project. Her input on how to market healthy foods, particularly produce, could be insightful.