

AUSTIN, TEXAS, US: HEALTHY CORNER STORES

#retail #healthyfood #businessadvice #marketing #fooddeserts #northamerica #supplychain #convenience #freshfood

THE ACTION AND ITS AIMS: Under the Healthy Corner Stores initiative, corner stores (including gas stations) in two zip codes are adopted by residents, who build relationships with owners and, together with a professional business consultant, help them to stock more healthy foods and host community events. The aim is to increase availability to fresh, affordable, convenient, and nutritious food in low-access neighbourhoods.

WHEN IT WAS INTRODUCED: The initiative began in 2015.

WHY IT WAS NEEDED: It was needed because 38% of residents in the two areas are food insecure, while there is high prevalence of fast food restaurants and convenience stores and lack of access to full service grocery stores.

WHO INITIATED IT, WHO IS INVOLVED: The initiative is supported by the City of Austin under its 'Fresh for Less' initiative and implemented by community health coalition Go Austin/Vamos! Austin (GAVA), in partnership non-profit organisation The Food Trust.



Fresh Fruits and Vegetables in Corner Store, shutterstock/Nomad_Soul

IMPACTS TO DATE: The initiative has worked with eight corner stores. GAVA is now working with Austin Public Health to create a sustainable supply chain for fresh produce for the corner stores, enabling them to diversify products and lower prices.

MORE INFORMATION:

- Charter: Memorandum: Response to Food Access Resolution 20160303-020, City of Austin, July 2016 http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Sustainability/07-27-16_Memo_to_MC_re-Response_to_Food_Access_Resolution_20160303-020_....pdf

A similar programme, called 'Baltimarket Healthy Stores', has been implemented in Baltimore (USA) to provide corner store owners with incentives, infrastructure, education and marketing strategies to stock healthier foods (more info: Briefing: Baltimarket Healthy Stores Program <https://www.health.maryland.gov/mchrc/Documents/Baltimarket-overview-Grant14-019.pdf>). Toronto (Canada) also ran a Healthy Corner Stores programme along similar lines from 2014. However, it was brought to an end as the resource inputs to ensure efficacy were too high and it was hard to achieve all the required interventions, working on behaviour change in tandem with supporting store operators and ensuring a stable supply of high quality, low cost, healthy foods (more info: Report: Toronto Food Strategy, Toronto Public Health, October 2016 <https://www.toronto.ca/leqdocs/mmis/2016/hl/bqrd/backgroundfile-97433.pdf>).

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