

# The Lowell Community Food Assessment

## Creating Capacity for a Healthy Food System



Prepared for the Lowell Community Food Security Coalition  
2013 | Andrew Camp and Lydia Sisson

### ABSTRACT

*In 2011 the Lowell Food Security Coalition elected to conduct a Community Food Assessment to enhance a collective understanding of the resources and gaps present within Lowell's food system, so that they could create common goals, strategic plans, and policy recommendations to inform future FSC endeavors for ensuring a more food secure Lowell. Findings from this two year long research process reveal that limited access to quality produce, language barriers, cultural differences, and cost are the leading factors undermining residents' ability to maintain healthful eating habits, leading to a dissatisfaction with their current diets or outright hunger. Language and cultural barriers also limit residents' ability to access necessary social services, and perpetuate misconceptions around nutrition and healthy eating habits. Results also show that few opportunities exist in Lowell to support local food producers and locally produced foods. Interest in urban agriculture is growing, although concerns over growing food safely in untested urban soils, time and space constraints, and seasonal and cultural differences in growing practices prevent more widespread participation. Finally, Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) are an invaluable component of Lowell's food system, providing services that are undercut by limited time and resources, tight budgets, and a shortage volunteers and trained staff. To develop year-round selection and a more secure emergency food network, EFPs must build out and diversify their distribution sources. With these findings in mind, the FSC devised recommendations aimed at encouraging greater support for local and regional food production, ensuring improved access to— and wider distribution of good foods, enhancing nutritional and food preparation knowledge, and reinforcing benefit programs and the role of Emergency Food Providers.*



Youth press cider from local apples at Mill City Grows' first Harvest Festival, which celebrated the success of its first garden.

*Photo: ©2012 Gil Slater courtesy of Mill City Grows*

<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Background.....	5
Food Production.....	7
Food Distribution.....	8
Consumption.....	9
Conclusion .....	10
<b>The Lowell Community Food Assessment.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Background.....	13
Methodology.....	14
Lowell Demographics.....	15
<b>Food Production.....</b>	<b>19</b>
We Once Farmed .....	19
Finding Local, Locally: the Lowell Farmers’ Market and Community Supported Agriculture .....	20
Conclusion: Food Production .....	25
<b>Food Distribution .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Where We Shop .....	27
How We Get There .....	27
Finding the Foods We Need.....	28
Competing with Advertising .....	29
Stretching Food Dollars with Food Stamps.....	29
Turning to Emergency Resources in Times of Need .....	30
Conclusion: Distribution.....	33
<b>Consumption.....</b>	<b>35</b>
Household Food Security .....	35
Nutritional Understanding and Food Knowledge .....	36
The Costs of Healthy Living.....	37
Conclusion: Consumption .....	38
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>40</b>
Recommendations for Growing Local Food, Enhancing the Distribution of Good Food, and Cultivating Healthy Lifestyles .....	40
<b>Works Cited .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>43</b>
Emergency Food Provider Survey.....	43
Focus Group Questions.....	49
Consumer Survey .....	53
Consumer Survey Results .....	55
Retail Store Assessment .....	64
Retail Store Assessment Results .....	66



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Community Teamwork, Inc.  
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Lowell Alliance for Families & Neighborhoods  
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Merrimack Valley Food Bank, Inc.  
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project  
The City of Lowell Department of Planning & Development  
The Greater Lowell Health Alliance  
United Teen Equality Center, Inc.  
University of Massachusetts, Lowell

We must also thank those organizations that were so closely involved with steering the research process:

Catholic Charities  
The Open Pantry of Greater Lowell  
YWCA

Countless volunteers gathered Consumer Surveys and Food Retail Surveys, and we are indebted to their generous donation of time. We thank each interviewee, focus group participant, and survey respondent, whose invaluable feedback and individual perspectives will so dramatically shape the future of food security in Lowell. Thank you to the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Coalition for a Better Acre, and the Lowell Senior Center for furnishing space for focus group discussions. We also thank the dedicated Interns, researchers, and volunteers who conducted focus groups, compiled data, and provided informative reports, including:

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Finally, none of the research presented here would have been possible without the generous grant provided by Third Sector New England. We are grateful for their steadfast and sustained support.

### Executive Summary

#### Background

##### The Lowell Food Security Coalition

The mission of the Lowell Food Security Coalition (FSC) is to increase the community's engagement in– and the capacity of our local food system, and ensure that all constituents have equal access to grow, purchase, and consume healthy and culturally appropriate food in quantities that can sustain a healthy community. As an official subcommittee of the 10 Year Plan to End Hunger and Homelessness, the FSC is comprised of members from many different sectors including: health services, youth services, emergency food providers, farming and gardening projects, universities, and others. In July 2011 Third Sector New England awarded the FSC a Capacity Building Grant in the amount of \$20,000 to conduct this Community Food Assessment.

##### The Lowell Community Food Assessment

The primary goal of a Community Food Assessment (CFA) is to create a picture of a community's food system. By enhancing a common understanding of the resources and gaps present within Lowell's food system, the FSC will create common goals, strategic plans, and policy recommendations that inform the FSC's future endeavors for ensuring a more food secure Lowell.

Goals for the CFA, as set by the FSC, include:

- Empowering the voices of constituents and partner organizations while providing important data and a lasting network for future initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Identifying gaps and voids in the existing food system as well as resources that can contribute to improving programs and services for the benefit of the people most in need of nutritious food.
- Creating policy and procedures for building a healthier community.
- Exposing community resources that can be shared with constituents, and understanding how we can increase our effectiveness in encouraging a healthier and more aware community.
- Identifying areas where local food production can be increased and raising support and interest in the creation of more resources for local farmers and gardeners.
- Acting as a tool that will increase the capacity for community organizing, especially among constituent groups.
- Promoting economic development via our local food system.

#### Methodology

Existing tools and resources were utilized in the development of our methodology, including the USDA's *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*, and *What's Cooking in Your Food System?*, a publication by the Community Food Security Coalition. Utilizing preexisting formats streamlined the research process, however, the FSC was consistently involved in decision-making processes and all organizations were given the chance to provide guidance and feedback. The Lowell Community Food Assessment contains three major areas of focus: food production, food distribution, and food consumption.<sup>1</sup> Data presented here is sourced from a combination of primary and secondary sources:

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed description of our methodology and process can be found on page 14 of the full report.

## Secondary Sources

- US Census Data
- Existing studies, reports, and databases
- Mapping databases and programs

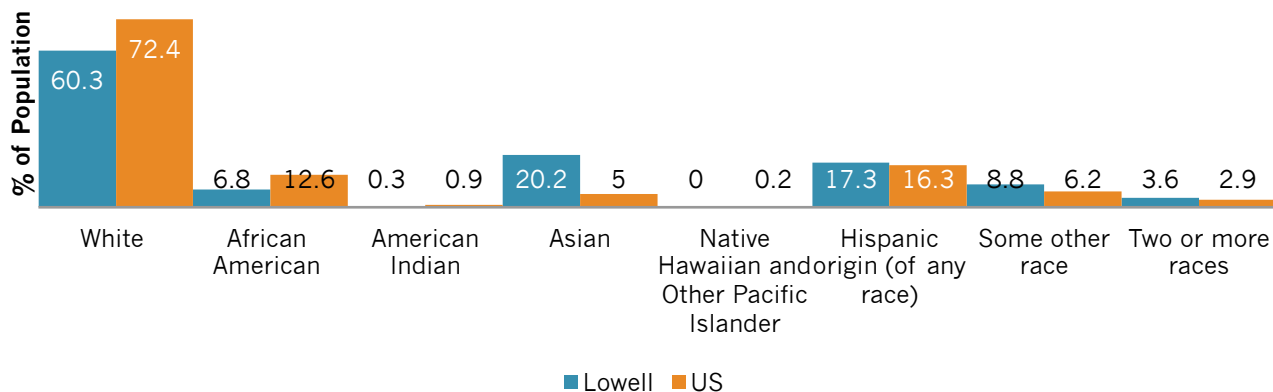
## Primary Sources

- 13 focus groups with over 150 participants
- 50 food store surveys
- Surveys from 430 Lowell residents
- 10 Emergency Food Provider surveys
- Several interviews

## Demographics

As the fourth largest city in the Commonwealth, Lowell, Massachusetts is a city of great historical depth, cultural diversity, and natural resources. The City's population of 106,519 residents is ethnically diverse: nearly one quarter of residents are foreign born and over 42% speak a language other than English at home.<sup>2</sup> According to research conducted by UMass Lowell, approximately 50% of current Lowell residents are immigrants and refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam, Brazil, Portugal, African nations, and the Dominican Republic. Despite a rich cultural heritage, Lowell experiences poverty rates above national and state averages,<sup>3</sup> the effects of which are most evident in Lowell schools where more than 75% percent of school children are eligible for free and reduced lunch,<sup>4</sup> and nearly 36% are obese, a much higher rate than in more affluent communities.<sup>5</sup>

### Race - Lowell as Compared to US



## Consumer Survey Profile

Our survey population of 430 residents very closely embodies Lowell's cultural and economic diversity.<sup>6</sup> The majority of survey respondents identify themselves as White (63%), 18% identify as Asian, 18% as Hispanic or Latino, and 4% self identify as African American (please see above table for comparison).<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, we discovered that thirty-nine percent of respondents or their household members participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/EBT), while 18% receive Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits, 16% receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), just 2% participate in Senior Coupons, and only 1% utilize Summer meals for children.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> For a more information on our survey respondents please see Consumer Survey Results on page 55.

<sup>7</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 26.

<sup>8</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 23.

### Food Production

#### Local Agriculture

Before it became the first industrial city in America, Lowell was comprised of small family farms. Today, Lowell is a rather dense urban center and, although pockets of green space and undeveloped land exist, there is little room for large-scale food production. Nearly 360 farms produce a diversity of products within 30 miles of Lowell;<sup>9</sup> however, there are few opportunities to purchase local food products in stores and restaurants, and just one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in Lowell.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, the Lowell Farmers' Market, the primary access point for local products, remains underutilized by many residents.<sup>11</sup>

#### The Lowell Farmers' Market

The Lowell Farmers' Market is the primary resource providing residents with direct access to locally produced food. Despite significant growth in recent years the Market faces several challenges, and obstacles to participation exist for both consumers and vendors.

The Lowell Farmers' Market struggles to attract shoppers, largely due to a lack of awareness about the market, site and schedule related issues, and perceptions of cost. Of those consumers surveyed who do not shop at the Lowell Farmers' Market, 42% explain that they were unaware that it existed, another 22% cite a lack of onsite parking, a lack of transportation, or disliking the market's location altogether. Twenty-one percent of these residents find that the hours and timing of the market are inconvenient, and 14% of residents who do not shop at the market feel that it is too expensive, an opinion often echoed in focus groups.<sup>12</sup>

The market does accept SNAP/EBT, WIC benefits, and Senior Coupons, making it an ideal venue for residents of all incomes to shop for nutritious foods.<sup>13</sup> Though, some focus group participants remain unclear on monetary value of their WIC and Senior Coupons, and/or how to properly redeem them.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, in order to remain viable the Lowell Farmers' Market needs support from the entire community, including customers buying with benefits and customers paying in cash.<sup>15</sup>

#### Community Supported Agriculture in Lowell

Although there are many Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs in the region, there is just one active CSA program with three distribution sites in Lowell; however, some residents participate in CSAs located in towns nearby. One community supported food project recently discontinued distribution in the City due to low participation rates, distribution limitations, and lack of follow through on behalf of their local partners.<sup>16</sup> Further research is required to understand the potential for– and feasibility of expanding CSA distribution and participation in Lowell.

#### Urban Food Production and Community Gardens

Urban agriculture is an important component of food security because it can help to reduce under– and unemployment, stimulate urban development and decrease urban blight, and create a healthier community by encouraging healthier diets, reducing the impact of food related illnesses. There are a handful of food production sites and several organizations that promote urban growing in Lowell, and interest in community gardening and urban agriculture is growing. Yet, barriers to more widespread participation in urban growing programs remain, as residents

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<sup>9</sup> For a map of these farms please visit: <http://www.zeemaps.com/pub?group=281382>

<sup>10</sup> Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is further discussed in the Food Production section on page 21

<sup>11</sup> This Lowell Farmers' Market is further discussed in the Food Production section on page 20.

<sup>12</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 19, Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012, Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Community Teamwork Inc.

<sup>14</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Chandler, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Tousinant, 2013.

express concern over growing food safely in untested urban soils, a lack of time and space to grow, as well as seasonal and cultural differences in growing here as compared to their home countries.<sup>17</sup>

## Food Distribution

### Accessibility

Like many urban communities, small markets and convenience stores dominate the food retail landscape in Lowell.<sup>18</sup> For most residents, transportation factors do not limit their ability to access food stores, and stores appear to be quite accessible for shoppers travelling by car or on foot.<sup>19</sup> Survey respondents reporting annual household incomes below \$10,000, however, are more likely to walk, to rely on a friend or family member for a ride, or to take a taxi to the grocery store, all of which adds time and expense to their weekly shopping.<sup>20</sup> A lack of reliable transportation options limits their ability to access more affordable food outlets and, in addition to prohibitive membership fees, excludes some from shoppers' clubs where they feel they could maximize spending dollars.<sup>21</sup>

### Availability

Inadequate availability of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables limits consumers' ability to make nutritious food choices, critical for maintaining healthy, balanced lifestyles. At the time of the Food Retail Survey, we found that at least 50% of stores distributed 3 or fewer fruit and vegetable varieties, while more than a third of all stores surveyed did not sell *any* produce items at all. Quality is also a significant factor, as focus group participants observe that vegetables from local stores are low quality and spoil quickly once at home.<sup>22</sup> Adding to the challenge of finding quality produce, many residents cite cost as the primary factor preventing them from eating fruits and vegetables.<sup>23</sup> In turn, many rely on canned or 'instant' food options.

### Competing with Advertising

The majority of stores surveyed feature advertisements for sugary drinks, tobacco products, lottery games, and beer or alcoholic beverages, while only a fraction of stores advertise fresh produce or promote organic products. Similarly, once inside a store's front door, surveyors were most often greeted by unhealthy snacks, baked goods, and sugary beverages.

### Assistance Programs and Benefits

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program are in high demand here in Lowell,<sup>24</sup> but participating residents still struggle to provide enough food for them and their families.<sup>25</sup> For many others, language is a key barrier to accessing these benefits. Interpreters are not available at the Lowell Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or at the Lowell WIC Office, making the process of applying for and retaining benefits difficult to navigate.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, many express frustration with the Lowell DTA, citing inconvenient hours, a shortage of staff to manage clients, and a general feeling of disrespect on behalf of DTA staff.

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<sup>17</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, and Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Question 2.

<sup>19</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Questions 12, 15, and 16.

<sup>20</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Question 2.

<sup>21</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Focus Groups: Lowell Senior Center, 2012, Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 23.

<sup>25</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Focus Groups: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.



### Emergency Food Resources

Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) such as food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other community-based food distribution programs are a crucial component of our food system, as they provide food for our community's most vulnerable. Although their work is invaluable the FSC has identified needs and gaps within the emergency food network that, if addressed, could enhance the role of EFPs and the services they provide.

### Cultural Challenges

Asians comprise 20% of Lowell's population, but represent just 1–15% of EFPs' total clientele. Few EFPs offer culturally appropriate, ethnic foods and therefore some residents do not seek out the services they need from EFPs. Others discard foods because they are inexperienced with how to prepare them and/or do not prefer how they taste. Again, language is a significant barrier to accessing these critical services as outreach efforts do not target non-English speakers, and no staff is available onsite to translate for them.

### Structural Challenges

Thirteen EFPs provide services to residents in five of Lowell's nine neighborhoods, though there are no EFP facilities within the neighborhoods of Upper and Lower Belvidere, South Lowell, Sacred Heart, Pawtucketville and Upper Belvidere. Nearly one third of the City's population live in these five neighborhoods, where they lack services within walking distance or easily accessible by public transportation.

Seasonal fluctuations in supply and client demand, as well as increased demand at the end of each month place strain on the services EFPs provide. Both EFPs and clients wish to see more fresh produce made available at pantries, though EFPs are again limited by fluctuations in supply and inadequate or no storage facilities for these products. Limited time, scant resources and tight budgets do not allow for expansion, and prevent regular resource sharing, and their ability to collaborate to create a support system for their work. Only one staff person at one agency is a trained nutritionist, the absence of which poses a significant problem for EFPs because they service a number of clients with diet related illnesses and restricted diets. Similarly, volunteers are consistently in high demand, but in short supply.

Finally, many EFPs rely heavily on The Merrimack Valley Food Bank, which speaks to the organization's invaluable work in our community. This singular reliance, however, poses a threat to the emergency food distribution network. Diversifying food sources could reduce the potential risks and the devastating effects of a food shortage if anything were to limit the supply chain from The Merrimack Valley Food Bank.

## Consumption

### Household Food Security

Households struggle to find affordable, nutritious foods for their families. Although 45% of respondents report that they had "enough" of the foods they wanted to eat, more than half of all survey respondents are dissatisfied with their current diets or, worse, they are hungry. Many focus group participants find ways to stretch their food dollars by limiting what they eat at mealtime, relying on others with SNAP benefits, eating at other family members' homes, or seeking out events offering free meals.

### Maintaining Traditional Eating Habits

In addition to finding fresh produce, survey respondents, have the most difficulty finding culturally appropriate foods.<sup>27</sup> Maintaining traditional eating habits is especially challenging for food pantry clients, who receive a number of food items that they do not know how to prepare. Conversely, for many participants finding culturally appropriate ingredients is not difficult,

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<sup>27</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 5.

however, maintaining cultural traditions is challenged by personal tastes, generational preferences for American foods, and cost. Others similarly highlight the fact that many markets that do sell ethnic foods do not accept SNAP/EBT or WIC benefits. Therefore, they must use the bulk of their food dollars to purchase these staples.<sup>28</sup>

### **Nutritional Understanding and Food Knowledge**

Although an overwhelming 95% of survey respondents believe that eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day can lead to a healthier life, just 14% of respondents actually eat five or more servings daily. Cost is the leading factor preventing many from eating the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, followed by personal tastes and busy schedules.

In focus groups, misconceptions were revealed over what foods actually qualify as nutritious. While many participants clearly agree that a healthy diet includes fresh fruits and vegetables and small amounts of meat and fish, others, particularly new immigrants, believe “American” foods such as hamburgers, butter, and fruit juice are nutritious. Some participants explain that a nutrition label alone on any food product signifies that it is “good for you.”<sup>29</sup> These comments indicate a clear misunderstanding of healthy eating habits, but also reveals that nutritional education is not reaching non-English speaking populations.

### **The Costs of Healthy Living**

In surveys and focus groups, cost is the most common factor limiting the amount and kind of food residents eat. Many perceive healthy foods to be more costly than unhealthy options, indicating that healthy options are beyond their grasp. Many residents are also fearful of buying and preparing unfamiliar fresh food options and disliking the final results and, therefore, stick to foods they know.<sup>30</sup>

Survey respondents and focus group participants express great interest and excitement in learning about food preparation techniques and nutrition education programs in their community. This widespread appeal presents a tremendous opportunity to shift popular perceptions of cost and influence healthy living habits.

### **Conclusion**

With these findings in mind, the FSC has devised recommendations to encourage greater support for local and regional food production, ensure improved access to– and the distribution of good foods, enhance food preparation and nutrition knowledge, and strengthen benefit programs and the role of Emergency Food Providers. For a complete listing of these recommendations please refer to Recommendations for Growing Local Food, Enhancing the Distribution of Good Food, and Cultivating Healthy Lifestyles on page 40 of the full report.

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<sup>28</sup> Focus Groups: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012, Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.



A boy plants seeds in a handmade paper pot at a seed planting workshop, part of the Food Day 2012 festivities at the Lowell WIC office.

*Photo: Mill City Grows*





## The Lowell Community Food Assessment

### Background

#### The Lowell Food Security Coalition

The mission of the Lowell Food Security Coalition is to increase the community's engagement in– and the capacity of our local food system, and ensure that all constituents have equal access to grow, purchase, and consume healthy and culturally appropriate food in quantities that can sustain a healthy community. The Lowell Food Security Coalition (FSC) was established in 2009 when the United Teen Equality Center, Inc. (UTEC) began a community-wide strategic planning process to determine goals for the installation and upgrade of a commercial kitchen facility. As part of a USDA Community Food Projects Planning Grant, UTEC convened multiple meetings with dozens of community members and stakeholders dedicated to food security.

The most compelling outcome of those initial meetings was an interest in coming together as a group to tackle the difficult questions and challenges that all of the organizations have faced in working toward a more food secure Lowell. The cooperative desire of our diverse organizations to tackle the issue of food insecurity in our community motivated the group to approach the City of Lowell to form an official subcommittee of the 10 Year Plan to End Hunger and Homelessness. The FSC is comprised of members from many different sectors including: health services, youth services, emergency food providers, farming and gardening projects, universities, and others. In July 2011 Third Sector New England awarded the FSC a Capacity Building Grant in the amount of \$20,000 to conduct this Community Food Assessment.

#### The Lowell Community Food Assessment

*“The purpose of community food security assessment is to facilitate decision-making about programs and policies that affect food security in your community, not simply to collect data.”<sup>31</sup>*

The primary goal of a Community Food Assessment (CFA) is to create a picture of a community's food system, through the collection of data and information that identifies current food resources and needs in the community. The FSC elected to conduct a CFA because they recognized it as a tool that could enhance a common understanding of the resources and gaps present within Lowell's food system. This common understanding will aid the group in creating common goals, strategic plans, and policy recommendations for the future of the FSC. The Lowell Community Food Assessment is a community-wide study of the food resources and needs in the city of Lowell.

Goals for the CFA, as set by the FSC, include:

- Empowering the voices of constituents and partner organizations while providing important data and a lasting network for future initiatives and funding opportunities.
- Identifying gaps and voids in the existing food system as well as resources that can contribute to improving programs and services for the benefit of the people most in need of nutritious food.
- Creating policy and procedures for building a healthier community.
- Exposing community resources that can be shared with constituents, and understanding how we can increase our effectiveness in encouraging a healthier and more aware community.
- Identifying areas where local food production can be increased and raising support and interest in the creation of more resources for local farmers and gardeners.

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<sup>31</sup> Cohen, 2002, p15.

- Acting as a tool that will increase the capacity for community organizing, especially among constituent groups.
- Promoting economic development via our local food system.

## Methodology

As the Lowell FSC is not the first to conduct a Community Food Assessment, we utilized existing tools and resources in the development of our methodology. In particular, we looked to the USDA's *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*, and *What's Cooking in Your Food System?*, a publication by the Community Food Security Coalition. Many communities have used these resources to establish the foundation for their research, and applied them within the context of their own community. Utilizing a preexisting format streamlined the research process, however, the FSC was consistently involved in decision-making processes and all organizations were given the opportunity to provide guidance and feedback.

The *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit*, published by the USDA, "provides a toolkit of standardized measurement tools for assessing various aspects of community food security. It includes a general guide to community assessment and focused materials for examining six basic assessment components related to community food security,"<sup>32</sup> including a profile of community socioeconomic and demographic characteristics; a profile of community food resources; an assessment of household food security; an assessment of food resource accessibility; an assessment of food availability and affordability; and an assessment of community food production resources. The *What's Cooking in Your Food System?* guide "is aimed at informing and supporting the development of Community Food Assessments as a tool for increasing community food security and creating positive change."<sup>33</sup>

The Lowell Community Food Assessment contains three major areas of focus: food production, food distribution, and food consumption. Through assessment of these three areas the FSC felt they would have a better understanding of the entire food system in Lowell and could formulate conclusive recommendations.

## Process

The Lowell Community Food Assessment began in August 2011 by creating a profile of community characteristics using existing demographic and socioeconomic data through the 2000 and 2012 US Census. Charts and graphs were created to compare neighborhood characteristics within Lowell, as well as citywide characteristics in comparison to statewide and national averages. We then compiled existing data held within the community. This involved interviews with the Health Department to better understand health in schools and diet related health issues from the perspectives of our healthcare providers.

Next we worked to understand food security through food production, or food grown both within city limits and produced within a 30-mile radius of Lowell. We conducted a thorough inventory of all of the farms within 30-miles of the City and mapped them using a public mapping service. Each farm was categorized by product type: vegetable, fruit, meat or dairy. We then mapped all Farmers' Markets in the area. An in depth interview with the Lowell Farmers' Market Manager was crucial to understanding how locally produced food can be distributed in the city of Lowell. We spent a considerable amount of time surveying and assessing food production within the city of Lowell, in particular community gardens and organizations that work to promote urban food production. This involved online research and one-on-one interviews.

Assessing food distribution networks has been a major focus of the FSC, beginning with creating and inventory of local food stores and Emergency Food Providers in Lowell. We then created

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<sup>32</sup> Cohen, 2002, p1.

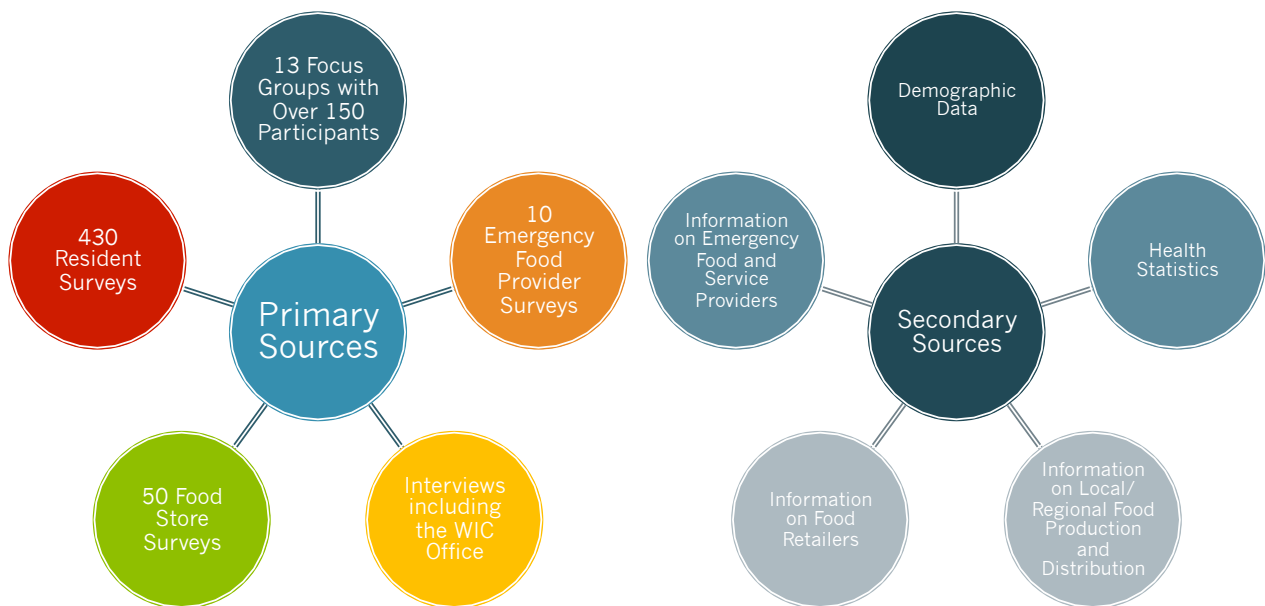
<sup>33</sup> Pothukuchi, et al., 2002, p5.

## 2012 Lowell Community Food Assessment

survey tools for both of these resources, with an emphasis on assessing food accessibility, availability, and affordability. Once all of the survey tools were tested and revised, we interviewed and surveyed Emergency Food Providers. During the months of July and August 2012, we conducted a thorough survey of 48 food stores in Lowell, and two supermarkets in Chelmsford along the Lowell border using the Food Retail Survey.<sup>34</sup>

We then created a thorough set of focus group questions and a Consumer Survey. Once these questionnaires met our standards we began conducting focus groups with community members. Throughout the months of June through September 2012 we collected Consumer Surveys from neighborhood groups, clients of our partner organizations, residents at community events, and electronically through an online survey platform.<sup>35</sup> Data was then processed and integrated into graphs included in this report. All research concluded in December 2012.

In total, sources include:



### Lowell Demographics

Lowell, Massachusetts is a city of great historical depth, cultural diversity, and natural resources. Built on the banks of the Merrimack and Concord rivers as the first intentionally planned industrial city in the US, Lowell harnessed waterpower to operate booming textile mills that drew waves of immigration and wealth to the city throughout the 1820s. Nearly 200 years later, Lowell's population of 106,519 residents remains ethnically diverse. US Census data indicates that 24.6% of Lowell residents are foreign born, and 42.5% speak a language other than English at home.<sup>36</sup> It is estimated that approximately 50% of current Lowell residents are immigrants and refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam, Brazil, Portugal, African nations, and the Dominican Republic.

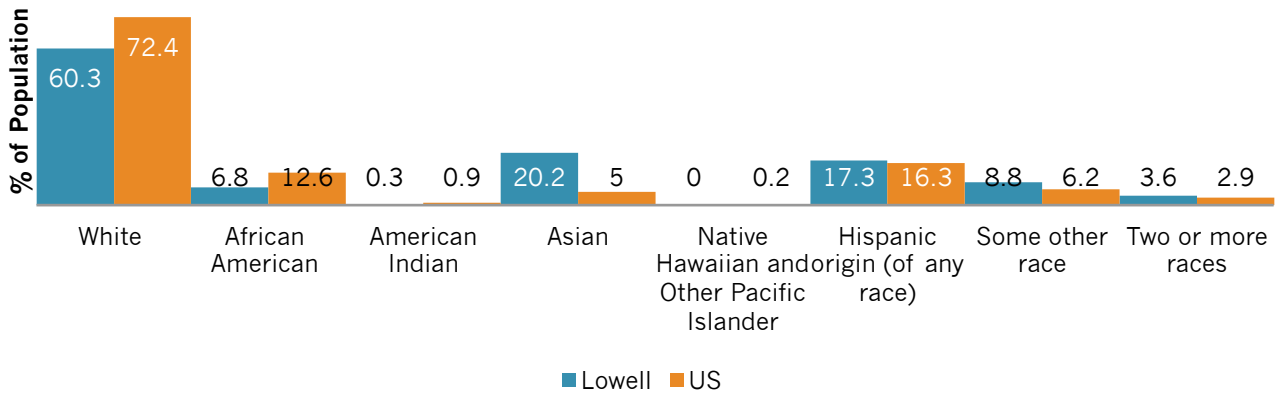
<sup>34</sup> These stores were selected for our survey based upon responses from the Consumer Survey, as consumers indicated that they frequently shopped at these stores.

<sup>35</sup> The Online Consumers Survey results were gathered through SurveyMonkey.com:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LowellCFA\\_ConsumerSurvey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LowellCFA_ConsumerSurvey)

<sup>36</sup> US Census Bureau, 2010.

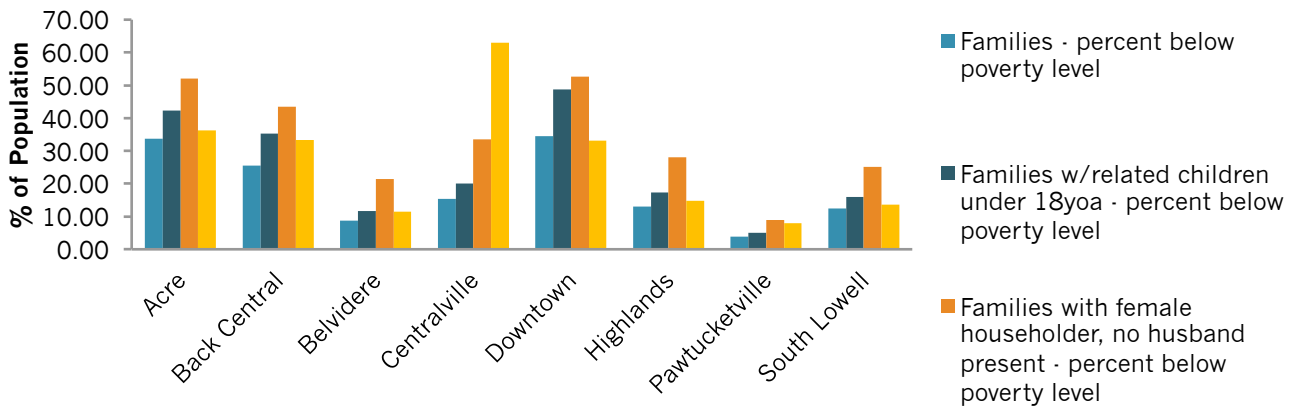
## Race - Lowell as Compared to US



**Table 1** Race - Lowell as compared to US (2010 US Census Data)

Lowell, the fourth largest city in the state, has poverty rates above the national and state averages. Poverty rates in Lowell are estimated at 17.6%, whereas poverty statewide is estimated at 10.7% and nationally at 14.3%.<sup>37</sup> The effects of poverty can be seen throughout the community, particularly in Lowell schools where more than 75% percent of school children are eligible for free and reduced lunch,<sup>38</sup> and nearly 36% are obese, a much higher rate than more affluent communities.<sup>39</sup>

## Poverty Rates by Neighborhood



**Table 2** Poverty rates by neighborhood (2010 US Census Data)

<sup>37</sup> US Census Bureau, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2012.



**Consumer Survey: About Us**

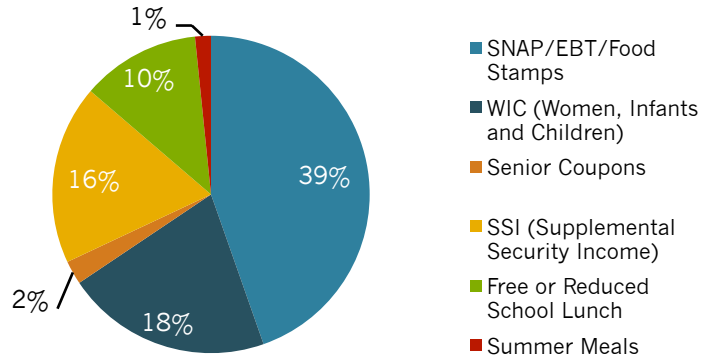
Throughout the research process it was paramount that we gather data from a cross section of residents and organizations that reflects the cultural and economic diversity within Lowell. In comparison to the data discussed above, our survey population very closely embodies that diversity.

We collected Consumer Surveys from 430 residents living in one of Lowell’s nine neighborhoods, with the greatest response rates coming from residents living in The Highlands (24%), The Acre (17%), Pawtucketville (15%), and Downtown (13%).<sup>40</sup> The majority of survey respondents identify themselves

as White (63%), 18% identify as Asian, 18% as Hispanic or Latino, and 4% self identify as African American:<sup>41</sup> figures very much in line with the City’s overall population (see Table 1). One quarter of survey respondents are male and 75% are female.<sup>42</sup> Nearly one quarter of respondents are between the ages of 19 and 30, while residents between 31 to 40 years and 41 to 50 years represent 18% of all respondents, respectively. Twenty-five percent of respondents are between the ages of 51 to 64, and 12% are 65 years or older.<sup>43</sup> Nearly 90% of respondents live in households with adults age 18 to 64, 53% report children under 18 years, and 19% of respondents live in households with adults age 65 years and older.<sup>44</sup>

Forty-six percent of survey respondents are employed, while 28% are unemployed and 13% receive some form of disability. Four percent of our survey respondents are students and 9% are retirees.<sup>45</sup> Although more than one quarter of our survey respondents reported annual household incomes below \$10,000, we received a relatively equal distribution of respondents reporting annual incomes from \$10,000 up to \$75,000. Just 6% of respondents report incomes greater than \$75,000 or above \$100,000, respectively.<sup>46</sup> Thirty-nine percent of respondents or a household member participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/EBT), while 18% receive Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits, 16% receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), just 2% participate in Senior Coupons, and only 1% utilize Summer meals for children.<sup>47</sup> The majority of respondents (60%) are aware of some Emergency Food program in their neighborhood, and 41% of these residents have visited one of these resources within the last year.<sup>48</sup>

**Do you or anyone in your household currently participate in any of the following programs?**



**Table 3** Benefits participation rates among survey respondents.

<sup>40</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 20.

<sup>41</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 26.

<sup>42</sup> This disproportionate response rate could be attributed to the fact that females are more concerned with feeding their children, and therefore take a more active interest in household food security.

<sup>43</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 25.

<sup>44</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 29.

<sup>45</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 28.

<sup>46</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 27.

<sup>47</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 23.

<sup>48</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Questions 21 and 22.





Raised planting beds at the Rotary Club Park Community Garden.

*Photos: Mill City Grows*





within 30 miles of Lowell, spanning more than ninety cities and towns throughout Massachusetts and New Hampshire.<sup>50</sup>

### Finding Local, Locally: the Lowell Farmers' Market and Community Supported Agriculture

These diverse farms yield a wide variety of products, ranging from vegetables, fruits, and nursery plants to dairy and meat, honey, and even maple syrup. Although these farms surround the City, very few locally produced foods are distributed within Lowell. There are few opportunities to purchase local food products in stores and restaurants, and there is just one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) distribution site in Lowell.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the Lowell Farmers' Market, the primary access point for local products, remains underutilized by many residents.<sup>52</sup>

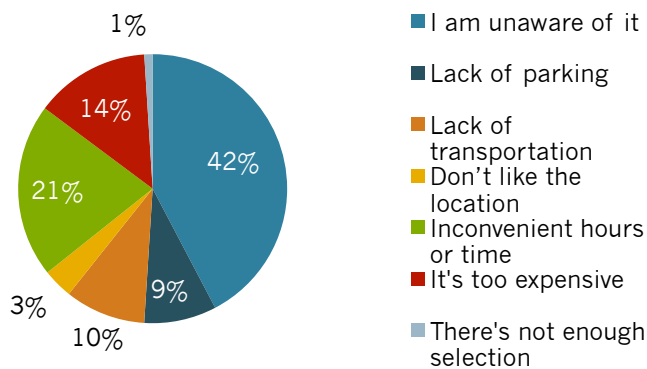
#### The Lowell Farmers' Market

The Lowell Farmers' Market is the principal resource providing residents with direct access to locally produced food. Using best practices, the Lowell Farmers' Market committed resources to expand and increase the capacity of the market throughout the 2011 season, for both farmers and consumers. By the end of the 2011 season the market experienced significant growth and had completed its most successful year.<sup>53</sup> In addition to offering fresh, locally grown produce from area farmers, the market accepts SNAP/EBT, WIC benefits, and Senior Coupons, making it an ideal venue for residents of all incomes to shop for nutritious foods.<sup>54</sup> Remarkably, much of this explains why 46% of all residents surveyed here shop at the Lowell Farmers' Market.<sup>55</sup>

Although the Market has grown significantly in recent years, several challenges undermine its viability and sustainability as a resource for locally produced foods. Both consumers and producers face obstacles to participating in the market, which contribute to the market's overall challenges.

The market struggles to attract shopper due to a lack of awareness about the market, or issues related to its location and scheduled hours. For those consumers surveyed who do not shop at the Lowell Farmers' Market, 42% explain that they were unaware that it existed. Another 22% cite location-related issues for not shopping at the market regularly, including a lack of onsite parking, no means of transportation to get to the location, or they dislike the market's location

**Why you don't you shop at the Lowell Farmers Market?**



altogether. Several elderly focus group participants cite similar accessibility issues. These seniors drive to farmers' markets in other towns simply because they are able to park close to vendors.<sup>56</sup> Twenty-one percent of residents that do not shop at the market find that the hours and timing of the market are inconvenient to their schedules. Finally, 14% of residents who do not shop at the market

**Table 4** Reasons why survey respondents do not shop at the Lowell Farmers' Market.

<sup>50</sup> For a map of these farms please visit: <http://www.zeemaps.com/pub?group=281382>

<sup>51</sup> Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is further discussed in the Food Distribution section on page [X].

<sup>52</sup> This Lowell Farmers' Market is further discussed in the Food Distribution section on page [X].

<sup>53</sup> Chandler, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Community Teamwork Inc.

<sup>55</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 18.

<sup>56</sup> Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.



## 2012 Lowell Community Food Assessment

find that it is too expensive, an opinion often echoed in focus groups.<sup>57</sup> One resident explains, “Price is more important than quality. So many families in this community are struggling...” underscoring that prices at the market are out of reach for them and many people they know.<sup>58</sup>

The Lowell Farmers’ Market strives to provide access for all community members by accepting federally funded benefits such as SNAP/EBT, WIC, and Senior Coupons. In fact, following farmers’ markets in Lynn, Lawrence, and Orleans, the Lowell Farmers’ Market had the fourth highest amount of WIC coupon dollars spent at the market in the state.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, some focus group participants remain unclear on the monetary value of their WIC and Senior Coupons, and/or how to properly redeem them.<sup>60</sup> In addition to rescheduling the market from Friday evenings to Saturday and extending the market season, focus group participants suggest increasing the monetary value of these benefits for use at the Farmers’ Market so that they can spend more on healthy, local options.<sup>61</sup>

The growth and sustainability of the Lowell Farmers’ Market, however, depends upon meeting the needs of both consumers *and* producers.<sup>62</sup> Although Federal assistance programs make possible participation by consumers with limited incomes, there is a sense that the Market and its vendors cannot subsist on these sales alone. Vendors continually struggle to meet their weekly earnings projections, and certain producers have altogether been priced out of the Market because their product is too expensive for local consumers. As a result, the market has not yet generated enough revenue to fund staff positions to enhance its presence in our community. In order to remain a viable option for locally produced foods the Market needs support from the entire community, including customers buying with benefits and customers paying in cash.<sup>63</sup>

### Community Supported Agriculture in Lowell

There is just one active CSA program that distributes at three locations in Lowell: the World PEAS Cooperative CSA, a program of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. During the 2012 season, World Peas distributed 27 full-price shares each week. A total of 80 low-income, subsidized shares were distributed through the Lowell Farmers’ Market distribution site. Fourteen additional shares were distributed weekly through the Lowell Pathfinder Program, which were equally subsidized by Pathfinder and donations received by New Entry.

The Cape Ann Fresh Catch Community Supported Fisheries (CAFC CSF) once distributed fresh fish shares at the Lowell Farmers’ Market. To maintain

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between a farmer and a community of supporters, with a shared commitment for ensuring both the survival of small farms and the availability of fresh, local produce. Members subscribe and pay for a “share” in the winter or spring months and in turn receive a weekly allotment of produce throughout the growing season. This upfront payment provides the farmer with a secure and supportive market, which helps to keep overhead costs down and allows them to buy seeds, equipment, and soil amendments, or invest in more sustainable food production practices. In return, subscribers have a direct relationship with their farmer, the knowledge of how and where their food is grown, and the ability to share in the bounties of a farm.

<sup>57</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 19, Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012, Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Focus Groups: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Chandler, 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Chandler, 2012.

economic viability, the CAFC CSF favors year round distribution sites and requires a minimum number of shareholders. At one point, in collaboration with market staff the CAFC CSF was seeking funds to provide SNAP/EBT eligible shares to expand their shareholder base, however, funds were never secured due to a lack of communication and follow through. Additionally, due to the limited market season during the summer and fall months and exceptionally low participation rates, the CSF was forced to discontinue distribution at the end of Summer 2012. The CAFC CSF is interested in distribution opportunities in Lowell, but will require a site and partnership that will ensure mutual interests and economic viability.<sup>64</sup>

Currently it is unclear as to why other CSA's do not distribute in Lowell. Although there are many CSA programs in the region, very few of them market or supply produce to residents in Lowell, however, we did learn that some residents participate in Farmer Dave's CSA in Dracut or the Jones Farm CSA in Chelmsford. The Lowell Community Food Security Coalition has not been able to collect data on how many Lowell residents participate in CSA programs in towns outside of the City, nor can we conclude that there is demand for- or interest in more CSA programs in Lowell. Consequently, further research is required to understand the potential for- and feasibility of expanding CSA participation and distribution in Lowell.

### Lowell Grows Again



*“As farming becomes more and more remote from the life of the average person, it becomes less and less able to provide us with clean, healthy, life-giving food or a clean, healthy, life-giving environment. A small minority of farmers, laden with debt and overburdened with responsibility, cannot possibly meet the needs of all the people. More and more people are coming to recognize this, and they are becoming ready to share agricultural responsibilities with the active farmers.”<sup>65</sup>*

Clearly this statement rings true here in Lowell, as nearly 30% of all residents surveyed grow some of their own food, and 41% of those who currently do not grow food are interested in learning how.<sup>66</sup> There are a handful of urban food production sites and several organizations that promote urban food production in Lowell (Table 5).

**Figure 2** Mr. Visoth Kim, who passed away in 2012, was a mentor to farmers in the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and an original member of the World Peas CSA. His son now operates the family farm that provides fresh produce to World Peas customers. (Photo: ©2008 Anne Fedrigo courtesy of New Entry Sustainable Farming Project).

<sup>64</sup> Tousinant, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> DeMuth, 1993.

<sup>66</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 14.

<b>The Community Gardens Greenhouse</b>	The Community Gardens Greenhouse is a local group of volunteers that works to build community gardens and support groups that want gardens.
<b>The Lowell Alliance for Families and Neighborhoods' (LAFN)</b>	LAFN's mission is to support families and communities by advocating for– and promoting empowerment, inclusion and diversity. LAFN coordinates the Franklin Court Community Garden (Franklin Court), the oldest community garden in Lowell and home to a diverse group of gardeners.
<b>Lowell Sprouts</b>	Lowell Sprouts works to educate and improve our youth's connection with whole foods, to sustain a healthy lifestyle and green environment by growing gardens in the school community. Lowell Sprouts currently manages a garden at B.F. Butler Middle School.
<b>Mill City Grows</b>	<i>Mill City Grows</i> mission is to improve physical health, economic independence and environmental sustainability in Lowell through increased access to land, locally grown food, and education. We grow a healthier, more food just community, through the creation of community and school gardens, educational programs, and increased food access. Mill City Grows runs three community gardens in the Back Central, Centralville, and Lower Highlands neighborhoods as well as a school garden in Pawtucketville. Mill City Grows offers educational programs to teach residents how to safely grow organic food in the city.
<b>New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Community Teamwork, Inc.</b>	New Entry's mission is to assist people with limited resources who have an interest in small-scale commercial agriculture, to begin farming in Massachusetts. The broader goals of New Entry are to support the vitality and sustainability of the region's agriculture, to build long term economic self-reliance and food security among participants and their communities, and to expand access to high-quality, culturally appropriate foods in underserved areas through production of locally-grown foods.
<b>Tutu's Garden</b>	Tutu's Garden delivers fresh produce to The Lowell Food Bank, the Lowell Transitional Living Center, their neighbors, and anyone who walks in through the gate.
<b>United Teen Equality Center, Inc. (UTECE), Fresh Roots Program</b>	UTECE's mission is to ignite and nurture the ambition of Lowell's most disconnected young people to trade violence and poverty for social and economic success. FRESH Roots manages a commercial culinary kitchen that focuses on sourcing locally produced foods. In partnership with Mill City Grows FRESH Roots attends the Lowell Farmers' Market.

**Table 5** Lowell organizations that support and promote farming and urban agriculture.

## Urban Food Production and Community Gardens

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) broadly defines community gardens: “It can be urban, suburban, or rural. It can grow flowers, vegetables or community. It can be one community plot, or can be many individual plots. It can be at a school, hospital, or in a neighborhood. It can also be a series of plots dedicated to ‘urban agriculture’ where the produce is grown for a market.”<sup>67</sup> Typically, community gardens are a single plot of land that is gardened by a group of people, either in individual plots or communally.

This type of gardening was extremely popular in England during the allotment movement, when city dwellers had allotments of space to grow food nearby. Throughout World War II, victory gardens ensured homeland security as the government encouraged Americans to garden to support the war efforts. By the end of that war, the increased food production totaled over \$1.2 billion. Community gardening is again gaining traction as outlined in the statement above, as more people become aware of their role within their own community food system.

Urban agriculture is an important component of food security because it can reduce under- and unemployment, stimulate urban development and decrease urban blight, and create a healthier community by encouraging healthier diets, reducing the impact of food related diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Many communities across the country have embraced the concept of urban food production as a vital component to urban living. For example, the City of Boston has begun a process of creating Urban Agriculture Overlay Zones so that urban food producers can market the crops they produce.

From training farmers to growing food for Emergency Food Providers, there are a number diverse organizations and individuals dedicated to promoting food production here in Lowell (Table 5). Although each of these organizations approaches food production differently, they work to address three prevalent issues: food production for job creation and development, food production for community engagement and education, and food production to enhance emergency food security.

Urban food production is still a very new concept to City government and many Lowell residents. Until recently, it has been difficult for organizations to grow food within City limits due to a general lack of support for urban food production. In March 2012, however, the City of Lowell released a community gardening program:

*The City of Lowell supports community initiatives that promote citywide sustainability, community pride, and healthy living, and therefore encourages qualified residents to work together to establish, manage, and maintain their own community garden sites on city-owned property. Community gardens are cultivated and maintained spaces where volunteers work collectively to achieve a common goal of growing fresh, healthy produce in our city.*<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> American Community Gardening Association.

<sup>68</sup> Lowell Department of Planning and Development.



Interest in community gardening in Lowell is growing. Mill City Grows set up one community garden this past year, and will complete two more gardens by the 2013 growing season, each of which are already at full capacity and have a waitlist of interested gardeners. Ten percent of residents surveyed indicate that they participate in a community gardening program and, of those residents who currently do not, 37% are interested in growing their own food at a community garden in their neighborhood.<sup>69</sup> Participants in focus groups, particularly new immigrants, also express a great deal of interest in growing their own food.

Nonetheless, barriers to more widespread participation in community gardening programs remain. Many new residents are experienced growers, however, they express concern over growing food safely in potentially toxic urban soils, and seasonal and cultural differences in growing food here as compared to their home countries.<sup>70</sup> Having the time and space to grow food are equally concerning for focus group participants. Although they agreed that growing their own food would provide affordable, healthy food for themselves and their families, their jobs would limit the amount of time they could spend in the garden. Getting to garden sites is also challenging for residents without their own means of transportation. Likewise, many of these residents rent their homes from landlords, whom they feel are unwilling to allow food production on their properties.<sup>71</sup>



**Figure 3** Francey Slater of Mill City Grows demonstrates planting techniques at one of their many garden-based learning workshops. Photo: Mill City Grows.

### Conclusion: Food Production

Currently, local and regional farmers lack adequate outlets to distribute their products within Lowell, undermining both farmers' potential market share and residents' ability to access locally produced foods. The Lowell Farmers' Market and CSA programs are underutilized, and therefore face many challenges to sustaining themselves as alternative sources for locally produced foods. For some residents, particularly the elderly and those with limited incomes, location-related issues prevent them from shopping at the Farmers' Market regularly, including a lack of onsite parking and no means of reliable transportation. Many residents find the hours and timing of these sources are inconvenient to their schedules, and many perceive them to be too expensive. The majority of those not utilizing these resources are unaware them altogether. Greater outreach should target their participation. Likewise, sustaining these resources also depends upon greater support from the *whole* community.

As it is clearly important to many residents, especially those bringing agricultural and food traditions from their home countries, urban food production must continue to be a serious consideration for the City of Lowell. Residents express a desire to learn techniques for safely growing food in urban spaces. Finding spaces close to home, however, is challenging and residents require greater support in securing room to grow.

<sup>69</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 17.

<sup>70</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, and Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>71</sup> Focus Group: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.





Liberty Mutual volunteers organize the Merrimack Valley Catholic Charities Food Pantry in Lowell as part of the nationwide Serve with Liberty Day, Friday, June 22, 2012.

*Photo: Suzanne Ouellette, Catholic Charities of Boston*

### Food Distribution

The following discussion includes a combination of data gathered through focus groups, interviews, the Food Retail Survey, the Consumer Survey, and Emergency Food Provider Surveys. Questions were developed for each of these platforms to better understand the food retail and emergency food environment in Lowell, including accessibility, availability of fresh produce and locally produced food, and information on benefits programs and their usage.

### Where We Shop

Like many urban communities, small markets and convenience stores dominate the food retail landscape in Lowell, comprising more than 66% of the 50 stores surveyed.<sup>72</sup> Residents, however, do the bulk of their weekly grocery shopping at larger markets such as Market Basket, Hannaford, and Stop & Shop.<sup>73</sup> In fact, 86% of residents rely on Market Basket Supermarkets<sup>74</sup> for the variety of products offered at prices they find to be lower than any of their competitors.<sup>75</sup>

What is the name of the store where you buy most of your food?

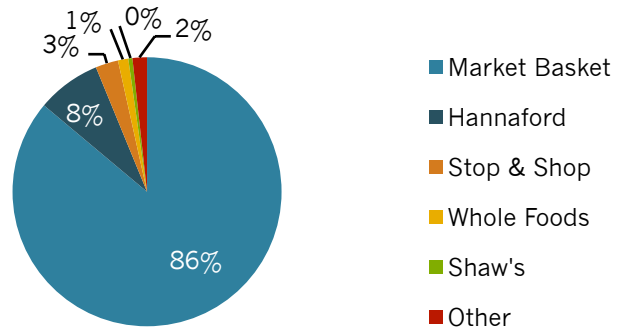


Table 6 Stores where consumer survey respondents purchase most of their food.

### How We Get There

For most residents of Lowell transportation does not limit access to food stores. Although more than one quarter of residents surveyed walk to the grocery store, 69% of residents drive themselves to do their weekly shopping. Food stores in Lowell appear to be quite accessible, for both shoppers travelling by car and on foot. Well-maintained sidewalks and crosswalks are adjacent to most stores, and a majority of stores offer designated parking.<sup>76</sup> These amenities are considerable, especially for the elderly and shoppers with limited incomes. In focus groups, elderly residents explain that they have difficulty carrying heavy grocery bags, so they must travel by car.<sup>77</sup>

How do you get to the supermarket or food store?

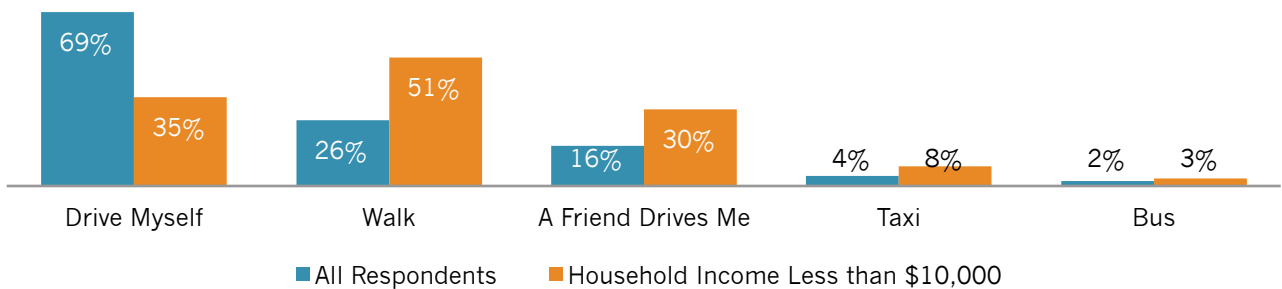


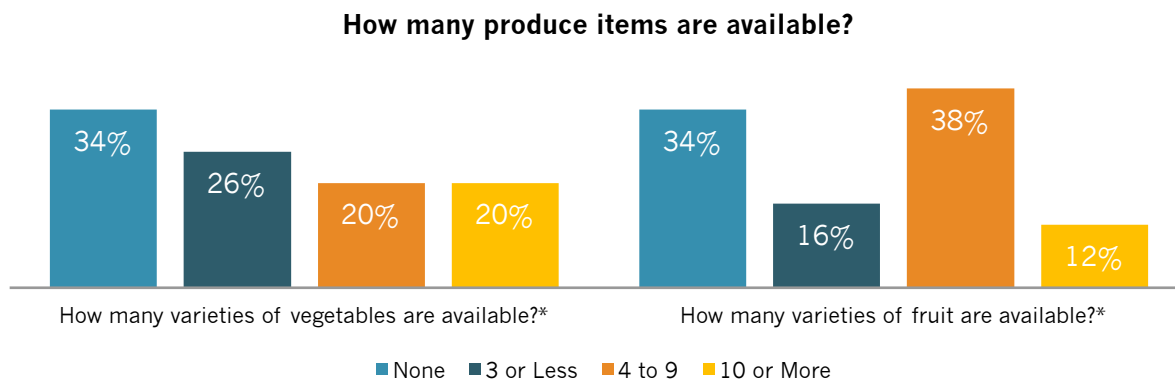
Table 7 Primary means of transportation to grocery outlets among consumer survey respondents.

<sup>72</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Question 2.  
<sup>73</sup> Focus Groups: Lowell Senior Center, 2012, Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.  
<sup>74</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 4.  
<sup>75</sup> Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.  
<sup>76</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Questions 12, 15, and 16.  
<sup>77</sup> Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.

In contrast, residents reporting annual household incomes below \$10,000 are more likely to walk, to rely on a friend or family member for a ride, or to take a taxi to the grocery store, all of which adds time expense to their weekly shopping.<sup>78</sup> A lack of reliable transportation options limits access to more affordable food outlets for these residents. Participants in focus groups express interest in more regular bus service and fixed routes to ensure they will not be stranded upon completing their shopping. In addition to prohibitive membership fees, some focus group participants feel excluded from shoppers' clubs where they feel they could maximize their grocery spending, at stores such as Sam's Club, BJ's or Costco.<sup>79</sup>

### Finding the Foods We Need

Inadequate availability of affordable fresh fruits and vegetables limits consumers' ability to make healthy food choices, critical for maintaining nutritious, balanced diets. At the time of the retail survey, a combined 40% of stores provided anywhere from 4 to 9 or 10 or more vegetable varieties. Fifty percent of stores surveyed featured upwards of 4 fruit varieties. Yet, 50% of stores offered 3 or fewer fruit options and 60% of stores distributed 3 or fewer vegetable varieties, while more than a third of all stores surveyed did not sell *any* produce items at all.



**Table 8** Number of produce items available at stores surveyed.

Focus group participants also observe that it is difficult to find quality produce. Some residents find that vegetables from local stores are low quality and spoil quickly once at home. Some Burmese residents explain that they are able to find culturally appropriate produce at local Asian grocers, though they feel that despite looking fresher it does not taste as good as it does in Burma.<sup>80</sup> Other residents agree that Asian grocers offer a wide variety, but they remain skeptical of the quality of the produce offered.<sup>81</sup>

To add to the challenge of finding quality produce, many residents perceive fruits and vegetables to be too expensive.<sup>82</sup> When asked what factor prevents them from eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day, survey respondents most often cite cost.<sup>83</sup> In turn, many residents explain that they rely on canned or 'instant' food options. A more extensive examination of the perceived cost of healthy foods can be found on page 37.

<sup>78</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Question 2.

<sup>79</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

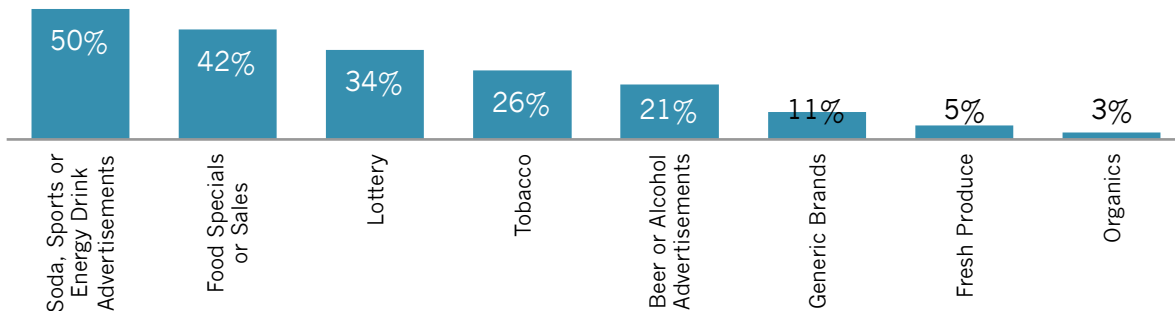
<sup>82</sup> Focus Groups: Lowell Senior Center, 2012, Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>83</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 11.

### Competing with Advertising

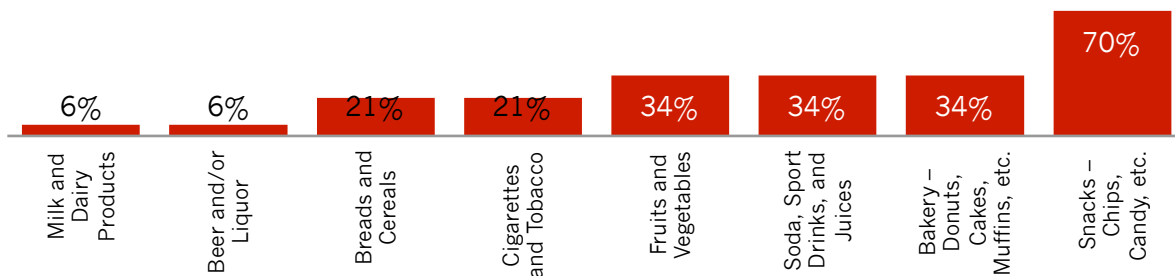
In addition to limited availability, advertising for—and prominent placement of unhealthy foods challenges consumers’ ability to maintain healthy shopping habits. Many stores promote food specials or sales and others announce generic brands through exterior advertisements. The majority of ads observed by volunteer surveyors, however, are dominated by advertising for sugary drinks, tobacco products, lottery games, and beer or alcoholic beverages. In contrast, only a small fraction of stores surveyed advertise fresh produce or promote organic products. Surveyors were also asked to observe what products are most prominently displayed at the front of each store. Once inside a store’s front door, surveyors were most often greeted by unhealthy snacks, baked goods, and sugary beverages.

**What type of signage is most prominent from outside of the store?**



**Table 9** Type of signage most prominent from outside of stores surveyed.

**When you first walk into the store, what products are most prominently displayed?**



**Table 10** Type of products most prominently displayed at the front of stores surveyed.

### Stretching Food Dollars with Food Stamps

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program help millions of Americans put food on the table.<sup>84</sup> It is clear that these programs are in high demand here in Lowell: 39% of households surveyed participate in SNAP and 18% utilize Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits to supplement their monthly grocery expenses.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> USDA Food & Nutrition Service, 2012, and USDA Food & Nutrition Service, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 23.



Volunteer surveyors discovered that 36% of the fifty stores surveyed indicate through exterior signage that they accept SNAP/EBT or Food Stamps, and 28% show that they accept Women, Infants and Children or WIC benefits. Only 2% of stores indicate the acceptance of Senior Checks.<sup>86</sup> All of the larger supermarkets welcome WIC vouchers<sup>87</sup>, and residents generally find that most stores accept SNAP/EBT, with the exception of certain Asian Grocers.<sup>88</sup>

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**“It makes you change what you eat.”**

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Yet, even with these programs, residents struggle to provide enough food for themselves and their families. One resident explains, “[SNAP] makes you change what you eat,”<sup>89</sup> a notion echoed by many across multiple focus groups. Residents find they must limit what they eat in order to have enough food into the next month

when benefits are issued again.<sup>90</sup> One gentleman explains that he stretches both his food dollars and SNAP benefits by redeeming coupons from circulars and newspapers, and others express interest in learning how to use coupons and other techniques to stretch their food dollars.<sup>91</sup>

For several focus group participants, SNAP benefits have been terminated for one reason or another. For many the reasons remain unclear, in large part due to language barriers. Participants explain that interpreters are not available at the Lowell Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) or at the Lowell WIC Office, making the process of applying for and retaining benefits challenging to navigate.<sup>92</sup> Additionally, many participants express frustration with the Lowell DTA, citing inconvenient hours for working individuals, a shortage of staff to manage clients, and a general feeling of disrespect on behalf of DTA staff. Male participants in particular, will not return to retrieve benefits for their children once they feel they have been mistreated.<sup>93</sup> In many cases, these residents rely on household or family members with benefits, further limiting how far a family can stretch their SNAP benefits and food dollars.

### **Turning to Emergency Resources in Times of Need**

Beyond Federal assistance programs, Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) such as food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens, and other community-based food distribution programs assist people most in need. By feeding those residents most vulnerable to food insecurity, EFPs are a crucial component in any community’s food system. These programs, however, are often subsidized by a variety of funding sources and are heavily reliant upon donations and volunteer support. Therefore, identifying the needs of these organizations and their clients is critical to understanding how to further support and sustain the services EFPs offer to enhance food security for the whole of our community.

The Lowell Food Security Coalition (FSC) assessed the needs of these agencies, as well as the services they provide through a combination of focus groups with residents, an Emergency Food Provider Survey,<sup>94</sup> and in-depth interviews with representatives from EFPs within Lowell.<sup>95</sup> Through this research the FSC learned of the invaluable and deeply committed work of each agency. The FSC, however, has also identified needs and gaps within the emergency food

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<sup>86</sup> Please see page 66: Store Survey Results, Question 9.

<sup>87</sup> Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>88</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Focus Group: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Focus Groups: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012, Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> Focus Groups: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.

<sup>93</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012

<sup>94</sup> Please see Appendix on page 46: Emergency Food Provider Survey.

<sup>95</sup> Information from the Lowell Senior Center, The Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (Lowell Elder Care), Central Ministries, as well as organizations outside of Lowell including Merrimack Valley Elder Services, MVNP Meals on Wheels, and Community Servings that serve the Lowell community are omitted from this discussion.



## 2012 Lowell Community Food Assessment

network that, if addressed, could enhance both the role of EFPs and the services they provide to our most vulnerable neighbors.

Most EFPs in Lowell distribute bags or boxes of food, hot meals, and/or federal commodities programs. With the exception of the Salvation Army during the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, none of these programs distribute vouchers for purchases at local food stores or restaurants, and no agencies interviewed deliver meals or groceries directly to clients' homes, excluding lunch bags delivered to area homeless camps by the Lowell Transitional Living Center.

The majority of EFPs in Lowell service residents between the ages of 18 and 64 and, although these agencies serve a diverse population, most of their clients are white. In some cases, upwards of 80% of their clientele is white. Despite the fact that Asians comprise 20% of Lowell's population,<sup>96</sup> Asians represent just 1–15% of EFPs' total clientele, highlighting a significant gap in Lowell's emergency food system.



Figure 4: Emergency Food Providers in five of Lowell's nine neighborhoods.

<sup>96</sup> US Census Bureau, 2010.

## A Cultural Chasm in Emergency Food

There are several potential reasons for low participation rates among Asian residents. Most notably, few EFPs offer culturally appropriate, ethnic foods. In a focus group, one participant explains that, “[the] quality of food [at the food pantries] depends on [your] culture,” while another agrees, “[the] pantry may give you \$150 [worth of food] which is helpful, but not all the food that you will use.”<sup>97</sup> This reveals that some residents are not finding foods they are familiar with and therefore do not seek the services they need from EFPs, but also the fact that some residents are not consuming foods because they are inexperienced with how to prepare them and/or do not prefer how they taste. Focus group participants explain that they would prefer to receive food they can use rather than waste it. One resident suggests a concept that would allow clients more discretion, “Make the food pantry like the shopping mall, like 606 Market St. [was]. [You got] a dollar bag and chose what you wanted, [I’d] like to see more of that.” Other residents simply seek information on how to prepare the foods they are unfamiliar with in a language they understand.<sup>98</sup>

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**“The quality of food at the food pantries depends on your culture.”**

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Many clients have a clear idea of what items are largely missing at EFPs: fresh produce, chicken, eggs, and larger bags of rice.<sup>99</sup> In fact, although most agencies felt that they had enough food to meet their needs, five of nine EFPs hoped to offer their clients more fruits and vegetables. Offering fresh produce is a challenge for pantries because availability through the central food bank fluctuates, and many EFPs have limited or no storage facilities for these products.

Certain ethnic communities cannot identify with these services, in many cases, because they do not know they exist. Outreach efforts for emergency food services do not target non-English speakers, and no staff is available onsite to translate for them. For some, language barriers exacerbate underlying tensions between clients and EFP staff. Several focus group participants nod in agreement as one resident explained, “[It] depends on language, if you don’t know English [you’re] treated poorly.”<sup>100</sup> It is important that further research is done to understand why ethnic groups are not accessing these services.

## Structural Challenges to a Stable Emergency Food Network

As illustrated in Figure 4, thirteen EFPs provide services to residents in five of Lowell’s nine neighborhoods. There are no EFP facilities within the neighborhoods of Pawtucketville, Upper and Lower Belvidere, South Lowell, and Sacred Heart, despite the fact that Sacred Heart, Lower Belvidere and South Lowell have poverty rates similar to areas of the Highlands and Back Central. Nearly one third of the City’s total population live in these neighborhoods, where they lack services within walking distance or easily accessible by bus—the most common modes of transportation for residents with limited incomes or living below the poverty line.

In addition to preparation instructions for unfamiliar foods, many EFP clients require dietary counseling. Several EFPs have a dedicated staff person that selects food and designs meals, however, only one staff person at one agency is a trained nutritionist. The absence of a trained nutritionist poses a significant problem for EFPs because they service a number of clients with diet related illnesses and restricted diets. It is crucial that these EFP clients receive appropriate nutritional counseling from an accessible and qualified staff person.

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<sup>97</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012

<sup>98</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

<sup>99</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>100</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.

Emergency food representatives and their clients note monthly and seasonal fluctuations in the emergency food supply and client demand. The effects of the recent economic recession, including tightened operational budgets and greater client demand, have placed significant stress on EFPs in every community. “[The] food pantry only lets you come once a month,” one focus group explains; “food does not last a month.”<sup>101</sup> Likewise, EFPs and clients highlight increased demand at the end of each month, when clients most often need emergency food.

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**“The food pantry only lets you come once a month; food does not last a month.”**

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Tight budgets do not allow room for expansion. Subsequently, each organization is extremely passionate and works extremely hard, though often in isolation from one another. Limited budgets, little time, and scant resources prevent these organizations from regularly sharing information, partnering on grants, sharing staff, or gathering to

create a support system for their work. These agencies rely on countless volunteers to fill operational and clerical gaps, however, volunteers are consistently in high demand. These limitations are the significant we have observed, undermining the role of Emergency Food Providers in the Lowell community.

Finally, many EFPs rely solely on The Merrimack Valley Food Bank, which speaks to the organization’s invaluable work and integral role within the Lowell community. This singular reliance, however, poses a threat to the food supply to local EFPs. Diversifying food sources could reduce the potential risks and the devastating effects of a food shortage if anything were to limit the supply chain from The Merrimack Valley Food Bank.

### **Conclusion: Distribution**

Lowell has a number of accessible food stores, supplemental assistance programs, and a robust network of emergency food providers. Each is a vital component of any food system, however, our food system faces several challenges to supporting the health and wellbeing of each and every resident of Lowell.

Healthy shopping and eating habits are undermined by inadequate access to fresh produce and a prevalence of marketing for unhealthy food options. Although many food stores in Lowell are accessible, most offer less than three produce items, and more than one third of all stores offer no fresh produce. For residents with limited incomes, a lack of transportation options inhibits them from accessing more affordable food outlets. Many stores prioritize advertising for—and the prominent placement of unhealthy food items, influencing poor shopping and eating habits.

Support systems, including Federal Assistance programs and Emergency Food Providers, help many residents to provide food for themselves and their families. These programs, however, are not meeting the need of all Lowell residents. In large part, language barriers inhibit participation in these programs and add confusion and stress to obtaining and maintaining necessary benefits, however, structural challenges most significantly limit the roles of emergency food resources. Residents and EFP clients require greater nutritional and food preparation knowledge to prepare foods unfamiliar to them, and economical shopping techniques to maximize the benefits they receive. Service providers must be more effective in delivering culturally appropriate foods, nutritional information, and food preparation instruction to their clients.

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<sup>101</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.





Farmer Rafferty, a vendor at the Lowell Farmers' Market, has a farm in Westford. Here, his daughter collects her own eggs from the chicken coop on the family farm.

*Photo: Rachel Chandler, Community Teamwork, Inc., Lowell Farmers' Market*



## Consumption

This discussion materialized through a combination of focus group conversations and data gathered through the Consumer Survey. In both cases, questions were developed to more fully understand household characteristics, household food security, personal eating habits, and personal nutrition and food preparation knowledge.

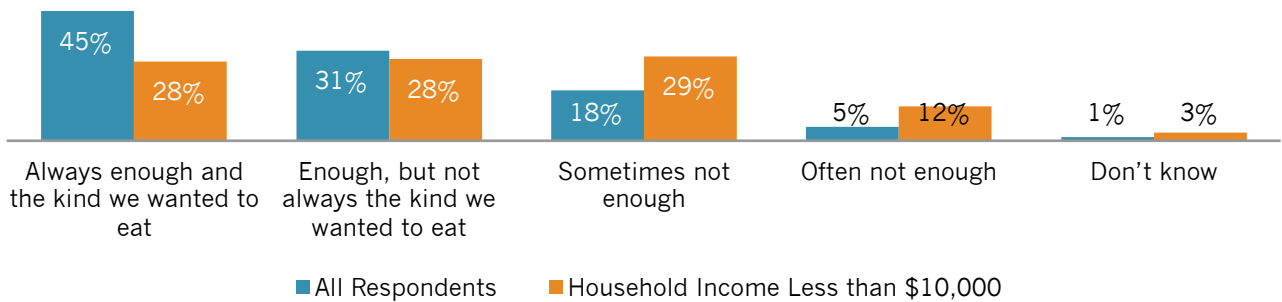
## Household Food Security

### How We Eat

We asked residents several questions about their shopping and eating habits.<sup>102</sup> Most households prepare meals from scratch daily (52%) or several times a week (33%). Just 9% report preparing meals from scratch on a weekly basis, and 2% of respondents either prepare meals “once a month”, “a few times a year”, or “never”, respectively.<sup>103</sup> Seven percent of respondents report that they never eat takeout or fast food meals, 22% report “a few times a year”, and 27% eat out once or twice monthly. Conversely, 28% eat out at least once a week, and a combined 16% eat takeout or fast food “daily” or “several times a week”.<sup>104</sup>

Although 45% of respondents report that they had “enough” of the foods they wanted to eat, 31% report having “enough, but not always the kind they wanted to eat”, and a combined 23% report “sometimes” or “often” not having enough to eat over the last year. Looking more closely at respondents reporting the lowest household incomes, a combined 41% report “sometimes” or “often” not having enough to eat over the last year. This indicates that more than half of all survey respondents are dissatisfied with their current diets, or worse, they are hungry.

**How would you describe the food eaten in your household during the past year?**



**Table 11** Survey respondents’ satisfaction with the food eaten in their households over the past year.

**“...I don’t know anyone not struggling.”**

Households struggle to find affordable, nutritious foods for their families. “Yes, I don’t know anyone not struggling,” one focus group participant explains.<sup>105</sup> Other residents express concern over food security in their communities. One participant defines food security as the ability “to buy what you need, not just junk.”<sup>106</sup>

Another resident adds, “Food security is having the [right] amount of food, with four kids, and one person working.” Many participants find ways to stretch their food dollars by limiting what they eat at mealtime, relying on others with SNAP benefits, eating at other family members’ homes, or seeking out events offering free meals.

<sup>102</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey.

<sup>103</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Questions 6.

<sup>104</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Questions 7.

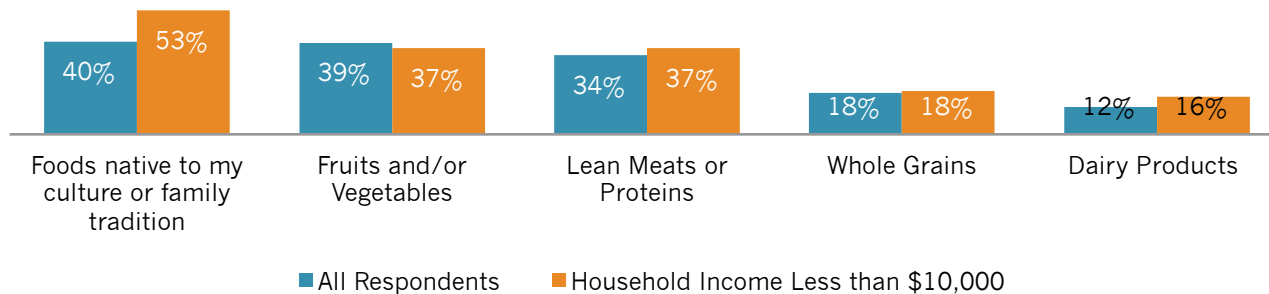
<sup>105</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

## Maintaining Traditional Eating Habits

In addition to finding fresh produce, survey respondents most frequently have difficulty finding culturally appropriate foods.<sup>107</sup> Some focus group participants echo this finding. One Burmese gentleman notes that his wife has not been able to find a particular plant traditionally eaten by new mothers to enhance lactation while breastfeeding, while others frequently mention sour leaf, a traditional green that they have yet to find at local food stores.<sup>108</sup> Maintaining traditional eating habits is especially challenging for food pantry clients, who receive a number of food items that they do not know how to use or prepare.

### What foods do you have the most difficulty finding near your home?



**Table 12** Food items survey respondents have the most difficulty finding at stores close to home.

Many focus group participants, however, do find most of the culturally appropriate or ethnic foods they need here in Lowell. “[It’s] easy to find cultural foods,” one resident explains as others nod in agreement, “...the community has many stores: African, Spanish, [and] Asian.”<sup>109</sup> Though, these residents face a different set of challenges to maintaining food traditions. Some participants avoid traditional ingredients including some produce items, meats, and fish, because they find that they taste different than they do in their home countries.<sup>110</sup> Parents also find themselves competing with American foods, as their children become more accustomed to school lunches they are less interested in eating traditional foods at home.<sup>111</sup> Finally, cost plays a significant role in limiting cultural food traditions. One African resident explains, “African food is expensive, just [making] a meal could easily [cost] \$100...WIC is not enough for me.”<sup>112</sup> Others similarly highlight the fact that most of the Asian markets that do sell ethnic foods do not accept SNAP/EBT or WIC benefits. Therefore, they must use the bulk of their food dollars to purchase these staples at these stores.<sup>113</sup>

## Nutritional Understanding and Food Knowledge

Although an overwhelming 95% of survey respondents believe that eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day can lead to a healthier life, just 14% of respondents actually eat five or more servings daily. In fact, most residents eat only two or three servings daily. The majority of residents explain that cost prevents them from eating the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables, followed by personal tastes and busy schedules.

<sup>107</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 5.

<sup>108</sup> Focus Group: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

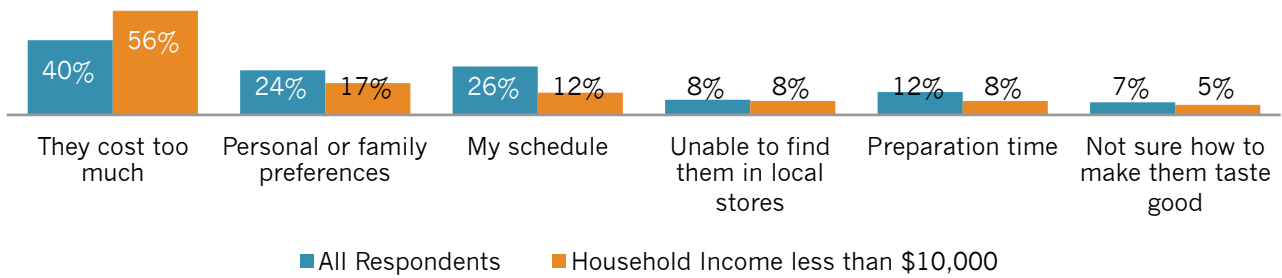
<sup>110</sup> Focus Group: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012.

<sup>111</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.

<sup>112</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>113</sup> Focus Group: Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, 2012, Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

**What most prevents you from eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day?**



**Table 13** Factors preventing survey respondents from eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Most residents (55%) look to food labels for information on nutrition and healthy eating. Others turn to the media (41%), including television, magazines, the Internet, the newspaper, etc., and some rely on family and/or friends (30%) or advice from a doctor or dietitian (31%).<sup>114</sup>

In focus groups, however, misconceptions were revealed over what foods actually qualify as nutritious. While many participants clearly agree that a healthy diet includes fresh fruits and vegetables and small amounts of meat and fish, others, particularly new immigrants, believe “American” foods such as hamburgers, butter, and fruit juice are nutritious. For example, one participant explains that orange soda is nutritious because it contains fruit juice, and others believe that a nutrition label alone on any food product signifies that it is “good for you.”<sup>115</sup> These comments indicate a clear misunderstanding of healthy eating habits, but also underscore the fact that nutrition education is not reaching non-English speaking populations.

**The Costs of Healthy Living**

In surveys and focus groups, cost is the most common factor limiting the amount and kind of food residents eat. Many perceive healthy foods to be more costly than unhealthy options. One focus group participant exclaims, “If you [could] afford healthy food you would buy it, otherwise you will continue to buy cheap, unhealthy food.”<sup>116</sup> Other residents associate the term “organic” with “healthy,” but feel that it is more costly and they don’t get as much value when they buy organics. One focus group participant explains, “Price is more important than quality. So many families in this community are struggling...”<sup>117</sup> One resident feels that organic and healthy food is intentionally priced higher to force people to turn to cheap, unhealthy food.<sup>118</sup> These comments indicate that healthy options are beyond their grasp, as residents favor quantity and value when feeding themselves and their families. Many residents are fearful of buying and preparing unfamiliar fresh foods and disliking the final results, they therefore stick to foods they know.<sup>119</sup>

**Price is more important than quality. So many families in this community are struggling...**

On a positive note, survey respondents and focus group participants express great interest and excitement in learning how to prepare new and unfamiliar foods. In particular, they want to

<sup>114</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Questions 12.  
<sup>115</sup> Focus Group: Community Teamwork, Inc., 2012.  
<sup>116</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.  
<sup>117</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a Better Acre Potluck, 2012.  
<sup>118</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012  
<sup>119</sup> Focus Group: Lowell Senior Center, 2012.

know how to prepare produce from the Farmers' Market or items they receive from the Food Pantry.<sup>120</sup> They want to know more about nutrition education programs in the community as well.<sup>121</sup> This widespread appeal presents a tremendous opportunity, as nutrition and food preparation instruction are pivotal to changing consumer perceptions of cost and influencing healthy living habits.

### **Conclusion: Consumption**

Although many residents are content with the food they eat, more than half of all survey respondents are dissatisfied with their current diets or are outright hungry. This fact explains why Federal assistance programs such as SNAP/EBT and WIC, and Emergency Food Providers are in high demand here in the Lowell community.

Residents most often express difficulty finding fresh produce and culturally appropriate foods in stores near their homes. Results from the Food Retail Survey and the Consumer Survey reveal that produce is rarely available and is difficult to find at many local stores. Finding culturally appropriate ingredients for many residents is not a challenge, however, maintaining cultural tradition is limited by personal tastes, generational preferences for American foods, and cost. On the other hand, maintaining traditional eating habits is a challenge for food pantry clients, who receive a number of food items unfamiliar to them.

In fact, cost is the most common factor limiting the amount and kind of food residents eat, and many perceive healthy foods to be more costly than unhealthy options. Despite the fact that 95% of residents surveyed believe that eating five or more servings of fruit and vegetables a day can lead to a healthier life, very few residents actually do, and most eat no more than two or three servings daily. The majority of these residents explain that cost prevents them from eating the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables. More than one third of residents eat take out and fast food at least several times a week, if not daily.

Residents also reveal a need for greater nutritional awareness and food preparation instruction. Without such knowledge, residents limit what they are willing to buy at the Lowell Farmers' Market and local food vendors, but are also limited by what foods they are able eat from emergency food resources. These opportunities for learning could go a long way in addressing a number of misconceptions around healthy eating, especially among recent immigrants who, to this point, have been excluded from such programming. Residents are open and excited for these opportunities to enhance their knowledge of food and nutrition.

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<sup>120</sup> Focus Group: Coalition for a better Acre, 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Please see page 55: Consumer Survey Results, Question 13.





Seasonal berries offered at the farmers' market.

*Photo: Mill City Grows*



## Conclusion

Through the Lowell Community Food Assessment, we have found that limited access to quality produce, language barriers, cultural differences, and cost are the leading factors undermining residents' ability to maintain healthful eating habits, adding to a dissatisfaction with their current diets or leading to outright hunger. Language and cultural barriers also limit residents' ability to access necessary social services, and perpetuate misconceptions around nutrition and healthy eating habits.

We also learned that few opportunities exist in Lowell to support local food producers and locally produced foods. Interest in urban agriculture is growing, though concerns over growing food safely in untested urban soils, seasonal and cultural differences in growing practices, and time and space constraints prevent more widespread participation.

Finally, Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) are a critical and invaluable component of Lowell's food system, whose services are undercut by limited time and resources, tight budgets, and a shortage of staff and volunteers. To ensure emergency food security and provide greater selection, EFPs must build out and diversify their distribution sources.

With these findings in mind, the FSC has devised recommendations aimed at empowering constituents and partner organizations as active stewards of our food system, encouraging greater support for local and regional food production, ensuring improved access to— and the distribution of good foods, enhancing food preparation and nutritional knowledge, and strengthening benefit programs and the role of Emergency Food Providers.

## Recommendations for Growing Local Food, Enhancing the Distribution of Good Food, and Cultivating Healthy Lifestyles

- Work with local food producers, distributors, restaurants, and food retailers to review best practices and examine the feasibility of wholesale distribution of locally produced foods to Lowell food vendors.
- Look to other farmers' market models to increase vendor and consumer participation, and enhance the presence of the Lowell Farmers' Market.
- Seek out new sites and time slots for market days: new sites should provide onsite parking and be accessible by multiple modes of transportation, and market hours should be more convenient for working families.
- Review best practices for augmenting SNAP/EBT, WIC, and Senior Coupon purchasing power at the Lowell Farmers' Market.
- Promote the greater 'value' of shopping at the Lowell Farmers' Market through a marketing campaign, which could feature profiles of market vendors, or themes such as supporting local farmers, preserving food traditions, or great tasting local foods.
- Study best practices for establishing mutually beneficial Community Supported Agriculture partnerships, to increase CSA distribution opportunities and shareholder participation.
- Work with City agencies, organizations, and residents to locate suitable and safe spaces for communal growing. Collaborate with organizations and City agencies to test and remediate brownfield soils.
- Collaborate with residents and community organizations to promote safe growing practices and expand opportunities for learning and growing in Lowell.

## 2012 Lowell Community Food Assessment

- Expand multilingual outreach strategies to promote community food projects, and seek out resources to offer translators at such events.
- With smaller local food stores, review best practices and business models to increase their capacity for distributing a wider selection produce and healthy food options.
- In tandem with increasing selection, work with retailers to more prominently feature healthy food options in the front of their stores, and reduce the number of advertisements for unhealthy items displayed on store exteriors.
- Develop multilingual outreach program to encourage the adoption of SNAP/EBT, WIC, and other benefits at stores owned by non-English speaking vendors, and streamline and clarify the process to fit their needs.
- Seek out methods and best practices for providing and reviewing public feedback for service providers such as the Lowell Department of Transitional Assistance, and develop a forum and action plan to address collective concerns.
- Provide support to Emergency Food Providers and strengthen their network by furnishing them with dedicated staff persons to assist them with bilingual outreach strategies, provide onsite translation, coordinate the sharing of resources and information, and provide cooking instruction and experienced nutritional consultation. These positions could be filled through the AmeriCorps or FoodCorps programs.
- While further supporting the Merrimack Valley Food Bank, enhance the emergency food network by diversifying its distribution sources, and seek out best practices and funding to provide fresh food options year round.
- Examine institutional and commercial food waste and devise strategies for connecting good food to the emergency food network and residents most in need.
- Seek out alternative food pantry models that allow for greater client discretion in selecting foods.
- Initiate a public awareness campaign around healthy foods and eating habits, and promote local resources, including vendors, organizations, and City agencies that support healthy lifestyles.
- Expand on-site cooking demonstrations at EFPs, alternative food outlets, and at community events. Encourage community participation by training community chefs: residents trained as cooking instructors, to lead demonstrations throughout their community.
- Shift perceptions of cost, while increasing food and nutrition knowledge through in-store shopping tours to find healthy food options at reasonable prices, and explore ways to maximize their shopping dollars using their benefits or coupons.
- Launch a marketing campaign featuring contextually and culturally specific ads to promote healthy, whole foods, or the true costs of eating junk food instead of healthy options.
- Provide more opportunities for learning healthy lifestyle habits in multiple languages, and increase support for organizations and programs already working to improve the health of our community.

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Appendix

Emergency Food Provider Survey

Note: Any identifying information will not be used to judge your agency. Agency contact information, services provided, and hours of operation will be used in a resource guide and published calendar to provide information to potential clients about food distribution times and procedures.

Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Person Completing survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

What type of emergency food services do you provide? (Please check all that apply)

- \_\_\_ Distribute food bags or food boxes to needy families or individuals
\_\_\_ Federal commodities programs
\_\_\_ Soup kitchen meals
\_\_\_ Senior nutrition program meals
\_\_\_ Meals to shelter residents
\_\_\_ Deliver meals and groceries to homes
\_\_\_ Vouchers for meals to local restaurants
\_\_\_ Vouchers for the purchase of groceries at local stores
\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your agency provide any services other than food to clients?

- \_\_\_ No
\_\_\_ Yes, explain. \_\_\_\_\_

How long has this agency been providing emergency food services in Lowell, MA?

\_\_\_ # of years and/or months

How often do you provide these services?

- \_\_\_ # of times per day
\_\_\_ # of days each week
\_\_\_ # of days each month
\_\_\_ As needed emergencies
\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your hours of operation?

- Monday: \_\_\_\_\_
Tuesday: \_\_\_\_\_
Wednesday: \_\_\_\_\_
Thursday: \_\_\_\_\_
Friday: \_\_\_\_\_
Saturday: \_\_\_\_\_
Sunday: \_\_\_\_\_
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please note holidays on which you are regularly closed\*

What, if any, special criteria must clients meet in order to receive food? Please specify.

Age: \_\_\_\_\_
Income Guidelines: \_\_\_\_\_

Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
Church/Religious Membership or Participation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Enrollment in Agency Programs: \_\_\_\_\_  
Community Service: \_\_\_\_\_  
Illness or Disability: \_\_\_\_\_  
Participation in Counseling: \_\_\_\_\_  
Needs-based Assessment Made by Agency Staff: \_\_\_\_\_  
Referral: \_\_\_\_\_  
Any: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
None: \_\_\_\_\_

**What, if any, sort of documentation must clients provide in order to receive food? Please specify.**

Picture ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
Proof of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Card: \_\_\_\_\_  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
None: \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you limit the number of times an individual or family may use your services?**

Yes. Please explain how. \_\_\_\_\_  
 No  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Are clients allowed to use your services if you know they are using other services/organizations in Lowell as well?**

Yes  
 No

**If you keep records of your clients, what information do you include?**

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability
<input type="checkbox"/> Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Number in Household
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Number of Children
<input type="checkbox"/> Race/Ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/> Reason for Need
<input type="checkbox"/> Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Last Time Served
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Services Provided
<input type="checkbox"/> Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Income Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Agency does not keep records

**Please estimate the percentage of people per age group who use your services.**

Under 18  
 18 to 64  
 65 & Over

**Please estimate the percentage of people per race who use your services.**

American Indian and Alaska Native  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander  
 White  
 Two or More Races  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Unknown

=====

Please explain the emergency food services you provide below, answer all that apply.

**Food Bags or Boxes**

Average number distributed monthly: \_\_\_\_\_

Average length of time boxes are intended to last: \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of clients served each month - unduplicated (Count each person only once, even if they used services multiple times last month): \_\_\_\_\_

How often do clients receive services per month? \_\_\_\_\_

Are boxes tailored for the size of families? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

**Meal Programs (Hot Meals or Brown Bags)**

Average number of clients each month (Count each person only once, even if they used services multiple times last month): \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of breakfasts served each month: \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of lunches served each month: \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of dinners served each month: \_\_\_\_\_

**Deliver Meals & Groceries to Homes**

Average number of clients each month (Count each person only once, even if they used services multiple times last month): \_\_\_\_\_

Average number of meals or bags delivered monthly: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vouchers for the Purchase of Food**

Average number of clients each month (Count each person only once, even if they used services multiple times last month): \_\_\_\_\_

Average cash value of one voucher: \_\_\_\_\_

How often can clients return for vouchers? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any restrictions on voucher use? If so, explain. \_\_\_\_\_

**When do you see the greatest demand for food requests?**

\_\_\_ The beginning of the month

\_\_\_ The middle of the month

\_\_\_ The end of the month

\_\_\_ There is a consistent demand

**Are there seasonal fluctuations in the demand for food services?**

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

If so, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you noticed any change in need for your agency's services in the past 12 months? Please specify when applicable.**

\_\_\_ Yes, Increase \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Yes, Decrease \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ No

**What proportion of your food (not funding) do you obtain from each of the following sources? (Check all that apply)**

	Name of source(s):
Food Bank _____%	_____
Commercial Donors: business/retail, markets, etc. _____%	_____
Wholesale food purchases _____%	_____
Food Drives _____%	_____

Private Donors \_\_\_% \_\_\_\_\_  
 None \_\_\_% \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other, please explain \_\_\_% \_\_\_\_\_

**On average each month, how much does your agency/program spend to purchase food?**  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have enough food to meet the demand?**  
 \_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Usually \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

**Each month:**  
 Approximately what percentage of people do you turn away due to lack of food stuffs? \_\_\_%  
 Approximately what percentage of people do you have to give a reduced amount of food? \_\_\_%

**Do you feel your agency experiences barriers when accessing the Food Bank? If so, describe.**  
 \_\_\_ No  
 \_\_\_ Yes, please describe. \_\_\_\_\_

**If the food supply you receive from the food bank were eliminated, would this have any significant impact on your program? (Check one)**

- \_\_\_ None
- \_\_\_ Minimal
- \_\_\_ Significant
- \_\_\_ Devastating
- \_\_\_ Unsure

=====

**Do your food sources allow you to provide a variety of food?**

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Usually \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

**Are you able to predict what food supplies you will receive from month to month from your different sources?**

\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_ Usually \_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_ Never

**What types of food do you need more of?**

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Bread/Cereal	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fresh Fruits/Vegetables	_____	_____	_____	_____
Milk/Cheese	_____	_____	_____	_____
Meat/Poultry/Fish/Eggs	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dried Beans/Peanut Butter	_____	_____	_____	_____
Formula/Baby Goods	_____	_____	_____	_____
Canned Goods	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hygiene Products	_____	_____	_____	_____

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**How often does your facility provide fresh fruits and vegetables?**

- \_\_\_ Always
- \_\_\_ Usually
- \_\_\_ Sometimes
- \_\_\_ Never

**What foods do you avoid distributing?**

- \_\_\_ Soda
- \_\_\_ Chips





**Which methods does your agency use to pick up food?**

- Use agency-owned vehicles
- Volunteers/staff use their own vehicles
- Arrange for pick-ups with larger organizations who have their own transportation
- Food is delivered to us
- Not applicable, because we do not distribute food
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Is the transportation available for your agency adequate?**  Yes  No  N/A

Please describe any transportation (including insurance) problems that you are experiencing currently.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following information would be helpful to your staff/volunteers?**

	Very	Somewhat	Not at all
Nutritious preparation of meals or bags	_____	_____	_____
Food packages for homeless people	_____	_____	_____
Nutrition needs of special groups	_____	_____	_____
(Which ones? _____ )			
Food storage	_____	_____	_____
Food safety	_____	_____	_____

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**What are the top 3 challenges you have experienced in providing emergency food assistance?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for participating in the Lowell Food Security Coalition Community Food Assessment!*

## Focus Group Questions

### Household Food Security

1. How would you define food security, what does it mean?
2. Do you think food security, food security is defined as access by all people at all times to enough culturally appropriate food for an active, healthy life, is a problem for our community?
  - a. *Do you think many households in the community struggle with accessing enough food on a regular basis?*
  - b. *Can you tell me about some of your experiences or observations that would make you think so?*
  - c. *Should food security be a priority to be addressed by the community?*
  - d. *What do you think are the biggest problems related to food security at the community level? Why do you think these exist?*
  - e. *How do people cope with the problem of not having access to enough food?*
3. What do you think the community (government, businesses, people) could do to make it easier for people to get enough food? What else could be done to improve the community's problems with food insecurity?
  - a. *How can they work to make food more accessible, available, and affordable?*
  - b. *Are there some system changes (bus routes, location of food sources) that need to be addressed? What would you change about these systems?*
  - c. *Are there barriers now? What are the contributing factors?*

### Food Assistance Programs

1. How does the community address food insecurity, or people that do not have enough food? Have you or anyone you know had any experience with this?
  - a. *Are emergency or federally funded food sources easily accessible and used in the community? What are they? Who organizes them?*
  - b. *If you have used Food Pantries or Emergency food sources are you satisfied with the foods you receive? Quantity, nutritional value, quality?*
2. How important are government-sponsored food assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, school meals) to your community? What are some of your observations with them?
  - a. *Do you think some people rely heavily on them? Why or why not?*
  - b. *What makes them important?*
3. What do you think could be done to improve these programs in your community?
  - a. *What problems do you see in the programs and what would you like to change?*
  - b. *Probe for: Outreach or information programs; Application assistance programs; One application for all programs; Change in hours of program operation; Transportation improvements; Training for professional staff on the programs and on the community's culture.*

### Dietary Needs/Culturally Appropriate Food

**POSSIBLE INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY:** have the participants break up into 3 groups and ask them to draw or write descriptions of meals. Group 1 will describe their typical meals that they eat. Group 2 will describe what they think people should be eating at every meal. Group 3 will describe what they wish they could eat on a day-to-day basis. At the end, we will all share what the groups came up with

1. Can you describe a typical meal that you and/or your family would eat (ingredients, time spent cooking, eaten at home or at a restaurant, etc.)?
  - a. *Are you satisfied with your day-to-day meals?*
  - b. *Do they meet your needs? Probe to see if anyone has special dietary needs like vegetarian, low-sodium, diabetes, etc.*
  - c. *What is the average cost of foods? Does this fit within your budget?*
2. What about cultural foods? Can you tell me about some foods that are native to your culture that you like to eat/cook?

- a. *Are you able to cook those foods here?*
  - b. *What are some stores where you can buy ethnic foods? Are they hard to get to?*
  - c. *What might be some reasons you don't make these foods?*
  - d. *Religious considerations*
3. Is there anything you wish you could change about the foods you buy or that are available to you? What do you think could be done to make more culturally appropriate foods available?
- a. *What kinds of foods would you add to the stores?*
  - b. *Who do you think should be responsible for putting these foods in the markets? Have you ever requested foods at a market?*
  - c. *Do you think having cultural foods available is a pressing issue?*

### **Food Patterns (eating/shopping)**

1. Can you define what you see as healthy food and give us some examples?
2. Where do you currently do your food shopping and why do you choose to shop there?
  - a. *Tell me about how you get and eat your food. How do you feel about your daily and weekly food habits?*
  - b. **POSSIBLE INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY:** *have people map out where they shop during the focus group as a way to break the ice and have interaction.*
3. Tell me about your shopping habits and your shopping experiences. What do stores look like in the community?
  - a. *What types of foods do you buy?*
  - b. *How often do you go shopping?*
  - c. *How do you get to the grocery store?*
  - d. *Who does the shopping in your household?*
4. Do you shop at the farmer's market? Why or why not? What other foods/goods would you like to see sold there?
  - a. *Where would you like to see farmers markets in your neighborhood?*
  - b. *Would you like to see a Winter Farmers Market in Lowell, where?*
  - c. *Are you familiar with the concept of a food coop? If there were a food coop in Lowell, would you shop there? Would you be willing to pay a yearly membership fee or donate your time to a coop as a way to support local growers? If so, how much?*
5. Do you think there is an issue with food access/availability in the community?
  - a. *What would you like to see changed about stores/food/transportation?*
  - b. *What are some ways we can find a balance between what people are eating, what people should be eating, what people want to be eating, and what foods are available?*
  - c. *What do you think are some major barriers to buying and eating healthy foods?*
    - i. *Is food too expensive?*
    - ii. *Are there issues related to transportation?*
6. How satisfied are you with your family's food options?
  - a. *What are your children eating habits in schools? Do they bring or buy lunch? What do they eat?*
  - b. *Do you eat meals together as a family? How many are you feeding in one household?*
7. How do you deal with food waste?
  - a. *How much food waste do you have on a weekly basis?*
  - b. *Do you recycle and packaging from your food (bottles, cans, boxes)? Do you Compost?*
  - c. *If composting were available through the city, would you do it?*
8. What are some innovative ways you would like to see the Lowell Food System change?
  - a. *Would you use a Shared Commercial kitchen space? Do you think others could benefit from it?*
  - b. *Would you like to see more Street Vendors or Food Trucks? Types that might be of interest and locations?*
  - c. *Do you know of any informal food systems that exist (street vendors or peddlers at parks and where their goods come from? What barriers do they face? Permitting issues, language, etc?*



### **Growing Food**

1. Do you or does anyone you know grow food for themselves or neighbors? If so what does this look like in an urban setting? If not, why do you think that doesn't happen?
  - a. *Why do you think some people garden? For recreation? Dependence on food?*
  - b. *If coming from a different country, did you grow food there and what did that system look like?*
2. What do you think would be some benefits of gardening? What about negative aspects of gardening?
3. If the resources were available, would you be interested in gardening and growing your own food?
  - a. *What resources would it take for you to get involved?*
  - b. *Who do you think should be responsible for installing these resources?*
  - c. *Where would you like to see community gardens in your neighborhood, if anywhere?*
4. Do you know of local farms in the area? Do you shop at any of them, why or why not?
5. What about raising Urban Poultry/other animals in Lowell, do you know anyone that has them or that would like to? Would people like to be able to keep chickens-it is currently illegal in Lowell?
6. Do you or does anyone you know go fishing or participate in fish farming practices?
7. What are other ways one can grow food in an urban setting?

To wrap up the discussion – Is there anything else you would like to add? Are there any aspects about food and the community that you feel we missed in our discussion today?

### **Wrap-Up**

1. *Thank you for your time and participation. I hope it was a worthwhile experience.*
2. *All of the ideas generated in this discussion are very valuable and we will use it for our assessment.*
3. *Again, we assure you that your participation will remain confidential.*
4. *Thank you and have a great day.*



Consumer Survey

Lowell Community Food Security Coalition  
Lowell Community Food Assessment

Consumer Survey

Survey Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

We are asking people living in Lowell to share their thoughts on the food available in their neighborhoods. Your responses will remain strictly confidential—we will not ask for your name on this survey and no personal information will be released.

**Please check the appropriate boxes or fill-in the blanks.**

<p>1. Do you live in the City of Lowell?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p><i>If 'No', thank you for your time, but we are only surveying residents of Lowell.</i></p>								
<p>2. How do you get to the supermarket or food store?  <input type="checkbox"/> Walk      <input type="checkbox"/> Drive Myself      <input type="checkbox"/> A Friend Drives Me      <input type="checkbox"/> Bus      <input type="checkbox"/> Taxi      <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</p>									
<p>3. How long does it typically take to get to the supermarket or food store?  <input type="checkbox"/> Less Than 5 Mins.      <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 Mins.      <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 Mins.      <input type="checkbox"/> 21-30 Mins.      <input type="checkbox"/> 31-45 Mins.      <input type="checkbox"/> More Than 45 Mins.</p>									
<p>4. What is the name and location of the store where you buy <b>most</b> of your food? (e.g. "Hannaford on Rogers Street")</p> <hr/>									
<p>5. What foods do you have the <b>most</b> difficulty finding near your home? (Check all that apply)</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Fruits and/or Vegetables (Fresh or Frozen, etc.)</td> <td style="width: 50%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Whole Grains (Breads, Cereals, Rice, etc.)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lean Meats or Proteins (Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts, etc.)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Products (Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, etc.)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Foods native to my culture or family tradition</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Fruits and/or Vegetables (Fresh or Frozen, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole Grains (Breads, Cereals, Rice, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lean Meats or Proteins (Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Products (Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Foods native to my culture or family tradition	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> Fruits and/or Vegetables (Fresh or Frozen, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Whole Grains (Breads, Cereals, Rice, etc.)								
<input type="checkbox"/> Lean Meats or Proteins (Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Dairy Products (Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, etc.)								
<input type="checkbox"/> Foods native to my culture or family tradition	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____								
<p>6. How often do you (or a household member) cook or prepare meals from scratch?  <input type="checkbox"/> Daily      <input type="checkbox"/> Several Times a Week      <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly      <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly      <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Times a Year  <input type="checkbox"/> Never</p>									
<p>7. How often do you eat takeout or fast food?  <input type="checkbox"/> Daily      <input type="checkbox"/> Several Times a Week      <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly      <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly      <input type="checkbox"/> A Few Times a Year  <input type="checkbox"/> Never</p>									
<p>8. How would you describe the food eaten in your household during the past year?  <input type="checkbox"/> Always enough and the kind we wanted to eat      <input type="checkbox"/> Enough, but not always the kind we wanted to eat  <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes not enough      <input type="checkbox"/> Often not enough      <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</p>									
<p>9. Do you believe that eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day can lead to a healthier life?  <i>(Note: a serving is about a ½ cup or a small apple, ½ banana, a handful of carrots, etc.)</i>  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>									
<p>10. About how many servings of fruits and vegetables do you eat a day?  <input type="checkbox"/> 0      <input type="checkbox"/> 1      <input type="checkbox"/> 2      <input type="checkbox"/> 3      <input type="checkbox"/> 4      <input type="checkbox"/> 5      <input type="checkbox"/> More than 5</p> <p>a. <b>If less than 5</b>, what <b>most prevents</b> you from eating <b>5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables</b> a day?  <i>(Check all that apply)</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;"><input type="checkbox"/> They cost too much</td> <td style="width: 33%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Unable to find them in local stores</td> <td style="width: 33%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Personal or family preferences</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how to make them taste good</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Preparation time</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> My schedule</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> They cost too much	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to find them in local stores	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal or family preferences	<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how to make them taste good	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation time	<input type="checkbox"/> My schedule		
<input type="checkbox"/> They cost too much	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to find them in local stores	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal or family preferences							
<input type="checkbox"/> Not sure how to make them taste good	<input type="checkbox"/> Preparation time	<input type="checkbox"/> My schedule							
<p>11. Where do you find information on nutrition and healthy eating? (Check all that apply)</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Food labels</td> <td style="width: 25%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Family and/or friends</td> <td style="width: 25%;"><input type="checkbox"/> School</td> <td style="width: 25%;"><input type="checkbox"/> Media (TV, books, newspaper, internet, etc.)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Physician or Dietitian</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Cannot find good information</td> <td colspan="2"><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____</td> </tr> </table>		<input type="checkbox"/> Food labels	<input type="checkbox"/> Family and/or friends	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Media (TV, books, newspaper, internet, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Physician or Dietitian	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot find good information	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Food labels	<input type="checkbox"/> Family and/or friends	<input type="checkbox"/> School	<input type="checkbox"/> Media (TV, books, newspaper, internet, etc.)						
<input type="checkbox"/> Physician or Dietitian	<input type="checkbox"/> Cannot find good information	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____							
<p>12. Would you be interested in learning more about nutrition education programs in your community?  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes      <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>									

SURVEY CONTINUES ON THE BACK

13. Do you grow any of your own food?  Yes  No

a. *If 'No'*, are you interested in learning about growing your own food?

Very Interested  Fairly Interested  Not Very Interested  Not Interested At All

14. Do you participate in a community garden program?  Yes  No

a. *If 'No'*, would you be interested in growing your own food at a community garden in your neighborhood?  Yes  No

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15. Do you shop at the Lowell Farmer's Market?  Yes  No

a. *If 'No'*, why you don't you shop at the Lowell Farmers Market?

Unaware of It  Lack of Parking  Lack of Transportation  Don't like the Location

Inconvenient Hours or Time  Too Expensive  Not Enough Selection  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

16. Which neighborhood in Lowell do you live in?

The Acre  Back Central  Belvidere  Centralville  Downtown

The Highlands  Pawtucketville  Sacred Heart  South Lowell  Yes  No

17. Are you aware of any emergency food providers in your neighborhood, such as food pantries or hot meal providers?  Yes  No

a. *If 'Yes'*, have you visited one during the past year?  Yes  No

18. Do you or anyone in your household currently participate in any of the following programs? (*Check all that apply*)

SNAP/EBT/Food Stamps  WIC (Women, Infants and Children)  Senior Coupons

SSI (Supplemental Security Income)  Free or Reduced School Lunch  Summer Meals

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

19. Are you:  Male  Female

20. In what year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

21. What is your race/ethnicity? (*Check all that apply*)

African American  White  Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  Asian

American Indian/Alaska Native  Hispanic or Latino  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

---

22. In what range does your household income fall?

Less than \$10,000  \$10,000-14,999  \$15,000-24,999  \$25,000-34,999  \$35,000-49,999

\$50,000-74,999  \$75,000-99,999  More than \$100,000  Don't know

23. What is your employment status?

Employed  Not employed  In armed forces  Student  Disability

Retired

24. How many people live in your household?

a. # of children under 18: \_\_\_\_\_

b. # of adults 18-64: \_\_\_\_\_

c. # of adults 65 and older: \_\_\_\_\_

*We are sincerely grateful for your participation in this survey.  
It helps us to assess the availability of food in Lowell.*

**Thank You!**



Consumer Survey Results

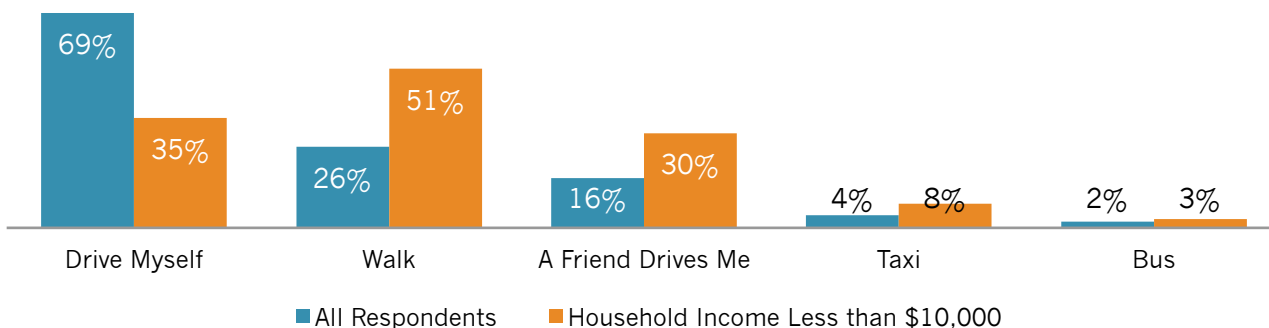
Question 1: Do you live in the City of Lowell?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	100.0%	430
No	0.0%	0
<i>answered question</i>		<b>430</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

Question 2: How do you get to the supermarket or food store?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Drive Myself	69%	280
Walk	26%	106
A Friend Drives Me	16%	65
Taxi	4%	18
Bus	2%	8
Other (please specify)		18
<i>answered question</i>		<b>409</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>21</b>

Question 2: How do you get to the supermarket or food store?



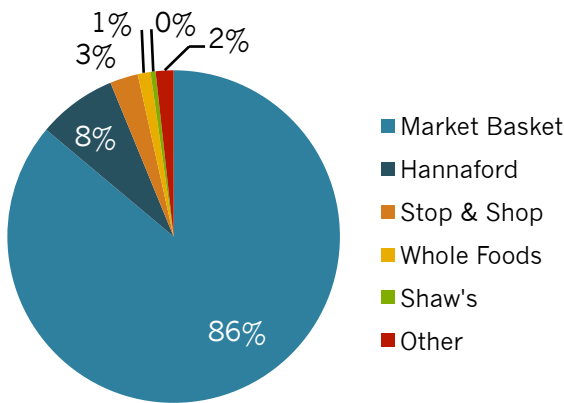
Question 3: How long does it typically take to get to the supermarket or food store?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 5 Minutes	22%	94
5 - 10 Minutes	47%	197
11 - 20 Minutes	19%	79
21 - 30 Minutes	7%	29
31 - 45 Minutes	3%	11
More than 45 Minutes	2%	9
<i>answered question</i>		<b>419</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>11</b>

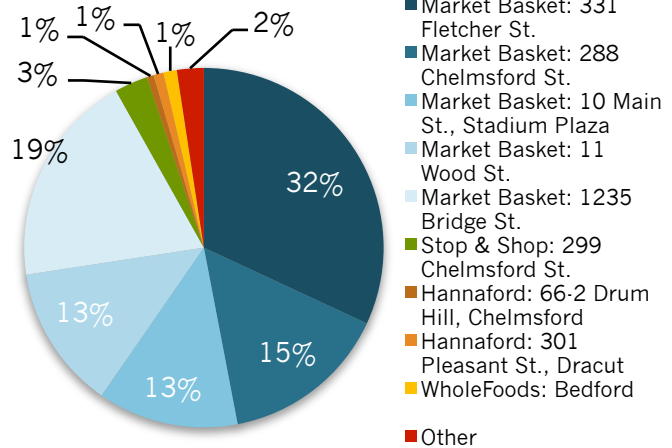
**Question 4: What is the name and location of the store where you buy most of your food? (Example: Store Name: Hannaford, Location: Rogers Street)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Store Name	99.5%	402
Location	90.1%	364
<b>answered question</b>		<b>404</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>26</b>

**Question 4: What is the name of the store where you buy most of your food?**



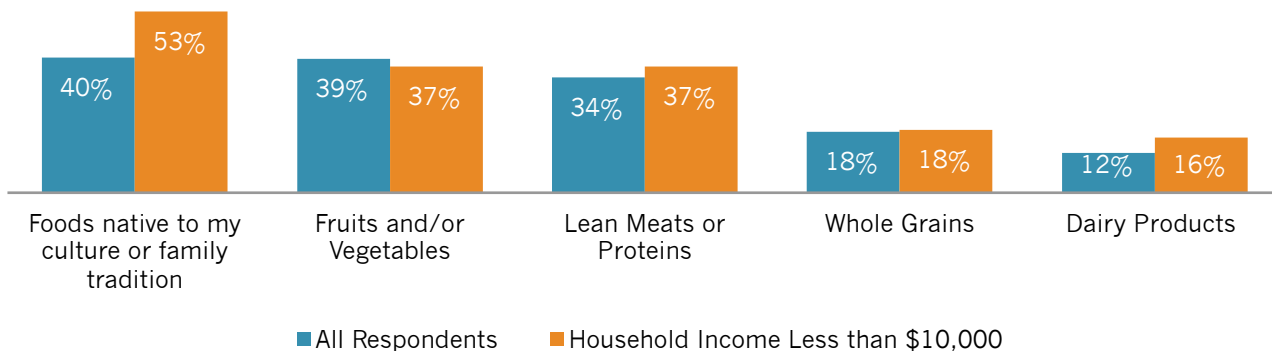
**Question 4: What is the location of the store where you buy most of your food?**



**Question 5: What foods do you have the most difficulty finding near your home? (Check all that apply)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Fruits and/or Vegetables (Fresh or Frozen)	39.1%	101
Lean Meats or Proteins (Poultry, Fish, Eggs, Nuts, etc.)	33.7%	87
Foods native to my culture or family tradition	39.5%	102
Whole Grains (Breads, Cereals, Rice, etc.)	17.8%	46
Dairy Products (Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, etc.)	11.6%	30
Other (please specify)		27
<b>answered question</b>		<b>258</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>172</b>

**Question 5: What foods do you have the most difficulty finding near your home?**



Question 6: How often do you (or a household member) cook or prepare meals from scratch?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Daily	52.0%	218
Several times a week	32.9%	138
Weekly	9.3%	39
Monthly	1.7%	7
A few times a year	2.1%	9
Never	1.9%	8
<b>answered question</b>		<b>419</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>11</b>

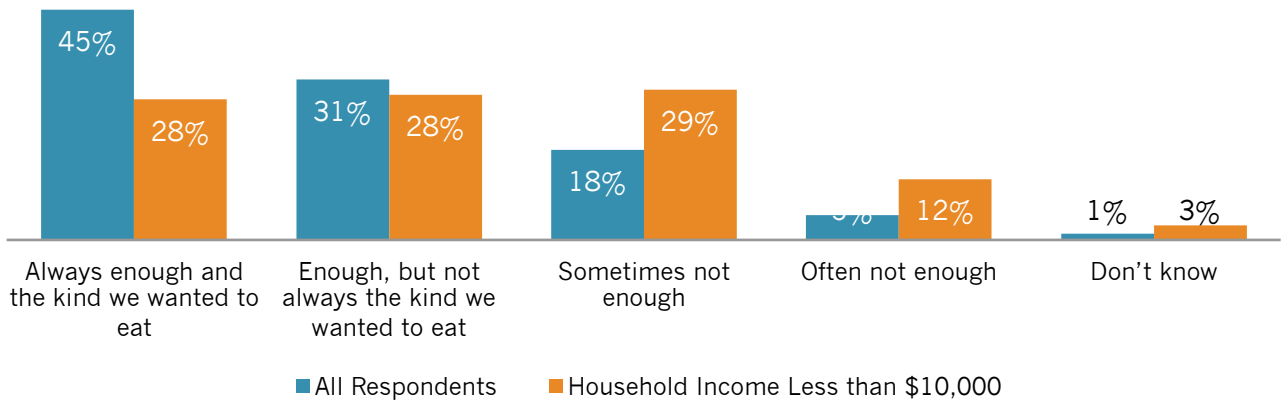
Question 7: How often do you eat takeout or fast food?

Daily	2.9%	12
Several times a week	13.1%	54
Weekly	27.6%	114
Monthly	27.4%	113
A few times a year	22.3%	92
Never	6.8%	28
<b>answered question</b>		<b>413</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>17</b>

Question 8: How would you describe the food eaten in your household during the past year?

Always enough and the kind we wanted to eat	45.0%	189
Enough, but not always the kind we wanted to eat	31.4%	132
Sometimes not enough	17.6%	74
Often not enough	4.8%	20
Don't know	1.2%	5
<b>answered question</b>		<b>420</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>10</b>

Question 8: How would you describe the food eaten in your household during the past year?



Question 9: Do you believe that eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day can lead to a healthier life? (Note: a serving is about a 1/2 cup or a small apple, 1/2 banana, a handful of carrots, etc.)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	95.2%	401
No	4.8%	20
<i>answered question</i>		<b>421</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>9</b>

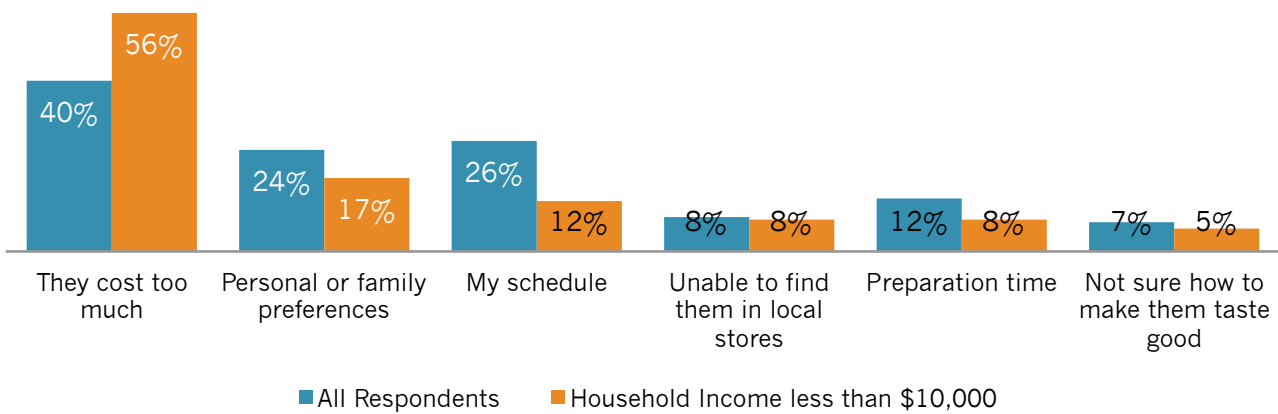
Question 10: About how many servings of fruits and vegetables do you eat a day?

0	1.7%	7
1	14.7%	62
2	29.5%	124
3	26.4%	111
4	13.8%	58
5	7.1%	30
More than 5	6.9%	29
<i>answered question</i>		<b>421</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>9</b>

Question 11: What most prevents you from eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day? (Check all that apply)

They cost too much	40%	139
My schedule	26%	90
Personal or family preferences	24%	83
Preparation time	12%	43
Unable to find them in local stores	8%	28
Not sure how to make them taste good	7%	24
<i>answered question</i>		<b>347</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>83</b>

Question 11: What most prevents you from eating 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day?





Question 12: Where do you find information on nutrition and healthy eating? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Food labels	55%	229
Family and/or friends	30%	124
School	9%	36
Media (TV, books, newspaper, internet, etc.)	41%	171
Physician or Dietitian	31%	128
Cannot find good information	2%	7
Other (please specify)	12%	52
<i>answered question</i>		<b>419</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>11</b>

Question 13: Would you be interested in learning more about nutrition education programs in your community?

Yes	60.6%	255
No	39.4%	166
<i>answered question</i>		<b>421</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>9</b>

Question 14: Do you grow any of your own food?

Yes	29.0%	117
No	71.0%	286
<i>answered question</i>		<b>403</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>27</b>

Question 15: Are you interested in learning about growing your own food?

Very Interested	18.7%	51
Fairly Interested	22.0%	60
Not Very Interested	28.2%	77
Not Interested At All	31.1%	85
<i>answered question</i>		<b>273</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>157</b>

Question 16: Do you participate in a community garden program?

Yes	9.8%	39
No	90.3%	361
<i>answered question</i>		<b>400</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>30</b>

Question 17: Would you be interested in growing your own food at a community garden in your neighborhood?

Yes	37.5%	130
No	62.5%	217
<i>answered question</i>		<b>347</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>83</b>

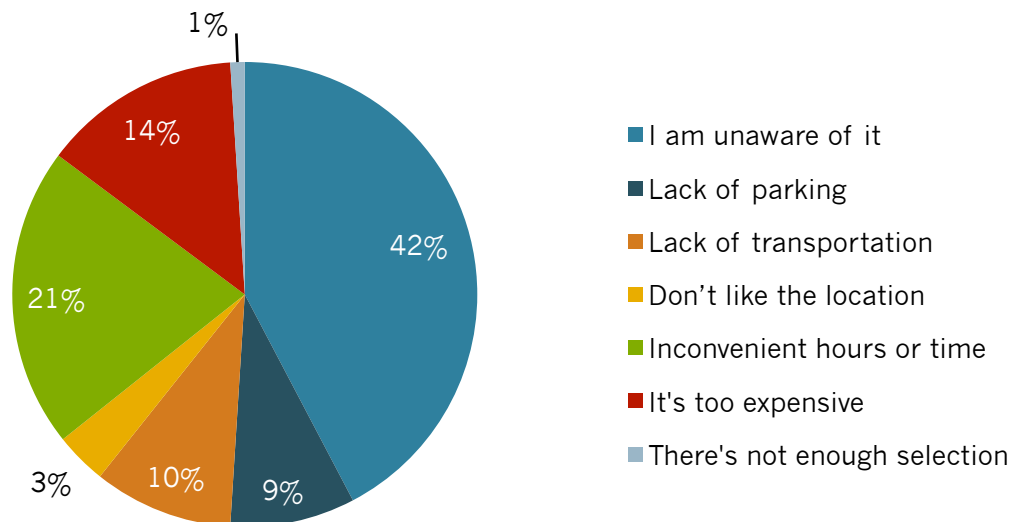
Question 18: Do you shop at the Lowell Farmer's Market?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	46.1%	188
No	53.9%	220
<b>answered question</b>		<b>408</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>22</b>

Question 19: Why you don't you shop at the Lowell Farmers Market?

I am unaware of it	42.3%	83
Lack of parking	8.7%	17
Lack of transportation	9.7%	19
Don't like the location	3.6%	7
Inconvenient hours or time	20.9%	41
It's too expensive	13.8%	27
There's not enough selection	1.0%	2
Other (please specify)		39
<b>answered question</b>		<b>196</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>234</b>

Question 19: Why you don't you shop at the Lowell Farmers Market?



Question 20: Which neighborhood in Lowell do you live in?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The Acre	17.2%	70
Back Central	3.2%	13
Belvidere	8.1%	33
Centralville	10.3%	42
Downtown	12.5%	51
The Highlands	24.3%	99
Pawtucketville	15.0%	61
Sacred Heart	1.0%	4
South Lowell	8.6%	35
<i>answered question</i>		<b>408</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>22</b>

Question 21: Are you aware of any emergency food providers in your neighborhood, such as food pantries or hot meal providers?

Yes	60.1%	239
No	39.9%	159
<i>answered question</i>		<b>398</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>32</b>

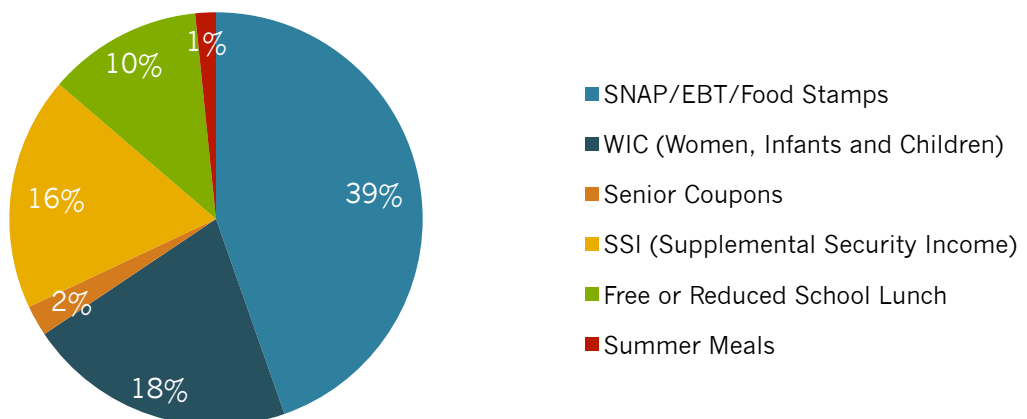
Question 22: Have you visited an emergency food provider during the past year?

Yes	41.0%	107
No	59.0%	154
<i>answered question</i>		<b>261</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>169</b>

Question 23: Do you or anyone in your household currently participate in any of the following programs? (Check all that apply, leave blank if none)

SNAP/EBT/Food Stamps	75%	166
WIC (Women, Infants and Children)	35%	78
Senior Coupons	4%	9
SSI (Supplemental Security Income)	31%	68
Free or Reduced School Lunch	20%	45
Summer Meals	3%	6
Other (please specify)		86
<i>answered question</i>		<b>222</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>208</b>

Question 23: Do you or anyone in your household currently participate in any of the following programs?



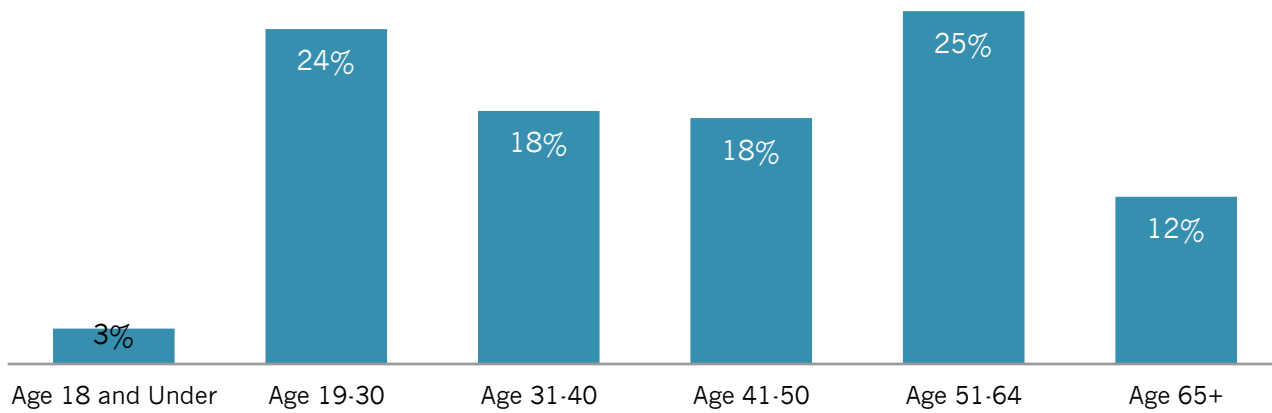
Question 24: Are you male or female?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	25.1%	103
Female	74.9%	308
	<i>answered question</i>	<b>411</b>
	<i>skipped question</i>	<b>19</b>

Question 25: In what year were you born?

Answer Options	Response Count
	396
<i>answered question</i>	<b>396</b>
<i>skipped question</i>	<b>34</b>

In what year were you born?





Question 26: What is your race/ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
African American	4.0%	16
White	63.1%	255
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2%	1
Asian	18.1%	73
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0%	4
Hispanic or Latino	17.6%	71
Other (please specify)		10
<i>answered question</i>		<b>404</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>26</b>

Question 27: In what range does your household income fall?

Less than \$10,000	28%	111
\$10,000-14,999	11%	45
\$15,000-24,999	13%	52
\$25,000-34,999	11%	44
\$35,000-49,999	10%	41
\$50,000-74,999	9%	36
\$75,000-99,999	6%	24
More than \$100,000	6%	22
Don't know	7%	26
<i>answered question</i>		<b>401</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>29</b>

Question 28: What is your employment status?

Employed	46.4%	188
Not employed	27.9%	113
In armed forces	0.0%	0
Student	4.0%	16
Disability	12.8%	52
Retired	8.9%	36
<i>answered question</i>		<b>405</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>25</b>

Question 29: How many people live in your household? (Select 0 if none)

Answer Options	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Response Count
Number of children under 18	162	78	73	41	9	6	4	2	0	1	0	376
Number of adults 18 - 64	29	131	160	43	22	2	3	0	0	2	0	392
Number of adults 65 and older	235	62	13	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	312
<i>answered question</i>											<b>404</b>	
<i>skipped question</i>											<b>26</b>	

## Retail Store Assessment

Lowell Community Food Security Coalition  
 Lowell Community Food Assessment

## Retail Store Assessment

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Store Information	<b>Store Name:</b> _____ <b>Address:</b> _____ <b>Neighborhood:</b> _____ <b>Store Hours:</b> _____	Is this store a chain? (There is more than one) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Are there similar stores located within two city blocks? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If 'yes' please list stores: _____ _____ _____
	<b>Type of Store:</b> (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Supermarket <input type="checkbox"/> Large Market <input type="checkbox"/> Small Market <input type="checkbox"/> Convenience Store (Bodega, Gas Station Market) <input type="checkbox"/> Drug Store <input type="checkbox"/> Dollar Store <input type="checkbox"/> Specialty Store (Butcher, Produce, Seafood, etc.)	

Store Exterior Appearance	<b>Describe the exterior signage:</b> (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Updated, Clear and Visible Signage <input type="checkbox"/> Older, but Visible Signage <input type="checkbox"/> Small, Not Very Visible Signage <input type="checkbox"/> No Visible Signage  <b>What type of signage is most prominent from outside of the store?</b> (Check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> Food Specials or Sales <input type="checkbox"/> Soda, Sports or Energy Drink Advertisements <input type="checkbox"/> Beer or Alcohol Advertisements <input type="checkbox"/> Lottery <input type="checkbox"/> Generic Brands <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Produce <input type="checkbox"/> Organics <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please list): _____	<b>Are there signs visually indicating that the store accepts any of the following?</b> (Check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> SNAP/Food Stamps, or EBT <input type="checkbox"/> WIC Vouchers <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Checks <input type="checkbox"/> Coupons <input type="checkbox"/> Store Discount Card (Ex. Rewards card) <input type="checkbox"/> Others (Please list): _____  <b>Describe the exterior condition:</b> (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Very Clean, No Litter <input type="checkbox"/> Small Amount of Litter <input type="checkbox"/> Lots of Litter and Debris  <b>Is there a trash can nearby?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	<b>In what language/s does the exterior signage appear?</b> (Check all that apply) <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Khmer <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please list): _____	

Store Accessibility	<b>Please describe the following:</b> (Check one for each of the four categories) <b>Parking</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Plenty of parking available <input type="checkbox"/> Limited parking available (Most spots are in use) <input type="checkbox"/> Street parking only <input type="checkbox"/> No parking  <b>Bike Parking</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Bike Racks available <input type="checkbox"/> Bike Ring available <input type="checkbox"/> No place to lock bikes Do you see bikes locked to sign posts or other structures? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Sidewalks</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Well-maintained sidewalks leading up to the store <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks around store but not leading up to store <input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks near store but not directly around store <input type="checkbox"/> No sidewalks around store  <b>Crosswalks</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Crosswalk directly outside of store <input type="checkbox"/> Crosswalk within a block of store <input type="checkbox"/> Crosswalk within two blocks of store <input type="checkbox"/> No crosswalks in view
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Lowell Community Food Security Coalition  
 Lowell Community Food Assessment

**Product Inventory Survey**

Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Product Placement**

**When you first walk into the store, what products are most prominently displayed?** (Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Fruits and Vegetables	<input type="checkbox"/> Soda, Sport Drinks, and Juices
<input type="checkbox"/> Milk and Dairy Products	<input type="checkbox"/> Snacks – Chips, Candy, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Breads and Cereals	<input type="checkbox"/> Beer and/or Liquor
<input type="checkbox"/> Bakery – Donuts, Cakes, Muffins, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cigarettes and Tobacco

**In what language/s do products appear?** (Check all that apply)

English     Spanish     Khmer     Other (Please list): \_\_\_\_\_

**Is alcohol sold in this store?**

Yes     No

**Produce Availability and Quality**

	3 or Less	4 to 9	10 or More
<b>How many varieties of vegetables are available?*</b> (Check one)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>How many varieties of fruit are available?*</b> (Check one) <i>*Do not count onions, potatoes, lemons or limes</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Very Fresh	Slightly Wilted	Old / Nearly Spoiled	Visibly Spoiled
<b>How would you rate the quality of the vegetables?</b> (Check one)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>How would you rate the quality of the fruit?</b> (Check one)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Refrigerator w/ Frequent Watering	Refrigerator w/ No Watering	On Shelves	In Crates or Boxes
<b>How are fresh vegetables stored or displayed?</b> (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>How are fresh fruits displayed?</b> (Check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Item Availability and Price Comparison**

<b>Fruit</b>	<b>In Stock</b>	<b>Price*</b>	<b>Vegetables</b>	<b>In Stock</b>	<b>Price*</b>
Apples (1lb.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$	Carrots (1lb.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$
Oranges	<input type="checkbox"/>		Dark Leafy Greens	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Bananas	<input type="checkbox"/>		Tomatoes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Protein Foods</b>			<b>Grains</b>		
Eggs (1doz.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$	Whole Wheat Bread (1 loaf)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$
Whole Chicken Breast	<input type="checkbox"/>		Brown Rice	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Canned Tuna	<input type="checkbox"/>		Plain Oatmeal	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Raw Almonds	<input type="checkbox"/>		<b>Dairy Items</b>		
Tofu	<input type="checkbox"/>		Skim Milk (1gal.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$
			Lactose Free Milk	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			Cheddar Cheese	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*\*Please record prices ONLY for items in grey where '\$' is noted.*

## Retail Store Assessment Results

### Question 1: Store Information:

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Store Name	100.0%	50
Street Address	100.0%	50
Neighborhood	100.0%	50
Store Hours	64.0%	32
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>50</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>0</b>

### Question 2: Type of Store: (Check one)

Supermarket	12.5%	6
Large Market	10.4%	5
Small Market	27.1%	13
Convenience Store (Bodega, Gas Station Market)	39.6%	19
Drug Store	0.0%	0
Dollar Store	2.1%	1
Specialty Store (Butcher, Produce, Seafood, etc.)	8.3%	4
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>48</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>2</b>

### Question 3: Is this store a chain? (There is more than one)

Yes	37.5%	18
No	62.5%	30
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>48</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>2</b>

### Question 4: Are there similar stores located within two city blocks?

Yes	29.3%	12
No	70.7%	29
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>41</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>9</b>

### Question 5: If 'yes' please list stores:

Store name:	100.0%	9
Store name:	33.3%	3
Store name:	11.1%	1
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>9</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>41</b>



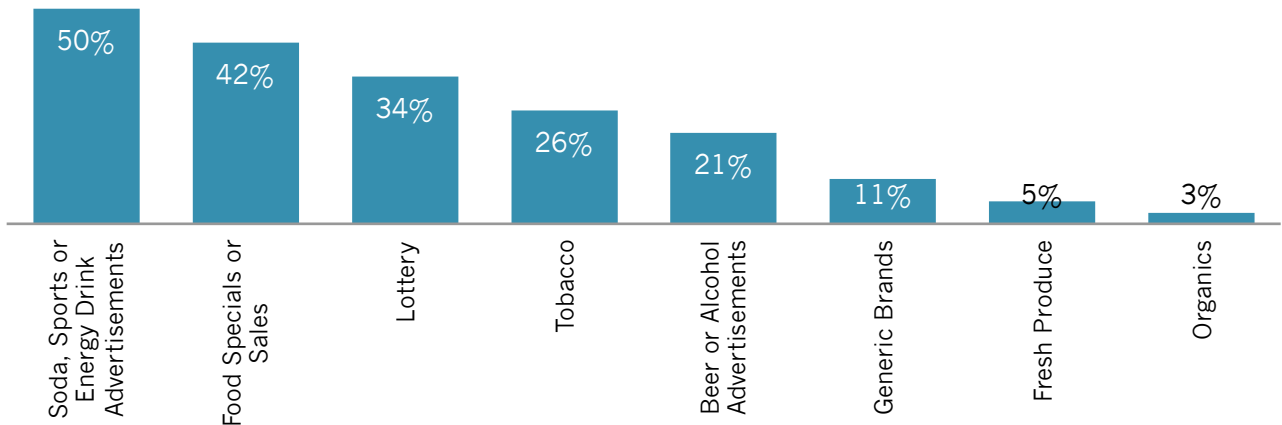
Question 6: Describe the exterior signage: (Check one)

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Updated, Clear and Visible Signage	56.0%	28
Older, but Visible Signage	32.0%	16
Small, Not Very Visible Signage	8.0%	4
No Visible Signage	4.0%	2
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>50</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>0</b>

Question 7: What type of signage is most prominent from outside of the store? (Check all that apply)

Food Specials or Sales	42.1%	16
Soda, Sports or Energy Drink Advertisements	50.0%	19
Beer or Alcohol Advertisements	21.1%	8
Lottery	34.2%	13
Generic Brands	10.5%	4
Fresh Produce	5.3%	2
Organics	2.6%	1
Other (please list)		18
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>38</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>12</b>

Question 7: What type of signage is most prominent from outside of the store?



Question 8: In what language/s does the exterior signage appear? (Check all that apply)

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
English	95.7%	22
Spanish	0.0%	0
Khmer	13.0%	3
Other (please specify)		1
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>23</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>27</b>

Question 9: Are there signs visually indicating that the store accepts any of the following? (Check all that apply)

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
SNAP/Food Stamps, or EBT	81.8%	18
WIC Vouchers	63.6%	14
Senior Checks	4.5%	1
Coupons	9.1%	2
Store Discount Card (Ex. Rewards card)	0.0%	0
Other (please list)		2
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>22</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>28</b>

Question 10: Describe the exterior condition: (Check one)

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Very Clean, No Litter	44.9%	22
Small Amount of Litter	53.1%	26
Lots of Litter and Debris	2.0%	1
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>49</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>1</b>

Question 11: Is there a trash can nearby?

Yes	64.4%	29
No	35.6%	16
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>45</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>5</b>

Question 12: Parking

Plenty of parking available	46.0%	23
Limited parking available (Most spots are in use)	28.0%	14
Street parking only	26.0%	13
No parking	0.0%	0
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>50</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>0</b>

Question 13: Bike Parking

Bike Racks available	4.0%	2
Bike Ring available	8.0%	4
No place to lock bikes	88.0%	44
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>50</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>0</b>

Question 14: Do you see bikes locked to sign posts or other structures?

Yes	7.7%	2
No	92.3%	24
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>26</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>24</b>

Question 15: Sidewalks

Well-maintained sidewalks leading up to the store	72.0%	36
Sidewalks around store but not leading up to store	18.0%	9
Sidewalks near store but not directly around store	8.0%	4
No sidewalks around store	2.0%	1
	<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>50</b>
	<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>0</b>

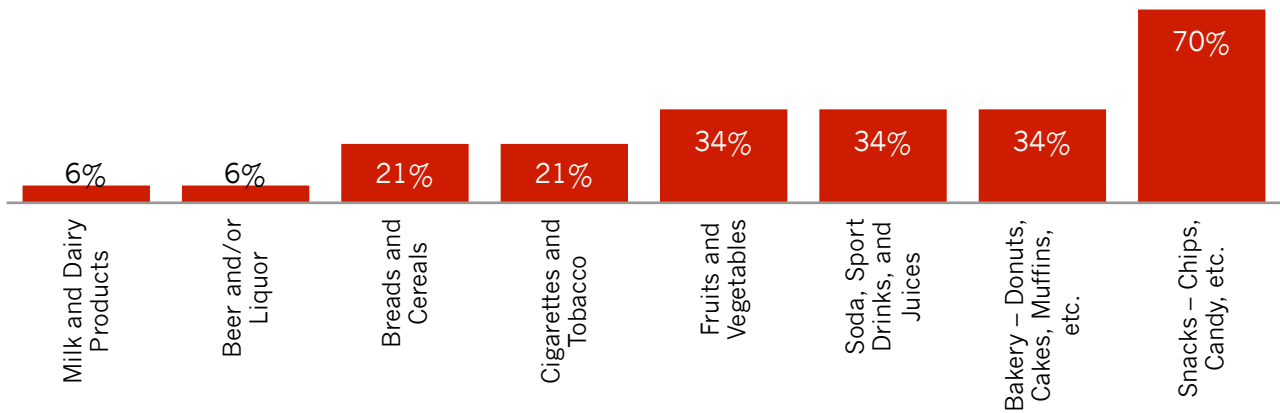
Question 16: Crosswalks

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Crosswalk directly outside of store	50.0%	24
Crosswalk within a block of store	33.3%	16
Crosswalk within two blocks of store	6.3%	3
No crosswalks in view	10.4%	5
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>48</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>2</b>

Question 17: When you first walk into the store, what products are most prominently displayed? (Check all that apply)

Fruits and Vegetables	34.0%	16
Soda, Sport Drinks, and Juices	34.0%	16
Milk and Dairy Products	6.4%	3
Snacks - Chips, Candy, etc.	70.2%	33
Breads and Cereals	21.3%	10
Beer and/or Liquor	6.4%	3
Bakery - Donuts, Cakes, Muffins, etc.	34.0%	16
Cigarettes and Tobacco	21.3%	10
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>47</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>3</b>

Question 17: When you first walk into the store, what products are most prominently displayed?



Question 18: In what language/s do products appear? (Check all that apply)

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
English	100.0%	27
Spanish	3.7%	1
Khmer	14.8%	4
Other (please specify)		3
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>27</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>23</b>

**Question 19: Is alcohol sold in this store?**

AnswerOptions	ResponsePercent	ResponseCount
Yes	18.6%	8
No	81.4%	35
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>43</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>7</b>

**Question 20: Please describe the following (Check one): \*Do not count onions, potatoes, lemons or limes.**

AnswerOptions	3 or Less	4 to 9	10 or More	ResponseCount
How many varieties of vegetables are available?*	27	10	10	47
How many varieties of fruit are available?*	22	19	6	47
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>				<b>47</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>				<b>3</b>

**Question 21: Please describe the following (Check one):**

AnswerOptions	Very Fresh	Slightly Wilted	Old - Nearly Spoiled	Visibly Spoiled	ResponseCount
How would you rate the quality of the vegetables?	20	7	1	1	29
How would you rate the quality of the fruit?	14	16	1	1	32
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>					<b>34</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>					<b>16</b>

**Question 22: Please describe the following (Check all that apply):**

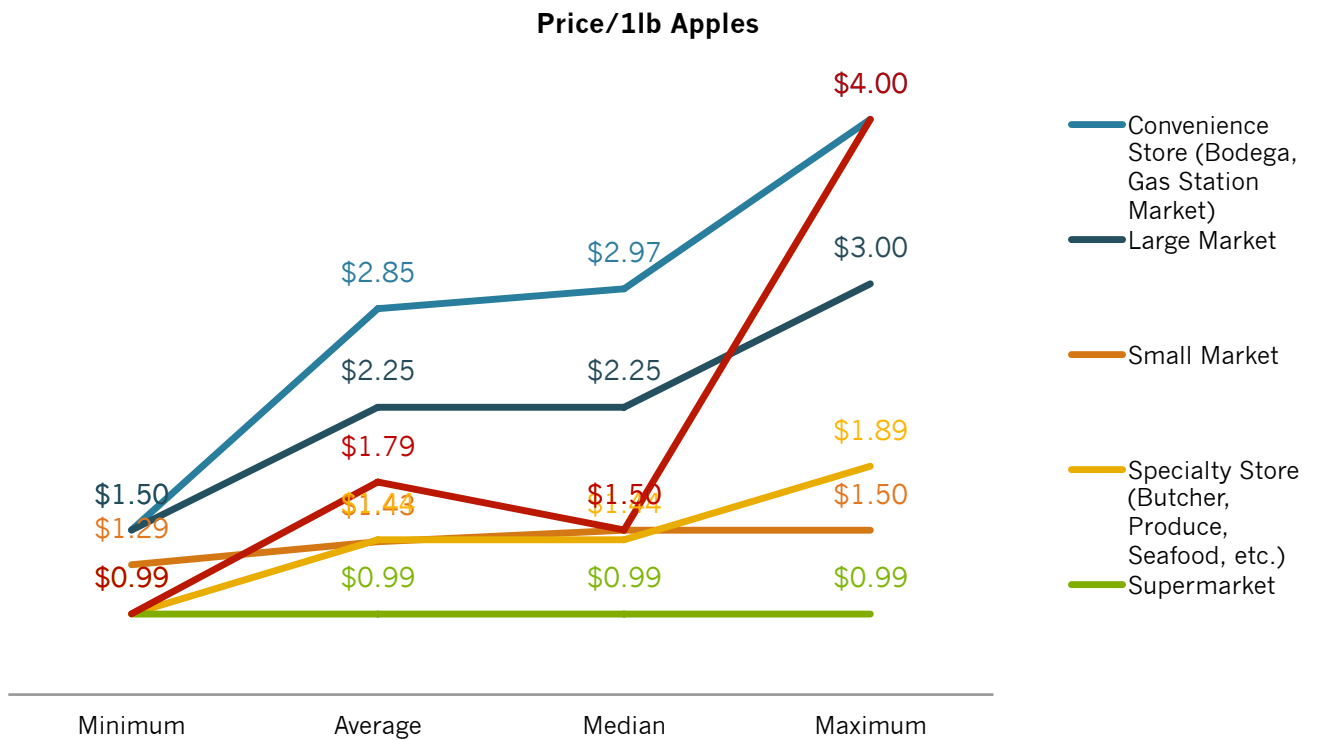
AnswerOptions	Refrigerator w/ Frequent Watering	Refrigerator w/ No Watering	On Shelves	In Crates or Boxes	ResponseCount
How are fresh vegetables stored or displayed?	7	17	4	6	28
How are fresh fruits displayed?	1	21	9	11	31
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>					<b>32</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>					<b>18</b>

Question 23: Please check all fruit items that are in stock:

AnswerOptions	In Stock	ResponseCount
Apples	26	26
Oranges	31	31
Bananas	24	24
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>33</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>17</b>

Question 24: For the least expensive apple in stock, please enter the price per pound:  
(Example: If the price is \$0.99, enter 0.99)

AnswerOptions	ResponseCount
	19
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>19</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>31</b>





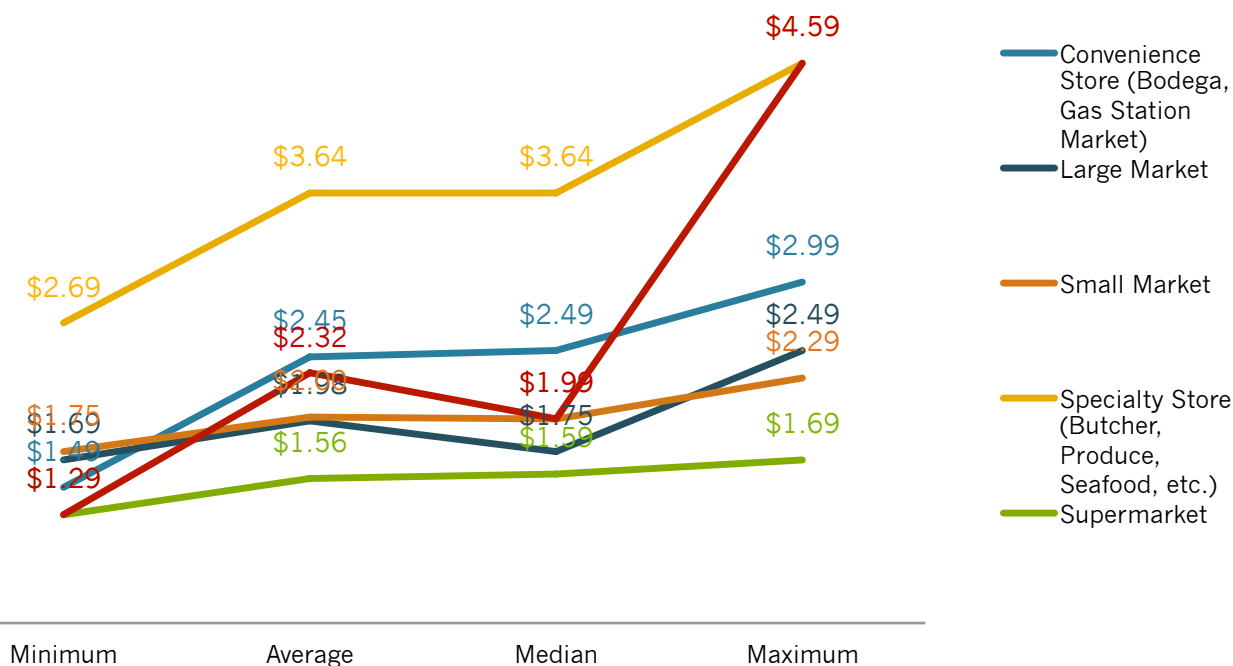
Question 25: Please check all protein food items that are in stock:

AnswerOptions	In Stock	ResponseCount
Eggs	36	36
Whole Chicken Breast	12	12
Canned Tuna	34	34
Raw Almonds	12	12
Tofu	10	10
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>43</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>7</b>

Question 26: For the least expensive dozen pack of eggs in stock, please enter the price dozen: (Example: If the price is \$1.99, enter 1.99)

AnswerOptions	ResponseCount
	25
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>25</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>25</b>

Price/1doz. Eggs

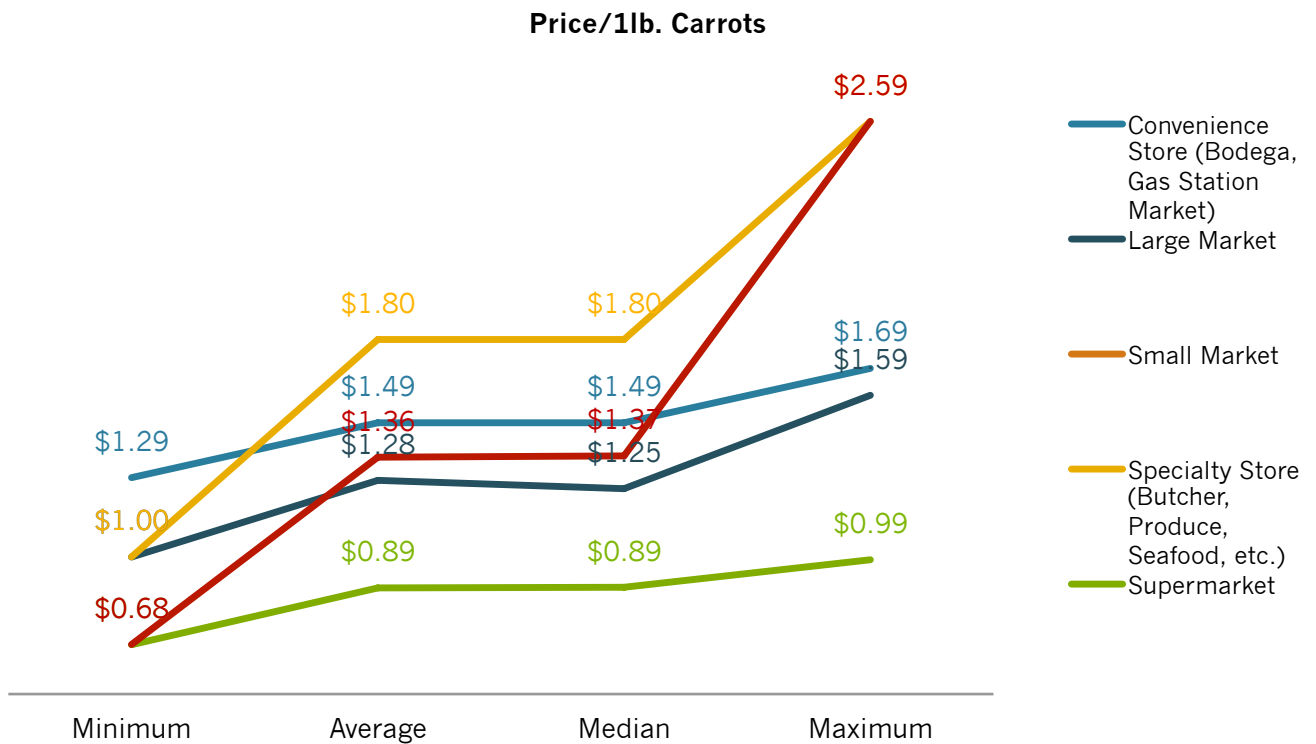


Question 27: Please check all vegetable items that are in stock:

AnswerOptions	In Stock	ResponseCount
Carrots	20	20
Dark Leafy Greens	16	16
Tomatoes	25	25
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>28</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>22</b>

Question 28: For the least expensive carrots in stock, please enter the price per pound:  
(Example: If the price is \$1.99, enter 1.99)

AnswerOptions	ResponseCount
	13
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>13</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>37</b>



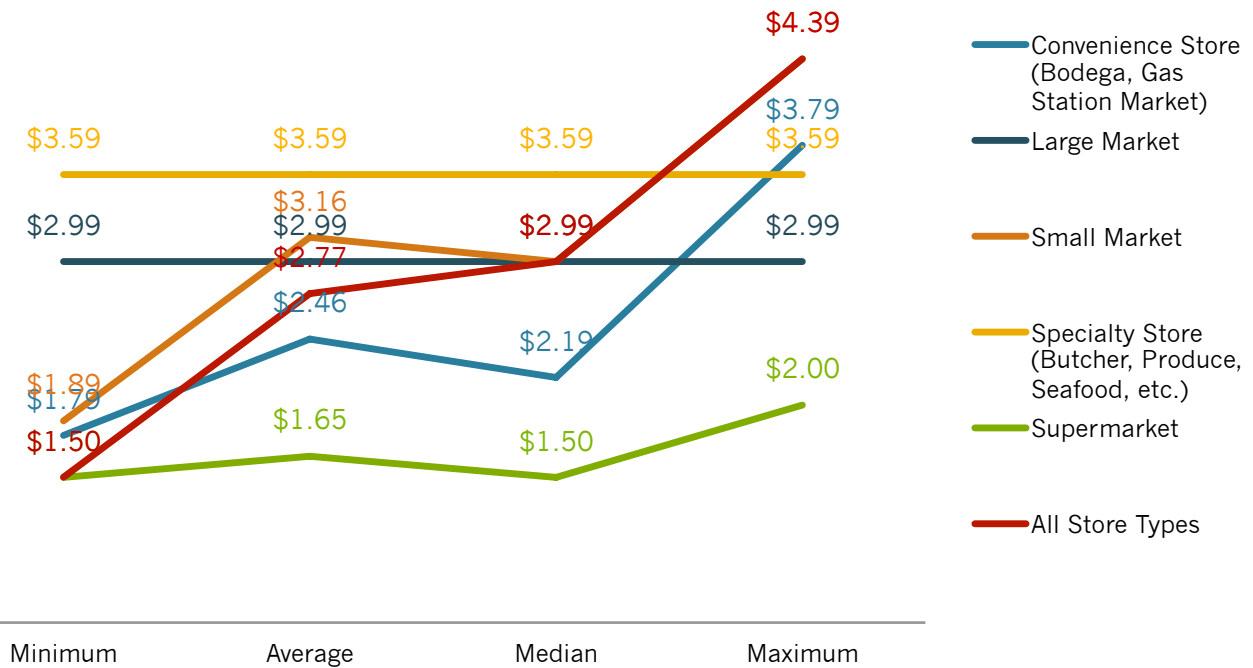
**Question 29: Please check all whole grain items that are in stock:**

AnswerOptions	In Stock	ResponseCount
Whole Wheat Bread	27	27
Brown Rice	32	32
Plain Oatmeal	16	16
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>38</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>12</b>

**Question 30: For the least expensive loaf of whole wheat bread in stock, please enter the price per loaf: (Example: If the price is \$2.99, enter 2.99)**

AnswerOptions	ResponseCount
	23
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>23</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>27</b>

**Price/Loaf Whole Wheat Bread**



Question 31: Please check all dairy items that are in stock:

AnswerOptions	In Stock	ResponseCount
Skim Milk	26	26
Lactose Free Milk	8	8
Cheddar Cheese	19	19
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>		<b>30</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>		<b>20</b>

Question 32: For the least expensive gallon of skim milk in stock, please enter the price per gallon: (Example: If the price is \$1.99, enter 1.99)

AnswerOptions	ResponseCount
	19
<i>AnsweredQuestion</i>	<b>19</b>
<i>SkippedQuestion</i>	<b>31</b>

