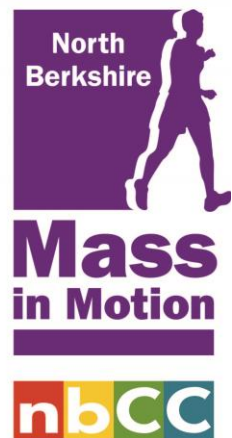


2019

Berkshire County Community Food Assessment

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BE WELL BERKSHIRES/MASS IN MOTION



Berkshire County Community Food Assessment

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*Berkshire County Community Food System as determined by the
Food Access Collaborative Conversations*

Introduction

In the fall of 2017, Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion began conducting a Community Food Assessment. The goal was to bring together community stakeholders to identify barriers many Berkshire County residents face in accessing healthy and affordable food, and work towards identifying long-term policy and systems change strategies to advance our Mass in Motion work.

We chose to separate the assessment into three distinct geographic areas of the county; North, Central and South, and anchor the study into the more densely populated areas of North Adams, Pittsfield and Great Barrington. This strategy allowed us to have greater participation given the rural nature of Berkshire County and the distance between the north and south borders, as well as presented an opportunity to dig deeper into the assets and challenges that make each of these geographic areas unique.

With the intention to incorporate all the programs, projects and efforts in food accessibility that we knew were happening, as well as integrate a collaborative and participatory approach, Be Well Berkshires coordinators began to facilitate quarterly, regionally specific Food Access Collaborative conversations for a cross-sector group of stakeholders representing all aspects of our food system (producers, processors, distributors), public and higher-education schools, emergency food sites, municipal government, investors/funders, the private business sector, health care centers, nonprofits and community members. A total of 85 stakeholders took part in the production of the Community Food Assessment.

What is a Community Food Assessment?

A Community Food Assessment is a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, to inform change actions to make the community more food secure. The result is the publication of this report to be used by community food system stakeholders, advocates, planners and municipal governments to make strategic changes to improve food security and our regional food system. As stated by the American Planning Association Policy Guide on Food Planning, the overarching goals of a Community Food Assessment plan are to provide a framework for action to help build a stronger, more sustainable and self-reliant regional food system while considering ways the food system can enhance economic vitality, public health, ecological sustainability, social equity and cultural diversity.¹

The two overarching goals of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment as determined by the Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion Project Coordinators are:

(1) Facilitate a platform for cross-sector collaboration and conversation of our regionally specific assets and challenges as it relates to food accessibility

(2) Create a plan that identifies and promotes actionable policy, systems, environmental change strategies and programmatic solutions to improve and advance food accessibility for all residents in Berkshire County.

Specifically, the objectives of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment were to:

- Identify barriers and challenges to access healthy, affordable food on a regional as well as countywide level
- Assess community resources that improve food access
- Identify priority populations experiencing food insecurity
- Facilitate collaboration among food access efforts to create a higher impact
- Identify and prioritize food access goals and action steps regionally and countywide

Lead Partner

Be Well Berkshires, a Mass in Motion Initiative, was the lead partner for the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment. Mass in Motion Municipal Wellness and Leadership Initiative, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health is a movement to lower the risk of

chronic disease by supporting equitable food access and active living opportunities in cities and towns throughout Massachusetts. This funding allows Be Well Berkshires Project Coordinators to work with a diverse network of partners to implement proven policies and practices to create environments that support healthy living. Since 2009, the Be Well Berkshires Project Coordinators have worked within the regional food system to build relationships with community stakeholders while guiding and supporting policy, systems and environmental change strategies.

A detailed list of all the participating stakeholders involved in this assessment can be found in Appendix D.

Common Terms

In order to establish a common language, following are definitions of the terms used in this planning process:

Food systems: A food system encompasses all the activities involved in the production, processing, distribution, access, consumption and disposal of food.

Community food systems: Local and regional food system assets that can enhance the environmental, economic, social and public health of a place and its people.

Community food system plan: A community food system plan synthesizes community members' shared visions for their food system and serves as a guide for advocates and municipal officials to make strategic changes. Community food system plans focus on the needs of and opportunities for community members.

Food insecurity: Lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.

Low food security: reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet, but with little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Very low food security: disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

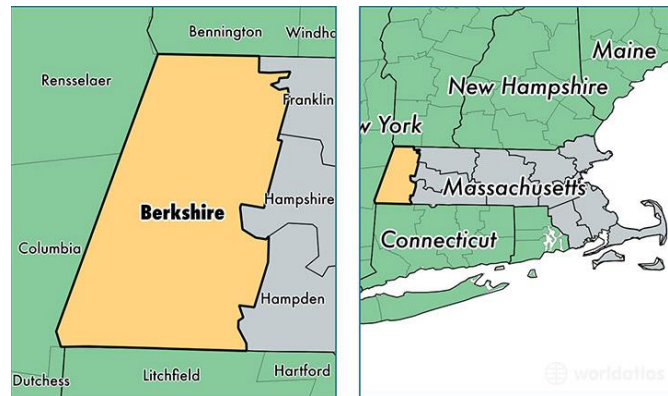
Community food security: The state in which all community members have adequate access to healthy, affordable and culturally acceptable food.

Food deserts: Geographic areas marked by limited healthy food options.

Food swamps: Geographic areas marked by high densities of unhealthy food options.

Healthy food opportunity areas: Geographic areas where there is opportunity for investments in increasing the availability of healthy food at existing or new food retailers, meal sites, pantries and schools.

Community Setting:



Berkshire County Massachusetts, is the most western of the 14 counties in the state. With about 12 percent of the landmass and only two percent of the population, Berkshire County is the second most rural county in the state (Census, 2010). The Berkshires run along the New York border from Vermont in the north to Connecticut in the south and encompasses most of the mountain ridge that separates the Hudson and Connecticut River Valleys.

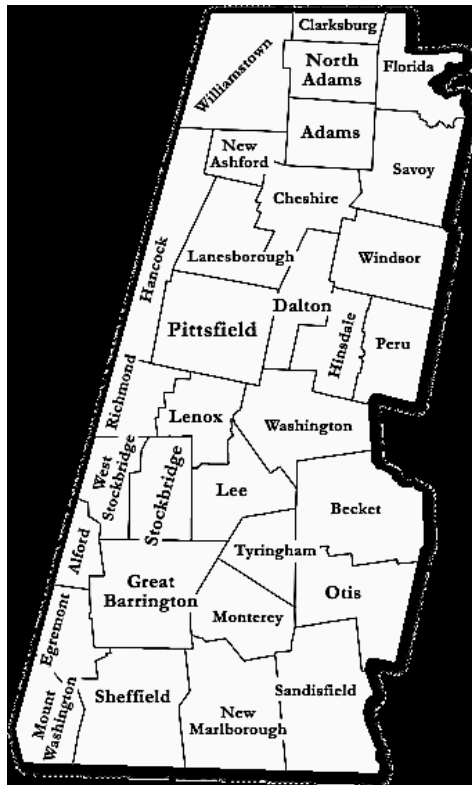
Central and South County have local hospitals and there is no County government. All local services are the responsibility of each of the County's 30 towns and two cities. Population county-wide is about 129,000 (Census, 2016). All population numbers are likely understated due to the substantial number of second homeowners year-round. The Berkshires have been a holiday destination for Boston and New York residents for hundreds of years. The area is promoted now as the "cultural Berkshires" with multiple lectures, plays, music and art offerings throughout the summer months, which is considered high 'tourist/visitor' season in the region.

The 32 communities of Berkshire County cover nearly 950 square miles of area and have an overall population density of 140 persons per square mile compared to 835 persons per square mile for the Commonwealth. It takes about roughly one hour and 15 minutes to drive from the Town of Sheffield in the far south to Williamstown in the north. Automobiles are the major method of intercity travel with limited bus transportation. This lack of public transportation makes access to jobs, healthcare and food a problem for residents without private cars.

Population (Census, 2016): 128,563

- Projected population changes 2016-2020:
 - Increase in age 65+ residents
 - Decrease in 19 years and younger residents
- Growing diversity
 - Black, Russian, and Latinx¹ populations
 - More likely to be living in poverty
 - Higher rates of stroke, heart disease, diabetes and cancer mortality

¹ The term Latinx is increasingly used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino and Hispanic. The definition of Latinx and Latino both refer to the population of Latin American origin or descent.



Map of Berkshire County's 32 Municipalities

Berkshire County is experiencing a continued decline in population that traces back to the 1970s when the county hit its peak population. As mills and manufacturing began closing, young adults left the region to pursue employment in other areas of the country. This departure, which continues today as employment, affordable housing, access to public transportation, affordable food and other socioeconomic opportunities further decline and/or become unstable, has led to the state of continual decline in Berkshire County.

Demographics, according to the 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment conducted by Berkshire Health Systems, include:

- Characteristic of many rural areas, growth in population is not anticipated
- More deaths than births
- Population is aging
- Population is predominantly white with a growing Latinx cohort
- Family and personal income measures lag behind other areas of the state
- Unemployment currently higher than state average (4.3%) in Berkshires vs. MA (3.5%)
- Violent crime rates substantially increased from 2014 to 2016 in Pittsfield by 78.8% and North Adams by 146.9%
- Homeless and individuals with unstable housing is growing
- Significant number of individuals and families who are uninsured or underinsured
- Population in Poverty -- High percentage (70%) of Berkshire residents fall below 200% of the poverty level (working poor)

The population of Berkshire County is predominately White (89.5% vs. 73.7% statewide) with smaller percentages of Hispanics (4.1%), Blacks (2.5%) and Asian (1.5%) persons. Countywide, South County has the greater percentage of Hispanics/Latinx (10.7%) compared to North

County (4.1%). Central County has the largest percentage of the Black population (4.5%) compared to North County (1.2%) and South County (2.9%).ⁱⁱ

Age Friendly Berkshires

In Berkshire County by 2012, the population over age 65 surpassed the number of those under 18. This appears to be a permanent shift in Berkshire County, with the number of adults over 65 continuing to increase and the percentage of children continuing to decline. With a median age of 44, Berkshire County is older than Massachusetts (median age of 39) and the country (median age 36). Projections show that both the absolute numbers and the proportion of older adults in Berkshire County will continue to increase, while the number of younger adults and children will continue to decrease. In 2010, ten of the 32 municipalities in Berkshire County had populations that were 20 percent or more adults over the age of 65. By 2020, one year from now, the Donahue Institute projects that all but two of the municipalities in the county will have populations that are more than 20 percent adults over the age of 65. Several municipalities will be close to or more than 40 percent adults over the age of 65. Because of this shift in age, several community groups have come together as an Age Friendly Berkshire Task Force under the leadership of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. This group created a comprehensive action plan focusing on the eight domains of livability which include health, wellness and food access.ⁱⁱⁱ

Food Insecurity in Berkshire County

Trends across the nation and in Massachusetts compel a closer look at food insecurity in Berkshire County. Twelve percent of the population -- close to 16,000 people -- regularly struggle to have enough food for themselves and their families. Poverty is the largest contributing factor to food insecurity nationwide, yet food insecurity is also correlated with many other factors such as race, ethnicity, age, household composition and SNAP eligibility. The rural geography of Berkshire County and the limited public transportation options contribute additional barriers to accessing healthy food.

Food insecurity statistics:

- 12% of Berkshire County residents experience food insecurity
- 27% are children
- 13% are aged 65+
- An average of 16,000 residents seek food assistance monthly
- 70% of residents report eating less than five servings of fruit and vegetables a day²

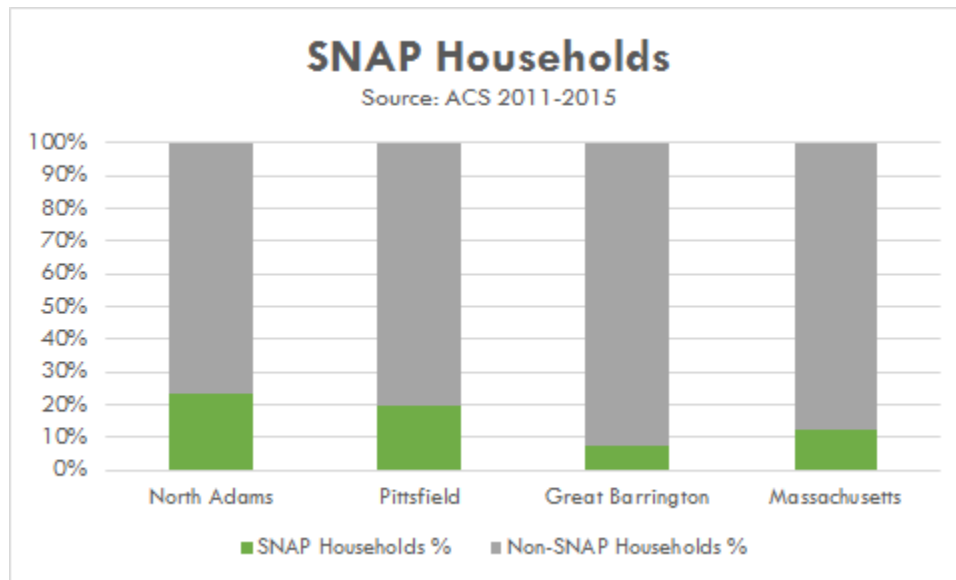
Berkshire Emergency Food Network

Berkshire County has a fairly robust emergency food network of 18 food pantries, six hot meal sites, eight brown bag programs, a mobile food pantry that regularly visits 10 sites, and a food bank mobile pantry that visits three sites, yet many residents in the more rural areas of the county have difficulties accessing these assets.^{iv}

² See Appendix A

SNAP and WIC:

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps) provides temporary help for people going through hard times – giving supplemental money to buy food until they can get back on their feet. In Berkshire County, a total of 7,843 households^v are receiving SNAP benefits. A total of 29 percent of the food-insecure population lives above the threshold for SNAP and other nutrition programs.^{vi} This working-poor population relies on food pantries and meal sites, all of which report an increase in clients in the past three years. County-wide, an average of 32 percent of residents are likely eligible for SNAP and are not receiving it.



SNAP Households in high population municipalities generated by Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

In Berkshire County 2,200 people are currently enrolled in the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program receiving nutrition education and subsidized healthy food from participating retailers. Several of the county's farmers markets provide matching funds for WIC farmers markets checks allowing an individual to double their purchasing power on fresh and local fruits and vegetables.

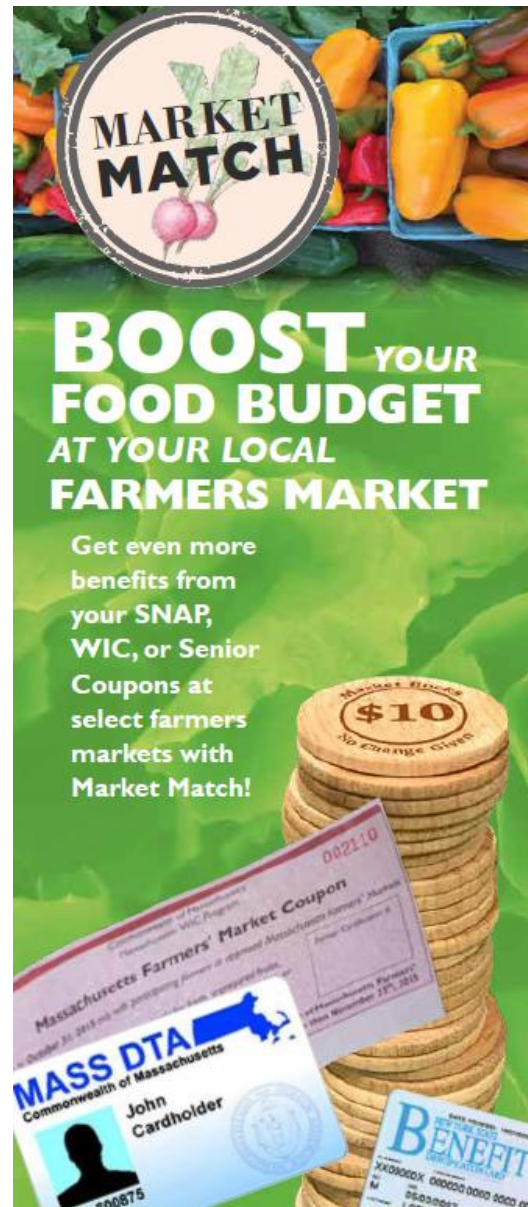
Food Access Incentive Programs

Healthy Incentives Program (HIP)

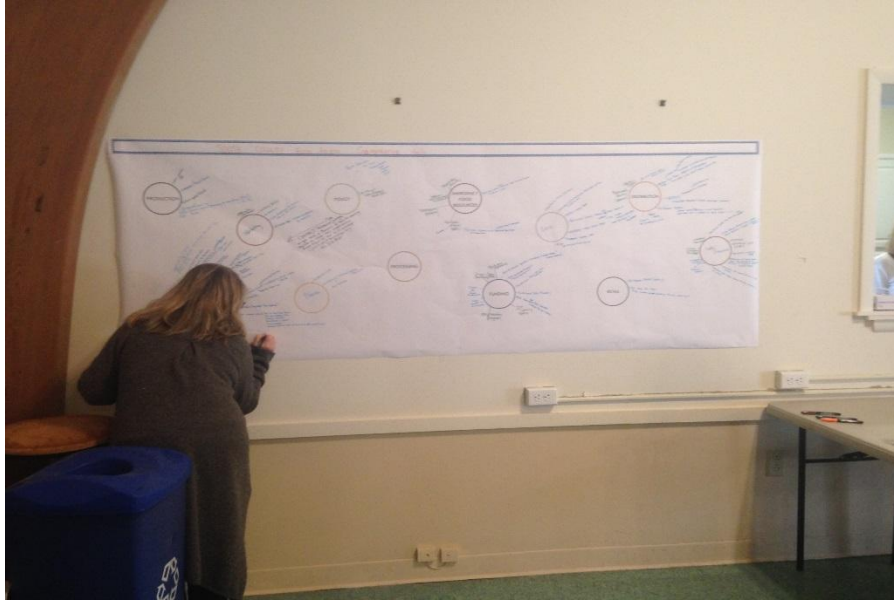
Launched in April 2017, the Massachusetts Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) provides monthly incentives to SNAP households of up to: \$40 for families of 1-2; \$60 for families of 3-5; and \$80 for families of 6 or more, when they purchase fresh, local, healthy vegetables and fruits from farmers at farmers markets, farm stands, community supported agriculture (CSA) farm share programs and mobile markets. The program is administered by the Department of Transitional Assistance, in partnership with the Department of Agricultural Resources and the Department of Public Health, and is supported by a grant from the USDA, state financing and private donations. HIP vendors can be found at most farmers markets throughout Berkshire County. The program has increased farmers' SNAP sales as well as fruit and vegetable intake in participating families.

Market Match

Berkshire County has a resilient local food system that includes a full spectrum of economically viable farms offering a diverse range of products.³ Successful farm businesses are part of the region's sustainable economy, keeping more money in the Berkshires through local spending. In an effort to increase accessibility of local food products, several farmers markets in Berkshire County offer incentive programs for SNAP, WIC and Senior Coupons throughout the market season. Some offer double SNAP, others provide a \$5 token to boost Senior Coupons and more. These programs were promoted with different incentive names at different markets. In order to generate additional shoppers (and revenue) for individual markets, a region-wide effort unified the branding of these incentive programs to help simplify marketing and reach shoppers more easily. With collaborative support from Berkshire Grown, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and Be Well Berkshires, the Market Match initiative now seeks to promote the various market incentive programs to benefit recipients through outreach to service providers at the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Councils on Aging (COA), and WIC, as well as food pantries and meal sites. The Market Match initiative helps inform benefit recipients about how to access fresh, local food through farmers markets, while simultaneously making their benefits go further, and supporting the region's agricultural economy.



³ See Appendix B for a list of Berkshire County Farms and locations.



Asset mapping activity at Food Access Collaborative Conversations

Methodology

The Berkshire County Community Food Assessment was created by compiling information gathered through a variety of primary and secondary resources, and with the help of Mass in Motion’s technical assistance provider Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

Primary Resources

Focus Groups: In addition to the quarterly Food Access Collaborative conversations, several focus groups were held to dig deeper into the barriers and challenges residents are experiencing in accessing healthy and affordable food. In each of these sessions, attendees were led through a series of exercises encouraging an exploration into the root causes of food insecurity. The first was held at Working Cities Wednesday, a resident led monthly gathering of community members and agencies working towards the vision that all people in Pittsfield experience a just, thriving and safe community. The second focus group was with the Food Pantry Collaborative and included staff and volunteers in emergency food sites as well as WIC, The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts and Berkshire Health Systems. The third focus group was held for Community Health Workers (CHWs), the individuals who interact with the underserved population directly and make the connection to helpful resources. Through these focus groups we gained valuable qualitative data that has been incorporated into the goals and recommendations of this assessment.

Key Informant Interviews: In addition to the focus groups, interviews were conducted with representatives of specific Food Access initiatives and organizations. These organizations included Volunteers in Medicine (VIM), the Rural Health Network, the managers of the Great Barrington, Pittsfield and North Adams farmers markets, Berkshire Dream Center, Bard College at Simon’s Rock, Berkshire Hills Regional School District, WIC outreach coordinator for North and South County, Berkshire Food Project and Friendship Center Food Pantry.

Previous Assessments: Several related assessments have been conducted both on the local as well as state level. These assessments served as a starting point in which the Berkshire County

Community Food Assessment could build on while advancing the goals and action steps previously determined. Assessments included:

- Age Friendly Berkshires (<http://berkshireplanning.org/projects/age-friendly-county>)
- Sustainable Berkshires and Keep Berkshires Farming (<http://berkshireplanning.org/reports-and-documents/sustainable-berkshires-executive-summary>)
- MA Local Food Action Plan (<https://mafoodsystem.org/plan/>)⁴

Secondary Resources

Quantitative data was obtained through the following sources:

- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Berkshire Benchmarks tool
- DPH State Office of Rural Health
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- Berkshire Health Systems Community Health Needs Assessment (2015)
- U.S. Census
- Food Bank of Western Massachusetts
- Feeding America
- American Community Survey, Census Bureau

Compilation of information gathered through these resources led to the development of three major themes for each region as well as for the County as a whole.

Berkshire Countywide Priorities

Facilitation of regionally specific Food Access Collaboratives was critical to the Community Food Assessment process. The Be Well Berkshires/Mass in Motion Project Coordinators have the unique challenge of working across Berkshire County (946 square miles, 58 miles from North to South) within eight Mass in Motion communities. The Food Access Collaboratives allowed for a platform to maximize and engage stakeholders in one central place per region while creating a space for community stakeholders to share their work. The result became a true participatory collaboration across sectors strategizing to have a higher impact on food security and access.

During the first round of Food Access Collaborative conversations, Be Well Berkshires coordinators presented preliminary quantitative data on the state of food access for each region, presented regional and state goals as determined by previous assessments (Age Friendly Berkshires, Sustainable Berkshires, Keep Berkshires Farming, MA Local Food Action Plan) and conducted an asset-mapping activity.⁵ The asset-mapping activity was an opportunity to assess the community food access resources that are already in place, to identify best practices and to facilitate collaboration among the different sectors working towards similar goals.

⁴ See Appendix A, Past Assessments and Goals

⁵ See Appendix E for asset map summary

The following pages summarize the main issues that emerged.

Berkshire County Priorities:

- Transportation and Food Access: Berkshire County is rural and limited public transportation options create a population that is vulnerable to food insecurity, particularly for low-income and car-less households.
- Coordination: Many organizations are working on the same issues but not in coordination with each other. There is potential and interest for collaboration among organizations which could result in a greater impact.
- Food Security Resources: Older adults and immigrant community members face barriers to utilizing SNAP, HIP and other food assistance resources and, in many cases, don't know resources that are available or if they qualify.
- Farms: The Berkshires have many farms that produce a variety of healthy, local foods and there are increasingly more ways to purchase Berkshire-grown products. The amount of local produce and products created in the Berkshires are an asset to Community Food System planning.

Summary of Goals

Implementation

Although each region has identified specific goals and recommendations, all three Food Access Collaboratives are working under the same implementation goal below.

Goal: The Berkshire County Community Food Assessment & Plan is implemented strategically.

Recommendation: Establish leadership and processes for strategic implementation of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment Plan.

Action Steps:

- Food Access Collaborative stakeholder group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to review progress toward implementing recommendations and revise the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment plan as needed.
- Food Access Collaborative stakeholder group will act as a steering committee to lead the implementation of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment plan.
- Smaller working groups will be established to carry out action steps and determine timeline.
- Develop and implement communications strategy to engage, seek involvement from, and inform residents and municipal leaders on the implementation of the Berkshire County Community Food Assessment. Include progress updates on a quarterly basis.
- A summit of all three regional Food Access Collaboratives will be held on an annual basis to celebrate success and explore county wide opportunities to improve food accessibility.

Regional Goals

North Berkshire County:

Goal 1: A Food Hub provides farmers and community food security organizations with increased food preparation and distribution infrastructure and services.

Goal 2: Local foods are consumed by North Adams Public School students through a Farm to School program.

Goal 3: Excess food is regularly reused benefiting community food security.

Goal 4: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Central Berkshire County:

Goal 1: Residents in Morningside have access to a retail outlet for healthy and affordable food options.

Goal 2: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Goal 3: There is year-round distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables through Emergency food sites in Pittsfield.

South Berkshire County:

Goal 1: Food-insecure school-aged youth in South Berkshire County have increased access to free and reduced food outside of school hours.

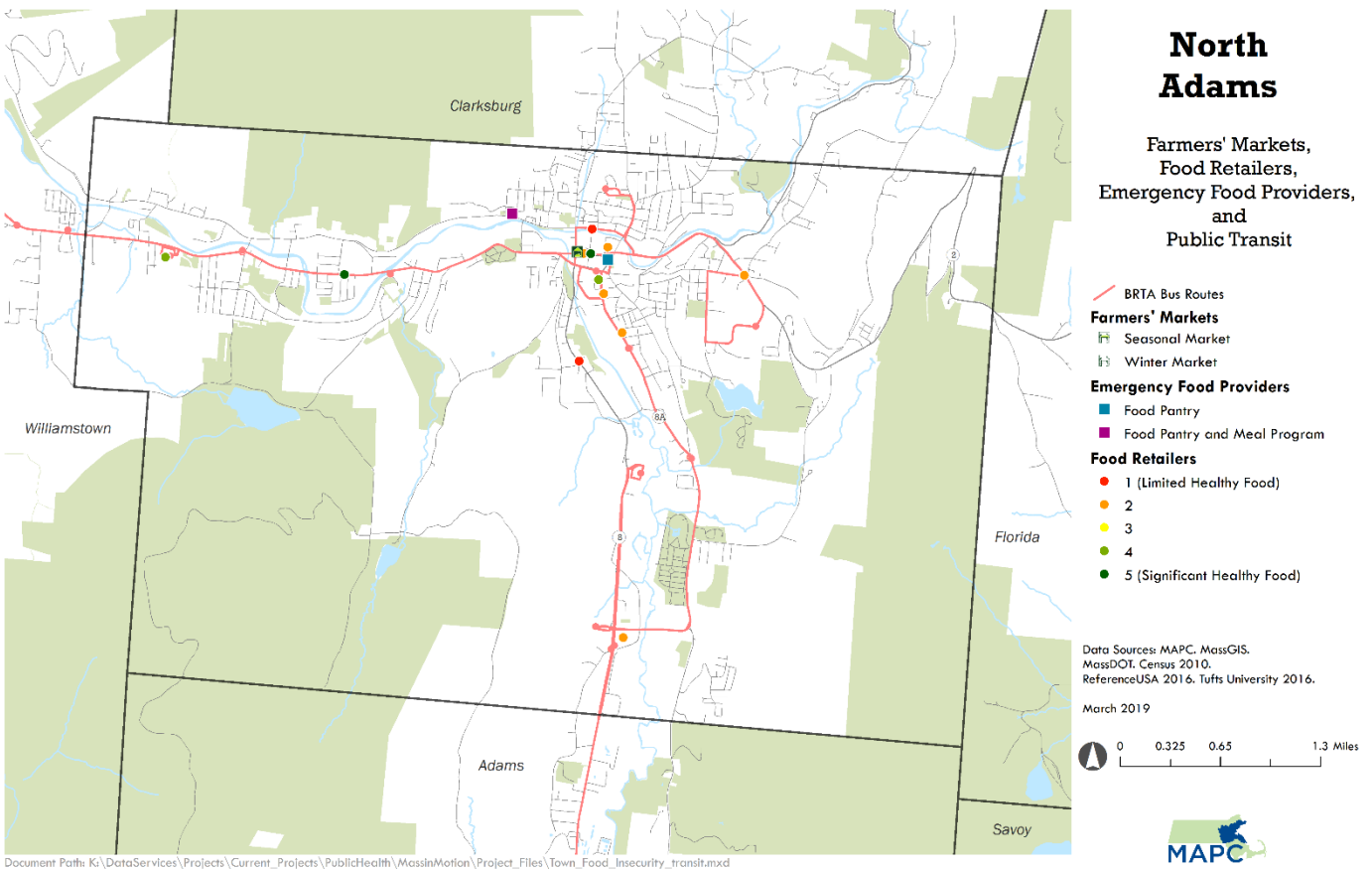
Goal 2: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Goal 3: The immigrant population of South Berkshire County have access to healthy food options year-round.

North Berkshire

The Northern Berkshires region is comprised of the seven communities that the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition works with: Adams, Clarksburg, Florida, Savoy, Williamstown, North Adams and Cheshire. North Adams is the only city in north Berkshire and the smallest city in the State with a population of 13,064. The six other communities range in population from 680 to 8,110. North Berkshire has many assets with regards to food access such as farms and farmland, free breakfast and lunch programs at schools, a WIC office, local colleges, food pantries and meal sites. There are also many challenges and barriers that this part of the Berkshires faces such as access to transportation to access food, dissemination of information/education around food access and workforce development in the food system. Through the assessment process it became clear that the health inequities in North Adams and north Berkshire are not determined by race but by socio-economic characteristics -- mainly income level, people involved in addiction/recovery, age and people with disabilities. The following goals and recommendations that emerged focus both on the priority populations and food access/system needs of north Berkshire. The major themes that came out of this assessment process are:

- Food Hub
- Farm to School
- SNAP Gap
- Food Waste (Residential and Commercial)



North Adams Food Access and Transportation Map, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Food Hub in North Berkshire

A food hub in north Berkshire has been a topic of conversation in this region for quite some time. The challenge of transportation is not only for residents accessing food, it also a challenge for emergency food sites to collect food from local farms to distribute to the food insecure residents. With a food hub in north Berkshire, this barrier would be alleviated creating greater access as well as increased options for foods and local produce at pantries and meal sites. The Food Access Collaborative created a vision for a food hub and what a food hub might entail. Visions include a location that provides food storage, processing, procurement and distribution. Food system education would take place here along with workforce development, employment and work to build agritourism. A north Berkshire food hub is ambitious and will take long-term planning, significant funding and a large group of people working towards this common goal.

Goal 1: The Northern Berkshire Food Hub provides farmers and community food security organizations with increased food preparation and distribution infrastructure and services.

Recommendations:

1.1 Create a vision and a needs/assets assessment of a food hub in Northern Berkshire County.

1.1.1: Utilize Food Access Collaborative to develop vision of a food hub in Northern Berkshire County.

1.1.2: Facilitate marketplace activity to gather needs/assets assessment

1.2 Establish Sub-Committee/Task Force to create action plan for food hub.

1.2.1: Add to the agenda of the North County Food Access Collaborative to engage stakeholders in initial task force and schedule time to meet.

1.2.2: Sub-Committee meets to create workplan/timeline and determines next steps.

1.2.3: Research previous work in Northern Berkshire from which to build current efforts.

1.2.4: Develop action plan for north Berkshire Food Hub including partners to include and logistics.

Farm to School

Most of the schools are interested and supportive of a farm to school strategy, and some have funding to source local ingredients. Northern Berkshire also has the support of local colleges that can partner to help connect farmers and schools, create dialogue and a process by which a sustainable farm to school policy can be established in future. The Northern Berkshire region has a variety of small farms. The small size of the farms and limited farm staff creates some challenge when it comes to incorporating local produce into school food service. Another challenge is food service at schools throughout Northern Berkshire have very limited staff and resources making it challenging to implement a sustainable farm to school program.

Goal 2: Local foods are consumed by North Adams Public School students through a Farm to School program.

Recommendations:

2.1: A group of students from Williams College Environmental Planning class of Fall 2018 will create a Northern Berkshire farm to North Adams Public Schools (NAPS) guide for implementation.

2.1.1: Be Well Berkshires Program Coordinator will consult with Williams College students on project needs, people/partners to connect with and project outcomes.

2.1.2: Students will work independently and within the context of their class

2.1.3: Williams College students will complete a north Berkshire farm to North Adams Public Schools guide for implementation.⁶

2.1.4: Guide will be presented to the Food Access Collaborative and the North Adams Public Schools Wellness Committee.

2.2: The guide will be adopted into the (NAPS) wellness policy.

2.3: Be Well Berkshires and the NAPS wellness committee will support implementation of the guide for school year 2019-2020.

Food Waste

With a lack of access to healthy foods for priority populations in north Berkshire, and emergency food access sites with limited funds, resources and staff, the conversation regarding food waste has been taking place over the past few years. There have been (and are) various initiatives to reduce and reuse food waste yet most of these are unofficial and not always a sustainable systems change to enable these efforts to take place on a continual basis. Examples include: restaurants set aside produce scraps and give to a meal site to make broth (this is currently happening), WRAPS program at Williams College with partner organizations (faces challenges in summer when students are limited), Hoosac Harvest oversees gleaning efforts which helps farmers and local food pantries have access to local produce. There are various components of food waste to focus on in Northern Berkshire: community composting, composting at food establishments, food waste at schools and institutions, food waste at community meals and grocery stores/markets expired food and seconds.

Goal 3: Excess Food is regularly reused benefiting community food security.

Recommendations:

3.1: Research Best Practices

3.1.1: Interview Williams College WRAPS Program and partners who receive food from the program.

⁶ See Appendix C

3.1.2: Interview WRAPS volunteers and partner organizations.

3.1.3: Learn assets, needs and how the Food Access Collaborative can support to help WRAPS become sustainable.

3.1.4: Gather and research other community models for policy, procedures and initiatives for food waste at food retail and emergency food sites.

3.2: Conduct comprehensive study on restaurants, meal sites, schools, institutions, markets and grocery stores are doing with food waste and seconds.

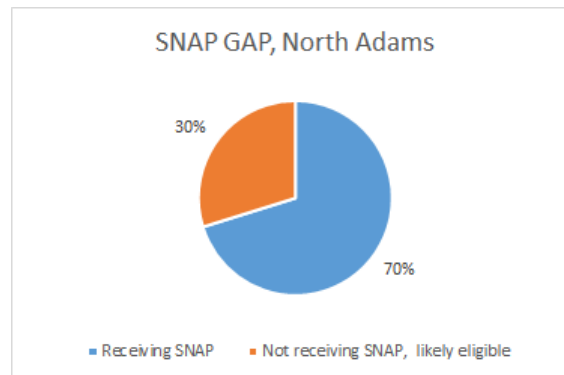
3.2.1: Create food retail map listing all restaurants, meal sites, schools, institutions, markets and grocery stores in north Berkshire County.

3.2.2: Survey restaurants, meal sites, schools, institutions, markets and grocery stores in north Berkshire County.

3.2.3: Compile survey results and present to Food Access Collaborative.

3.2.4: Food Access Collaborative will decide upon next steps.

SNAP/HIP Gap and Education



SNAP enrollment data for North Adams, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Of those likely eligible for SNAP in North Adams, over 30 percent are not receiving these benefits. Through focus groups and informant interviews several reasons have been identified for this gap including the application process presenting barriers for older adults, youth that are no longer living at home and community members with disabilities. The North Berkshire Food Access Collaborative identified resources that could help close this gap if they are expanded. The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts currently offers SNAP application assistance to North Berkshire County both in person and over the phone. On site assistance at The Friendship Center in North Adams is available twice a month during a pantry distribution. SNAP Coordinators are also available for phone assistance to prescreen and help people apply for SNAP during regular business hours. In addition, The Food Bank will begin digital SNAP Outreach to Berkshire county in May. This means that when someone in Berkshire county Googles a term related to SNAP, they will be brought to a landing page where they can fill out a referral form. From there, a SNAP Coordinator will follow up with them via phone to apply for SNAP. Support for WIC applications include Berkshire County Community Connector, a computer program maintained by Berkshire Community Action Council that automatically generates referrals to WIC when clients apply for other services such as fuel assistance.

Although these existing resources are helpful, the SNAP/WIC gap still exists. Therefore, efforts to close this gap must be expanded. A collaborative approach among community organizations could help increase awareness of these resources and result in more people taking advantage of food assistance programs.

Goal 4: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Recommendations:

4.1: Increase distribution of materials including resources and SNAP eligibility information

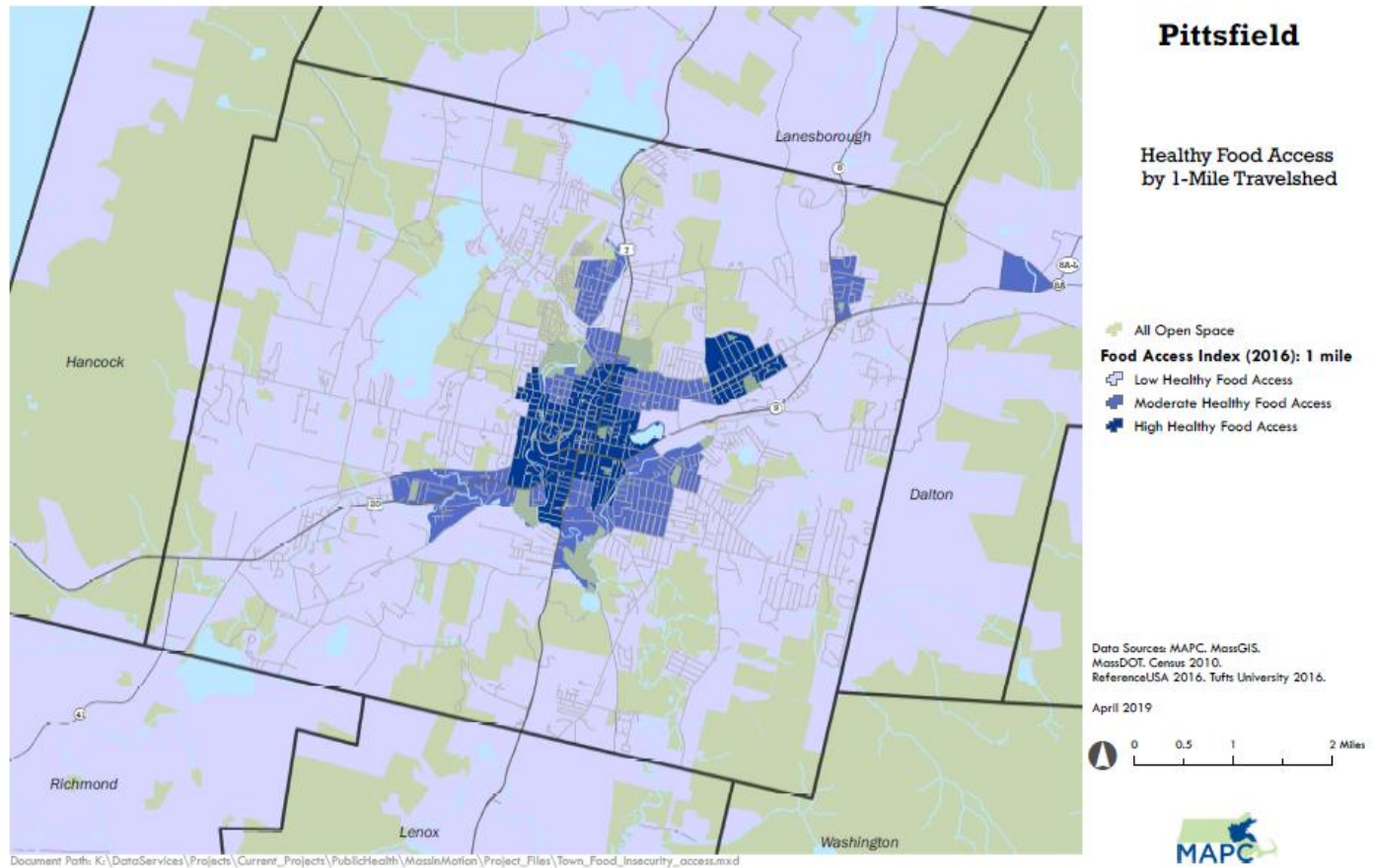
4.1.1 Print SNAP eligibility guidelines in newspaper

4.1.2: Disseminate information on public access TV stations

4.1.3: Include SNAP education as part of job training

4.1.4: Station a person registered to process SNAP applications at food pantry and other distribution sites.

Central Berkshires



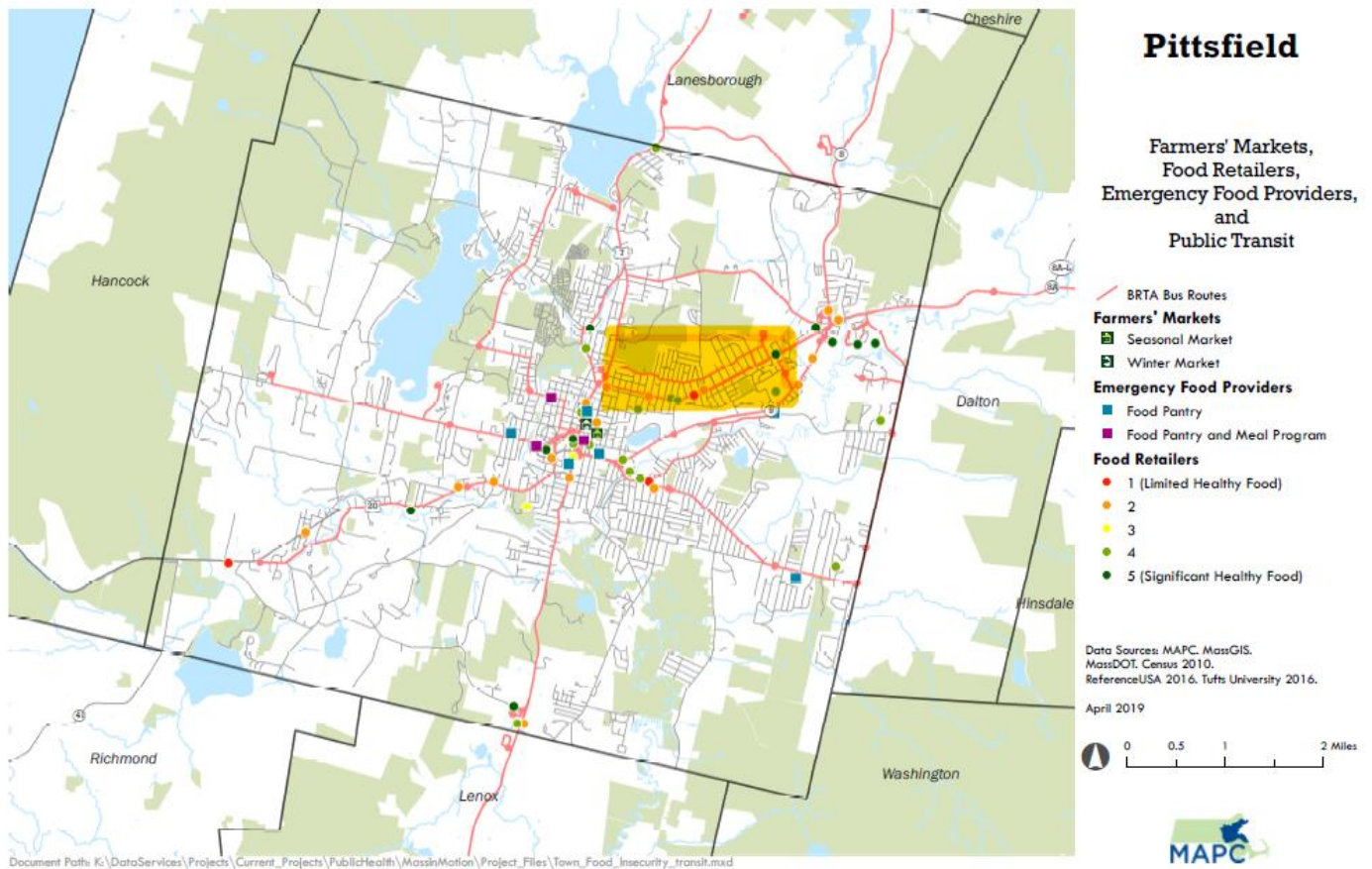
Pittsfield Food Accessibility Shed, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

The Central Berkshires region, home to Pittsfield, the largest city in the county, is the most diverse and densely populated area. Pittsfield is one of 11 Massachusetts Gateway Cities, midsize urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state, facing stubborn social and economic challenges while retaining many assets with unrealized potential. These communities, which all had a legacy of economic success, have struggled as the state's economy shifted toward skills-centered knowledge sectors. Median household income in Pittsfield is \$45,000 and 16.7 percent of the population lives below the poverty level. Through the assessment process, it became clear that the health inequities in Pittsfield determined by socio-economic characteristics center mainly around income level and age. The following goals and recommendations that emerged focus both on the priority populations of those 65 years and older, the population that is food insecure and utilizes the emergency food network, and residents living in the Morningside neighborhood. The major themes that emerged through the assessment process are:

- Healthy Food Retail in Morningside Neighborhood
- Closing the SNAP Gap
- Year-round distribution of fruits and vegetables

Healthy Food Retail in Morningside Neighborhood

The Morningside Neighborhood in Pittsfield has become a priority area to municipal government, social service agencies and the community at large in recent years because of the high concentration of low-income residents and the lack of access to healthy affordable food options. The area has a long history of being a working-class neighborhood that experienced a great deal of disinvestment after General Electric closed the factory in the 1960s. In present day, several revitalization efforts have/are taking place and several assets have been identified including Morningside Community School and the Berkshire Dream Center mobile food pantry that distributes nutritious food throughout the area. The Dream Center's program has been so successful that there has been interest and commitment from city government and several investors to support an increase in access points for healthy food for residents of the neighborhood.



Pittsfield Food Access and Transportation Map, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Goal 1: Residents in Morningside have access to a retail outlet for healthy and affordable food options.

Recommendations:

1.1: Increase access points for healthy food options in Morningside.

1.1.1: Establish a cross-sector healthy retail and distribution working group.

1.1.2: Research models of retail opportunities (i.e. co-op, corner store initiative, storefront, mobile market, farm stand kiosks) to determine best fit for Morningside.

1.1.3: Contract technical assistance for feasibility study on retail opportunities.

1.1.4: Assess resident needs in a retail outlet through resident engagement opportunities.

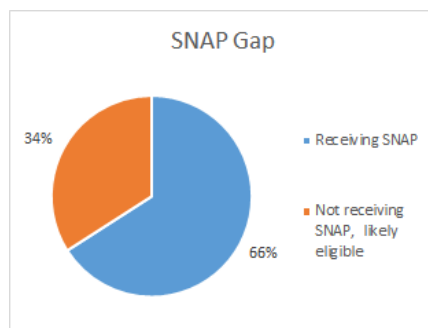
1.1.5: Create timeline and work plan for implementing additional access points.

1.2: Incorporate cooking/nutrition education into retail outlets including recipes and samples.

1.2.1: Coordinate nutrition education programs with local organizations offering this service.

Closing the SNAP GAP

Of those likely eligible for SNAP in Pittsfield, 32 percent are not receiving these benefits. Through the focus groups and informant interviews, several reasons have been identified for this gap including the application process presenting barriers particularly for older adults and the immigrant population. During the Food Access Collaborative conversations, stakeholders and community members present were also concerned with the gap that exists with other federal benefits such as WIC. Strong and consistent scientific evidence supports SNAP, WIC and other safety net initiatives because they “can improve children’s health and education outcomes and help them achieve higher earnings in adulthood”.^{vii} Assuring that all eligible consumers use 100 percent of their benefits should be a top priority for all organizations and individuals working to improve their local food system. Some opportunities for support with SNAP and WIC applications were identified including the Food Bank of Western Mass SNAP application assistance program which provides phone support as well as onsite once-a-month SNAP application assistance at the Family Resource Center. Current local resources are limited and a more collaborative approach would help close the SNAP and WIC gap.



Pittsfield SNAP Enrollment, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Goal 2: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Recommendations:

2.1: Increase support and promotion of supplemental nutrition benefits and incentive programs including SNAP, WIC, HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) and Market Match.

2.1.1: Create local network of SNAP support partners that are trained to assist in filling out and processing a SNAP application to expand onsite opportunities to apply/renew benefits. Explore a “train the trainer” model with Food Bank of Western MA.

2.1.2: Assist in distribution of Market Match and HIP materials.

2.1.3: Promote WIC farmers market check distribution.

2.2: Increase education about supplemental nutrition benefits and incentive programs including SNAP, WIC, HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) and Market Match.

2.2.1: Establish and schedule regular training sessions on using benefits at Farmers Markets.

2.2.2: Ensure regular HIP training sessions.

Year-Round Distribution of fruits and vegetables

In terms of emergency food resources, Central Berkshire has a vast network of food pantries and meal sites serving most neighborhoods and towns. Several assets were identified related to this network including collaboration with the Pittsfield Community Gardens (a city-funded effort), delivery/pick up from most local grocery outlets as well as the Food Bank of Western MA and a coordinated effort among this network to increase the nutritional quality of the food being distributed. Through focus groups, informant interviews and a needs-assessment process, it was identified that the food-insecure population of Central Berkshire does want more healthy food items including fresh produce throughout the year.

Goal 3: There is year-round distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables through Emergency food sites in Pittsfield.

Recommendations:

3.1: Increase access to excess local produce during growing season.

3.1.1: Coordinate with Pittsfield City Garden Program to process and store excess produce during growing season.

3.1.2: Work with Berkshire Bounty to increase distribution of gleaned produce in Central Berkshire County.

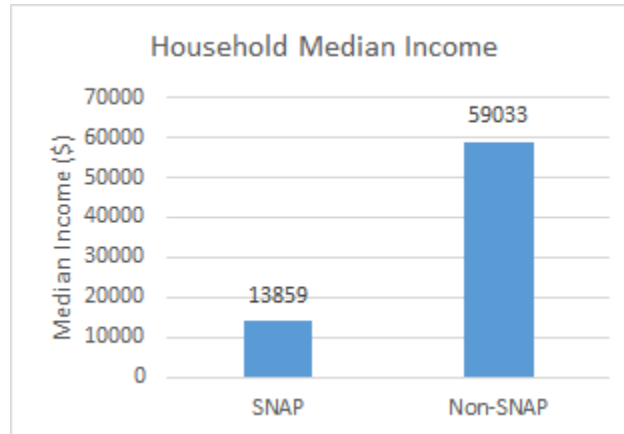
3.1.3: Identify and engage food retail outlets to donate excess produce.

3.2: Establish a system for storing and distributing excess produce among the food access sites in Central Berkshire county.

3.2.1: Utilize fresh food processing equipment (vacuum sealer at First United Methodist Church, flash freezer at Berkshire Dream Center)

3.3: Collaborate and engage volunteer networks to mobilize when excess produce is identified.

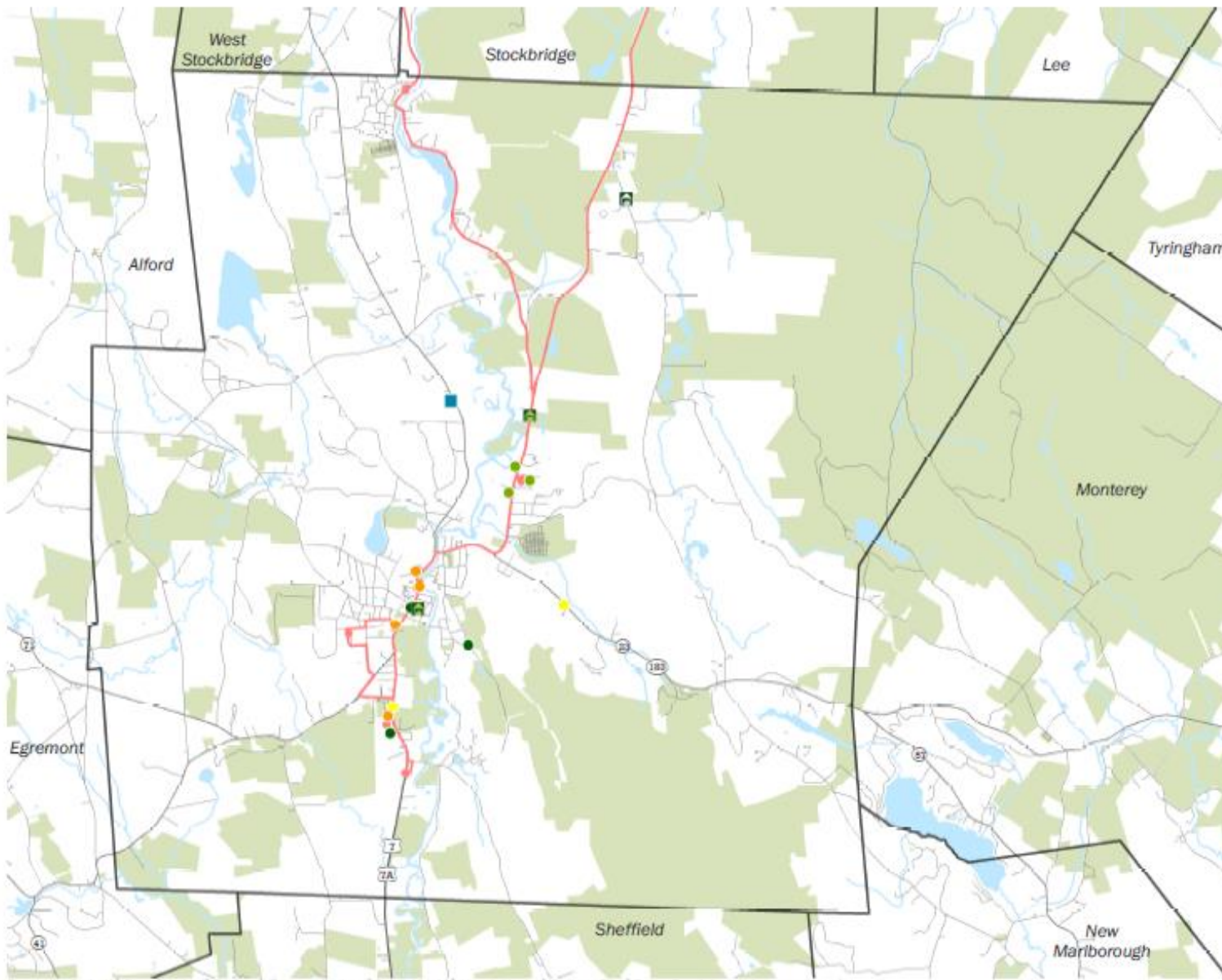
Southern Berkshires



ACS 2011-2015

The Southern Berkshires is characterized as the most rural region of the County with the greatest amount of active farmland. Varied definitions exist, but for our purposes the focus area of South Berkshires is the region of the county that is south of Interstate 90. Great Barrington is the population center of South Berkshires. Median household income in Great Barrington is \$56,124 and 5 percent live below the poverty line.^{viii} The Southern Berkshires is also the tourist and second home center of the county with hospitality as a major industry. Restaurants, bed and breakfasts and hotels provide many seasonal jobs. Despite this, the region has rapidly increasing numbers of food insecure populations specifically among families with school-aged children and immigrants working seasonal jobs. The major themes that emerged through the Community Food Assessment are:

- Food Security and Youth
- Closing the SNAP Gap
- Food Security and Immigrants



Great Barrington

Farmers' Markets,
Food Retailers,
Emergency Food Providers,
and
Public Transit

- BRTA Bus Routes
- Farmers' Markets**
 - Seasonal Market
 - Winter Market
- Emergency Food Providers**
 - Food Pantry
 - Food Pantry and Meal Program
- Food Retailers**
 - 1 (Limited Healthy Food)
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 (Significant Healthy Food)

Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS,
MassDOT, Census 2010,
ReferenceUSA 2016, Tufts University 2016.

March 2019



Document Path: K:\DataServices\Projects\Current_Projects\PublicHealth\MassinMotion\Project_Files\Town_Food_Insecurity_transit.mxd

Great Barrington Food Access and Transportation Map, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Food Security and Youth

Through the asset mapping activity during the Food Access Collaborative conversation in South Berkshires, it became clear to all participants that South County has many opportunities and programs in place to meet the increasing numbers of food-insecure youth. Some highlights include free community meals at several sites, an established incentive program at the Great Barrington Farmers Market, farming programs targeted at youth, and a backpack program at Berkshire Hills Regional School District where food is sent home with students for the weekend. Some opportunities are only available during the school day (i.e. free and reduced breakfast and lunch) and some are only available during summer programming. In addition, transportation barriers prevent utilization of many of these programs. There is a strong desire among stakeholders to expand these opportunities to meet the growing need. At the same time, there is recognition that distribution of healthy food options needs to be accompanied by cooking and nutrition education to have the highest impact on long-term choices.

Goal 1: Food-insecure school-aged youth in South Berkshire County have increased access to free and reduced food outside of school hours.

Recommendations:

1.1: Increase distribution sites for free and reduced-cost healthy food.

1.1.1: Expand/support Berkshire Bounty gleaning program.

1.1.2: Implement summer meals program.

1.2: Increase cooking/nutrition education for school-aged youth and their families.

1.2.1: Integrate cooking/nutrition education assets into after-school and summer programs through public schools, community centers and youth sports teams.

1.3: Increase awareness of current distribution sites for free/reduced-cost healthy food for the weekends/summer.

1.3.1: Create a South County-specific food access resource pamphlet.

1.4: Increase incentives for volunteers to participate in and assist in distribution and awareness of food access programs available to youth.

1.4.1: Explore adjusting Municipal Volunteer Policy (Great Barrington) to include community organization volunteer opportunities.

1.4.2: Collaborate with Elder Services of the Berkshires work program and Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires.

Closing the SNAP Gap

Of those likely eligible for SNAP in Great Barrington, 69 percent are not receiving these benefits. Similar to North and Central County, several reasons have been identified for this gap including the application process presenting barriers particularly for older adults and the immigrant population. South Berkshires has some resources and programs that help facilitate the application process including The Food Bank of Western Mass SNAP coordinator stationed at Community Health Programs (CHP) the second Wednesday of each month and their SNAP application assistance program which includes support over the phone. These resources are limited and a local support system or network would help close the SNAP gap.

Goal 2: All eligible residents have access to food assistance resources that increase food security and improve health.

Recommendations:

2.1: Increase support for the SNAP enrollment process including filling out the application specifically for older adults and the immigrant population.

2.2: Increase community awareness of SNAP application assistance programs.

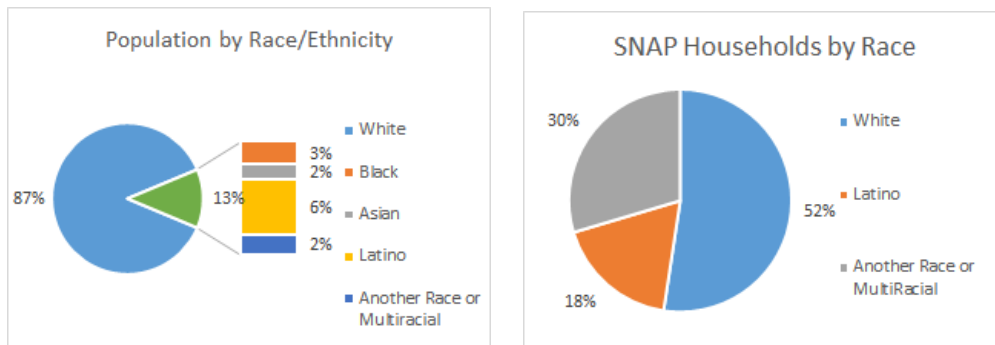
2.2: Increase education about SNAP benefits and incentive programs.

2.2.1: Support distribution of Market Match incentive programs and literature.

2.2.2: Provide opportunities for training sessions on utilizing SNAP incentives programs at farmers markets.

Food Security and Immigrants

Several barriers exist preventing immigrants access to healthy food options. Specific to South Berkshire County, there is a growing number of Latinx immigrants coming to the region to work on farms and in the robust hospitality industry. Some are undocumented while some have expired visas. These workers often lack reliable transportation, live in inadequate housing, experience isolation and have a language barrier in terms of being aware of the existing support resources and how to access them. In addition, the undocumented population are ineligible for SNAP and other federal benefits. This population has increased challenges and needs in the winter months when work is slow.



Great

Barrington population and SNAP enrollment by race/ethnicity, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Goal 3: The immigrant population of South Berkshire County has access to healthy food options year-round.

Recommendations:

3.1: Increase distribution sites for healthy food options for immigrant population.

3.1.1: Build relationships between food access stakeholders and facilities that have built trust with the immigrant population.

3.1.2: Diversify the times of food distribution to ensure the working population can access.

3.1.3: Include nutrition education/cooking workshops at distribution sites.

3.2: Increase education and awareness of immigrant population among agencies and programs.

3.2.1: Consider this priority population in all Food Access Collaborative work.

3.2.2: Conduct cultural competency workshops.

3.3: Increase bilingual services

3.3.1: Translate food and food program marketing materials into Spanish.

3.3.2: Create list of translation services.

3.4: Address isolation

3.4.1: Create opportunities for the immigrant population to gather around food and cooking/nutrition education.

Berkshire County Best Practices

Case Study #1 BERKSHIRE BOUNTY (formerly BACKYARD BOUNTY OF THE BERKSHIRES)



Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires Founders and Volunteers

Founded in 2016 by Jay Weintraub and Mark Lefenfeld, Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires is a “gleaning” (fruit and vegetable gathering) organization that has established a network of supermarkets, local property owners and farmers markets willing to donate excess fruit and vegetables that would otherwise go to waste. Through the efforts of many volunteers, Backyard Bounty collects the produce and distributes it to food distribution organizations to provide to those in need.

One out of four people in Berkshire County and all of Western Massachusetts suffer or are at risk of suffering food insecurity. With strong business backgrounds as well as a history of significant volunteer involvement, Jay and Mark intensively researched the issue of developing a sensible model for a community-wide, sustainable organization to help address the unfortunate and persistent reality of food insecurity in the Berkshires.

Mark and Jay were ready to go in 2016 with a group of South County homeowners and pickers/gleaners volunteering to participate in the Backyard Bounty fruit (only) recovery and distribution effort. Unfortunately, Mother Nature didn’t cooperate. Unseasonably warm weather in late winter and early spring caused the fruit trees to bud prematurely. Then, an unexpected hard freeze in early April killed most of the fruit tree buds. They had no choice but to wait until 2017 to begin gathering fruit. They also decided to expand their food gathering efforts to include excess fresh produce from local farms in order to reduce the dependency on weather-sensitive fruit trees.

During the inaugural year of operations in 2017, Backyard Bounty gathered more than 8,200 pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables from 21 South County homeowners and 13 local farms, mostly at farmers markets. They distributed the produce to those in need through a network of 18 food pantries, senior centers and other food distribution organizations in South County and Pittsfield. This success was realized, in large measure, through the efforts of 26 volunteers who collected produce, picked fruit from trees and delivered all of that excess fresh produce to distribution organizations.



Produce donations to Food Pantry

The success of Backyard Bounty in 2017 was constrained by the absence of refrigerated storage space, as tender greens and other vegetables deteriorated in the time between collection and distribution. During late July 2018, Backyard Bounty completed construction of a refrigerated storage shed on the CHP/WIC campus in Great Barrington, which allows for temporary, safe store of the produce. As a result, Backyard Bounty now has materially enhanced flexibility on the timing of deliveries. The shed was made possible by the generous donations of individuals and a grant from Berkshire Agricultural Ventures.



Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires Refrigerated Storage Shed

The amount of fresh produce collected and delivered during 2018 already exceeds the amount collected and delivered during all of 2017. Backyard Bounty is now on track to at least double their 2017 results, as a result of continued contributions from local farms as well as from new relationships with Great Barrington Big Y and Price Chopper, which are providing the opportunity to make regular and large pick-ups of excess fresh produce.

Backyard Bounty is a community-wide program involving the all-volunteer efforts of many people who are working towards expanding fresh food access to those in need in the Berkshires: (1) local farms, farmers markets, as well as individual, organizational and school property-owners and supermarkets -- which all provide excess fresh produce; (2) food distribution organizations which deliver the produce; (3) volunteers who collect, glean and deliver produce; and, (4) individual and organizational donors who together have covered all Backyard Bounty costs since inception.

More information is available at www.backyardbountyberkshires.org.

Case Study # 2 WRAPS PROGRAM AT WILLIAMS COLLEGE



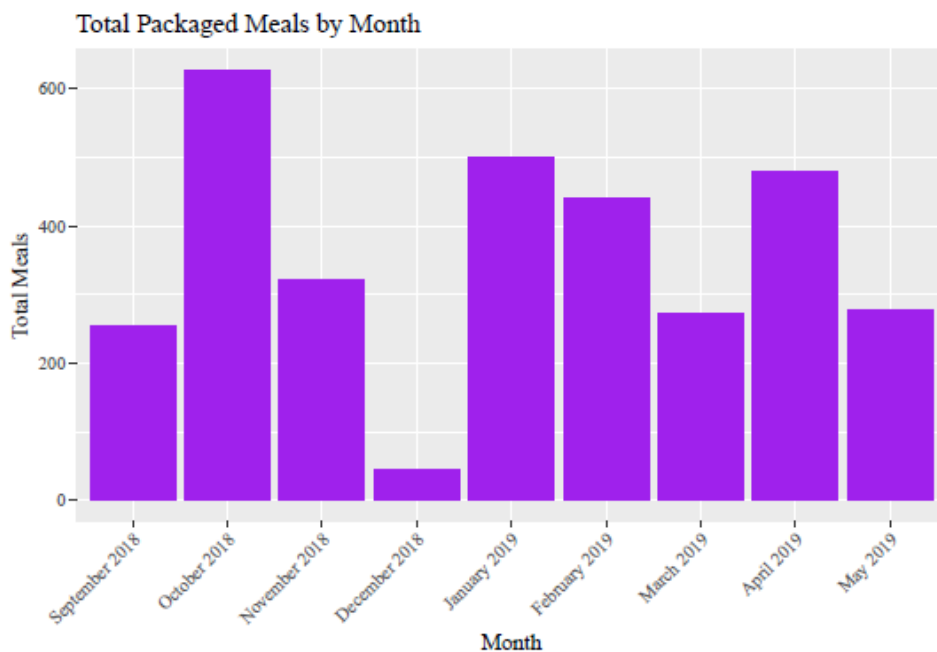
Williams Recovery of All Perishable Surplus (WRAPS) is a program started by Williams students approximately 15 years ago. Originally, students wrapped trays of food left over from dinners in the dining halls and delivered them to Berkshire Food Project. Since 2014, students have been packaging leftovers into clamshell containers, freezing them and then delivering them. Students include one grain, one vegetable and one protein in each container to create what they consider to be a balanced meal. The frozen meals are delivered to Mohawk Forest, an intergenerational, subsidized and Section 8 neighborhood in North Adams, and in 2017, WRAPS added two new community partners, ROOTS Teen Center and the Berkshire Family YMCA North Branch, both also in North Adams.



WRAPS program volunteers packaging meals

The WRAPS program is student-led, with institutional support from Williams College Center for Learning in Action and Dining Services. There are three student leaders, an outreach coordinator, a volunteer coordinator and a campus kitchen representative (all volunteer positions), plus student volunteers who help with packaging and delivery. During the shifts when students volunteer there are about 8-10 active designated shift leaders. Three nights a week, students collect and package leftovers from dining hall kitchens and the Faculty House kitchen. (During the summer, there is only one dining hall for food collection.) Students are asked and

encouraged to think about the presentation of the food when placed into the clamshells. Marco, the current outreach coordinator teaches, “Make it look like something you would want to eat.” The packages are dated and placed into the freezer, in which they can be frozen for up to three months. Once a week on Fridays, these frozen meals, along with “seconds” produce from Wild Oats Market that is picked up along the way, are delivered by students and staff volunteers to Mohawk Forest. If there are extra meals, those will be dropped off at ROOTS Teen Center and the YMCA. During the 2017-2018 school year, 120 meals per week were delivered, and over the summer, about 50-70 meals per week were delivered. During the 2018-2019 school year the program experienced a 92% increase in recovered food, delivering 3,214 meals resulting in 5,061 pounds of food recovered.



WRAPS Total Packaged Meals by Month in 2018/19

WRAPS Goals for the coming School Year:

- Continue (limited) operations on campus over the summer.
- Partner with the North Adams Public Schools and the Brayton After School Tutoring Program to create snack packs with the goal of reducing food insecurity during school holidays and long weekends.
- Next fall, look for new opportunities to recover food from stores in North Adams and/or Pittsfield

WRAPS Challenges

- There are fewer students on campus in summer to volunteer.
- The neighborhood of Brayton Hill, a neighbor to the YMCA in North Adams, houses the main recipients of the meals delivered to the YMCA. Not a lot of residents living at Brayton Hill are taking the meals. How can there be greater communication about this opportunity?
- Now that WRAPS is a designated Campus Kitchen Program (CKP), students follow CKP sign-up procedures, which are more complicated, creating a barrier to sign up as WRAPS volunteers.

Sustainability

Marco, current outreach coordinator, knew the previous student leaders running WRAPS prior to his involvement and wanted to keep WRAPS going. He learned the procedures, logistics and contact people and had the opportunity to shadow and volunteer with WRAPS before the previous students graduated. There is now a Google document that is shared among leaders that acts as a toolkit for WRAPS procedures. Institutional and faculty support of this program is critical to the sustainability.

For more information contact Colin Ovitsky at cmo2@williams.edu.

Case Study #3 Berkshire Market Collective and Market Match



Berkshire Market Collective: Statement of Purpose

The *Berkshire Market Collective* is a three-year USDA grant-funded initiative managed by partners *Berkshire Farm & Table*, *Alchemy Initiative*, *Berkshire Grown* and *Berkshire Regional Planning Commission*. The *Collective* is charged with creating a coalition of market managers to collect data and advance business goals, provide resources and support and design a comprehensive branding and marketing campaign.

As a provisional marketing agency, the *Collective* will establish and launch the “*Berkshire Farmers Markets*” brand which will include all farmers markets in the surrounding region. Public relations and media campaigns will reference *Berkshire Farmers Markets* as a brand entity and the *Collective* will remain behind the scenes building foundation, collecting data, implementing programming and executing campaigns on behalf of all farmers markets in the region.

Berkshire Market Collective: Progress Report

In Year One, the *Collective* has accomplished the following:

- Met individually with farmers market managers and as a group to explore ideas for collaboration, determine market needs, strategies and rules of engagement
- Advocated on behalf of regional farmers markets with state and local reps, regional and national network collaborators, support organizations, and vendors and consultants
- Secured *Northbound Ventures* as data consultants to establish data collection/management strategies, create and distribute shopper, vendor, manager and non-shopper surveys, evaluate and report data and offer recommendations for data collection enhancement
- Partnered with *Wholesome Wave* to license FM Tracks app for data collection and rolled out data collection methodology with anchor markets
- Developed volunteer program to support farmers market managers
- Created ‘Music for the Markets’ musician database to support farmers market managers

- Established baseline communications – online market manager discussion forum, market manager enewsletter and social media accounts for public outreach
- Secured sponsorship for **Market Match** flyer to develop content, design and distribute 10,000 flyers to regional offices of the *Department of Transitional Assistance, WIC, Councils on Aging and Elder Services* to promote ‘healthy food for all’

MARKET MATCH – Spend Less + Get Fresh! INITIATIVE

The Objective

The *Berkshire Market Collective* has been exploring ways in which we can better serve individual farmers markets and support the efforts markets are making to reach food-insecure shoppers.

There is a stigma by members of our community that farmers markets are inaccessible and unaffordable. While many markets do a great deal of community outreach to change perceptions, having other advocates in the community working on their behalf would go a long way.

If we further empower this audience to shop at our regional farmers markets, we will increase their access to local food, keep dollars in the community and increase revenue of our region’s farmers and food makers. A win-win-win for all!

Universal Incentive Program Name: MARKET MATCH

Several regional farmers markets offer incentive programs for SNAP, WIC and/or Senior Coupons throughout the market season. Some offer double SNAP, others provide a \$5 token to boost Senior Coupons and more. These programs are promoted with different incentive names at different markets. We believe a region-wide effort that unifies the branding of these incentive programs will help simplify marketing and reach shoppers more easily. The *Collective* worked with farmers market managers to establish **Market Match** as the universal name for the region. The non-specific name **Market Match** allows managers to define and promote their individual incentive programs to shoppers directly. At the same time, the name allows the *Collective* to promote all incentive programs under one brand.

Reaching the Target Audience

The *Collective* is working to spread the word about the availability of nutrition incentive programs at participating markets in collaboration with food access agencies and organizations in the region. In an effort to generate additional shoppers (and revenue) for individual markets, the *Collective* with support from various sponsors in the region created **Market Match** flyers to distribute to the offices of the *Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), Council on Aging (COA), Elder Services and Women, Infants and Children (WIC)* among others. These agencies distributed **Market Match** flyers to clients to help promote farmers markets in our region. The **Market Match** flyer message highlighted the following:

- Specific markets offering incentive programs (double SNAP, \$5 tokens, etc.)
- All markets currently accepting benefits but not offering incentive programs

•

2019

The *Berkshire Market Collective* is working with *Berkshire Grown* to secure sponsorship for a 2019 printing of the flyer plus additional financial support for a potential staff training program for *WIC, COA, ES and DTA* offices to better promote farmers market food access to their clients.

Appendix A:

Preliminary Food Access Data:

County Wide:

- 12% of Berkshire County residents experience food insecurity
- 27% are children
- An average of 15,000 residents seek food assistance monthly
- 19.9% of Berkshire County residents are obese
- 18.3% are children
- 70% of residents report eating less than five servings of fruit and vegetables a day
- By 2030, the majority of Berkshire County municipalities will have populations that are 60% or more residents aged 50 or over
- South County: 69% of Berkshire County residents are likely eligible for SNAP and not receiving it
- Central County: 34% of Berkshire County residents are likely eligible for SNAP and not receiving it
- North County: 32% of Berkshire County residents are likely eligible for SNAP and not receiving it

Past Assessments and Goals:

MA Local Food Action Plan:

Food Access, Security and Health: Reduce hunger and food insecurity, increase the availability of healthy food to all residents and reduce food waste.

Sustainable Berkshires:

Healthy Food Access:

- Build a year-round local food system.
- Expand access to healthy, local food in all Berkshires schools.
- Expand access to locally grown foods for low- to moderate-income households.

Keep Berkshires Farming:

- Support local efforts to expand year-round access to local foods.
- Help connect interested farmers to land to start or expand a farm.
- Strengthen and connect the farm community.
- Eliminate Hunger in Central Berkshire Region.
- Grow and foster connections between growers and food buyers.
- Make all Berkshire residents and visitors aware of agriculture's value to place and identity.

Age Friendly Berkshires

- Identify and address health inequities and reduce health disparities.
- Increase health literacy.
- Address the social determinants of health.
- Work toward wellness and quality of life for all.

Appendix B:

Location Name	City
Adams Fair	Adams
Bartlett's Orchard	Richmond
Berkshire Area/Lanesboro Farmers' Market	Lanesborough
Berkshire Co. 4-H Fair	Pittsfield
Berkshire Equestrian Center	Richmond
Berkshire Farms Apiary	North Adams
Berkshire National Fish Hatchery	Monterey
Blueberry Hill	Washington
Blythewood Stables	Pittsfield
Brattle Farm	Pittsfield
Brattle Farm - CSA Pick-Up	Pittsfield
Canterbury Farm	Becket
Caretaker Farm	Williamstown
Clarke's Nursery	Lee
Clover Hill Farm	Williamstown
Clover Hill Farm-Williamstown MA	Williamstown
Crane Hill Tree Farm	Washington
Cricket Creek Farm	Williamstown
Crystal Brook Farm	Tyringham
Cumworth Farm Blueberries & Bed and Breakfast	Cummington
Deer Run Maples	Otis
East Mt. Farm	Williamstown
Fairweather Farm	Worthington
Field Farm Guest House/B & B	Williamstown
First Flower Farm - CSA Pick Up	West Stockbridge
First Flower Farm - CSA Pick-Up	Great Barrington
Forthill Farm	Pittsfield
Frederick's Tree Farm	Hinsdale
Great Barrington Farmers' Market	Great Barrington
Great Barrington Winter Farmers' Market	Great Barrington
Hancock Farmers' Market	Hancock
Hancock Shaker Village	Pittsfield
Hawk meadow Farm Bed & Breakfast	Lee
High Lawn Farm	Lee
Hilltop Orchard / Furnace Brook Winery	Richmond
Holiday Brook Farm	Dalton
Holiday Brook Farm stand	Dalton
Ingalls Crossing Farm B&B on Fairfield's Farm	Williamstown

Ioka Valley Farm	Hancock
Jaeschke's Fruit and Flowers	Pittsfield
Jaeschke's Orchard	Adams
Kirchner Farm	Pittsfield
Lakeview Orchard	Lanesborough
Lee/Town Green Farmers' Market	Lee
Lightwing Farm	Cheshire
Meadow Farm	Lee

Appendix C:

Williams College Project Outline: <https://ces.williams.edu/files/2019/01/North-Adams-Farm-to-School-Project-Report-1.pdf>

Appendix D:

Food Access Collaborative Conversation Participant List

Name	Organization
Laura Kitross	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Karen Vogel	Berkshire United Way
Linda Avalor	Operation Better Start
Cathy Marchetto	Operation Better Start
Julia Lemieux	Pittsfield City Gardener
Nick Martinelli	Marty's Local
Wendy Krom	Berkshire Interfaith Organizing
Ellen Merrit	Christian Center
Jess Vecchia	Alchemy Initiative/Roots Rising

Nate Joyner	City of Pittsfield Community Development
Gina Armstrong	City of Pittsfield Health Department
Alisa Costa	Working Cities
Caroline Valli	Habitat for Humanity
Alana Chernila	Guido's Fresh Marketplace
Chris Horton	City of Pittsfield Agricultural Commission
Donna Chandler	Brattle Farm
Aleisha Gibbons	Berkshire Organics
Maureen Daniels	Berkshire Health Systems
Joe McGovern	Boys and Girls Club of the Berkshires
Kate Louzon	Morningside Initiative
Katelynn Miner	Berkshire Dream Center
Jake McCandless	Pittsfield Public Schools Superintendent
Sam Sirani	Berkshire Medical Center Nutrition Operations manager
Melissa Provencher	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Amanda Chilson	North Berkshire Community Coalition
Heidi Stucker	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Mariana Bergtold	Shire Kitchen
Mark Lincourt	Food Bank of Western MA/Brown Bag Program
Sheri Iodice	The Nutrition Center
Celia Norcross	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Sal Perry	Greylock Works
Sarah Gardner	Williams College
Kim McMann	Berkshire Food Project
Spencer Moser	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Matt Tatro	Grazie
Mark Rondeau	Friendship Food Pantry

Eric Wilson	COV NbCC
Tracy Finnegan	Williams College
Dan Randall	New Hope United Methodist Church
Rosalie Girard	Berkshire Nursing Families
Al Nelson	Friendship Food Pantry
Morgan Ovitsky	Be Well Berkshires
Tom Bernard	City of North Adams
Paula Morey	Berkshire Interfaith Organizing
Cory Nicholas	North Adams Public Schools Food Service Director
Sharon Wyrrick	Many Forks Farm
Nancy Slattery	Berkshire Health Systems Visiting Nurses Association Wellness Nurse
Aaron Oster	Food Retail
Jennifer Munoz	Growing Healthy Garden Program
Sarah Hansman	Wild Oats Community Market

Erin Egan	Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School
Pat Lescarbeau	Mary Spitzer Center
Anne Singleton	Williamstown Community Chest
Chris Hantman	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
A.J. Enchill	Senator Hinds' Office
Cortney Burns	TOURISTS WELCOME
Patti Messina	North Berkshire United Way
Kathy Keeser	Louison House/Hoosac Harvest/North Adams Farmers Market board member
Sandra Thomas	Marty's Local
Phyllis Babcock	Williamstown Community Bible Church Food Pantry
John Lutz	Elder Services
Jazmyne Joy	Family Place
Jamie Paxton	Berkshire Grown
Lee Venolia	Hoosac Harvest

Jim Mahon	Williamstown Rotary/Berkshire Food Project Board
Donna Salloom	Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Fran Berasi	Friendship Food Pantry
Juliannen Henault	Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts
Chris Witruk	YMCA
Jess Sweeney	ROOTS
Brian O'Grady	Harper Center
Jenny Schwartz	Berkshire Co-op Market
Julia Jarvis	WIC/ Community Health Programs
Amy Taylor	Berkshire United Way
Natalia DeRuzzio	Volunteers in Medicine
Barbara Zheutlin	Berkshire Grown
Jamie Paxton	Berkshire Grown
Tom Kelly	Monument Valley Middle School

Elizabeth Keen	Indian Line Farm
Angela Cardinali	Berkshire Farm & Table
Peter Stanton	The Nutrition Center
Liz Weibrecht	The Nutrition Center
Rebecca Jurczyk	Great Barrington Health Department
Maryann Tebben	Bard College at Simon's Rock
Polly Mann	Great Barrington Council on Aging
Ananda Timpane	Railroad Street Youth Project
Bridgette Stone	Great Barrington Farmers Market
Lauren Smith	Fairview Hospital
Jaclyn Sinay	Berkshire South Community Center
Chris Rembold	Great Barrington Town Planner
Maeve O'Dea	Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
Meg Boyer	Berkshire Health Systems

Mark Lefenfeld	Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires
Aretha Whitehead	Greenagers
Cynthia Pansing	Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Deb Philips	South Berkshire Rural Health Network
Jim Wilusz	Lee Health Department
Jamal Miles	Community Health Worker
Robert Hoechster	Fairview Hospital
Mary Feuer	Community Health Programs
Jen Salinetti	Woven Roots Farm
Anne Hutchinson	Muddy Brook Backpack Project

Appendix E:

North, Central, South County Assets

Organization/Affiliation	Areas of work										Programs and services provided	
	Production	Education	Policy	Processing	Funding	Emergency	Distribution	Retail	Connections	OTHER	OTHER	Include notes from the Bubble Chart, and information you have about each organization/stakeholder
YMCA						X			X			Getting freezer to collect food from WRAPS program to distribute-to? How access?
North Adams Public School System							X	X		X		Anyone/any place/any organization want to host summer food site-need to have organize activity to offer-NAPS can get food there. Currently there are 6 summer meal sites in NA. Suggestions: skate park, UNO Park?- Free Lunch/Breakfast/Dinner for all students, up to 18, summer lunch program
Growing Healthy Gardens Program-School Systems-Neighborhoods	X	X				?			X			Greylock School- Yes, Colegrove-? Brayton-Yes, DHS-? BART-? Adams-Cheshire-? Clarksburg-Yes- NBN and Community Gardens- Maps of community/neighborhood gardens? Gardens and Meal Sites/Pantries?
Hoosac Harvest		X		X		X	X					Gleaning- How increase and sustain this? Where does gleaned food go? How can gleaners help with processing? What can offer for education? Help subsidize CSA shares-where does funding come from for this? Harvest to get extra produce to pantries and meal sites. Food from food bank in Hatfield, use farmers not from this area. But, they could get pay if included in the food bank produce (from Western Mass food bank); need to support local farmers – and get paid to grow extra at their farm.

												Gleaning and getting extra produce
Armory Kitchen			X			X						Current Use? How can make use of this space and who?
Greylock Works	X	X		X				X	X			2500 sq. feet for current production-what currently producing?, commercial kitchen that has technology to record food education opportunities and more, processing in commercial kitchen space- How retail?
Elder Services						X	X					Meals on Wheels and COAs
MCLA		X							X			Create classes for food system/access education
BNF		X							X			Increased education on breastfeeding as food access and healthy eating
Mary Spitzer Center/North Adams COA		X				X			X			Offer brown bag lunches-brown bag lunch site, local farmer offers HIP education and purchases of local produce, hot lunches M-F
Berkshire Grown		X			?			X				Increase HIP Education, Winter Farmers Markets
DTA		X			X				X			Food Assistance, HIP Education, Increase SNAP education, not represented at first NB FAC
E3		X						X				Food Pantry recipe cards and recipe book, mini food pantry box outside of Vets on River St.- every first quarter focus on food insecurity theme with a project-brochure for this
Food Adventures		X			X							Currently works with Pine Cobble and Wild Oats- what need to do to get into NAPS? Or Clarksburg or Adams? Or UNO? Or ROOTS? Or Adams Youth Center? YMCA?
Northern Berkshire Youth Collaborative									X			Need to add to NB FAC contact list, connect with FOOD Adventures
Wild Oats						X		X				Suspended Groceries Program, Donations, WIC/SNAP discount-Healthy Food For All
Foodbank of Western MA		X				X	X					Brown Bag lunches, outreach (what Mary D. used to do), distribute food to pantries

Share the Bounty					X						What offer in north county?
ROOTS					X						offer WRAPS food
Mohawk Forest					X						offers WRAPS food
Berkshire Food Project					X						Meal Site
Mountain Girl Farm	X	X		X			X	X			HIP, Spitzer Center Education
											Future Community Café, offering SNAP Ed. For youth, Cooking Education, Food Storage-In development - Community café and kitchen – old Carr hardware building – establish SNAP cooking classes and youth cooking classes so local chefs come in and demonstrate; plus storage and distribution site. Planned to open this summer.
New Hope Church		X				X	X	X			
CSA Farms	X						X				
											Williams- Tracy Finnegan, Jim Mahon- Donates to Mohawk Forest, Louison House, YMCA, ROOTS
WRAPS						X	X				
Marty's Local							X				Sandra Thomas
North Adams Farmers Market		X					X	X			SNAPx2
BIO			X								Advocate at Legislative level
											Donate to meal sites- is there protocol or consistency with this? How does this work?
Boston Seafood						X		X			
											Donate to meal sites- is there protocol or consistency with this? How does this work?
American Legion						X					

Organization/Affiliation	Areas of work										Programs and services provided	
	Production	Education	Policy	Processing	Funding	Emergency Food Resources	Distribution	Retail	OTHER	OTHER	OTHER	Include notes from the Bubble Chart, and information you have about each organization/stakeholder
Marty's Local							X					Aggregates farm produce within a 70-mile radius from Pittsfield and distributes to institutions (PPS) and restaurants.
BHS Worksite Wellness		X						X				Education at 15-20 worksites throughout the county. Includes Nutrition, exercise, mindfulness. Also organizes a weekly farmers market on the BMC campus for employees and community members- Fort Hill Farm. Runs central county Canyon Ranch Institute Life Enhancement Program.
Operation Better Start		X										Operation better start – nutrition education for youth – medical nutrition therapy program – Alzheimer’s clients with food insecurity. All Headstart clients and WIC-nutrition program to screen people for food insecurity. Outreach into schools and community. Grant funded programming in Pittsfield and North Adams schools. Train the trainer model=sustainable program. Free meal for

												kids enrolled in Triple Play program at Boys and Girls club.
												Roots Rising-youth development/education, working on farms and in emergency food sites. Managing organization of Downtown Pittsfield Farmers Market-year-round market walkable from low income neighborhoods. Giving Table-donated to emergency food sites. Blue Cross Blue Shield sponsoring cooking/nutrition education series year round at Farmers Market.
Alchemy Initiative		X					X	X				
Berkshire Farm and Table								X				Marketing and promotion of Berkshire County as destination for food. Partner in Farmers Market promotion program-3 year USDA capacity building grant.
Pittsfield Community Gardens	X	X		X		X						Mangers and maintains 8 community garden plots, 2 at the community schools. Teaches after school gardening and cooking classes to elementary school students in the gardens. Distributes food grown to emergency food sites.
Pittsfield Ag Commission			X									Volunteer advisory board. Enforces right to farm laws and settles disputes.

The Nutrition Center		X								Medical nutrition therapy in 5 different locations, accepts insurance. Food Adventures kids culinary education program into schools and summer program. Host dietary interns from Miss Halls, BCC, UMass with interest in nutrition. Future plans: Mobile food adventures – program acquired bus and seeking funding to get outfitted inside.
Food Pantry Collaborative		X	X			X				Monthly meeting of 10 food pantry and mealsite staff to share best practices, network, and work on coordinated effort to increase the quality of food at these emergency food sites. Projects include creating a wallet card listing food pantry dates/times/locations, and hosting cooking demos at pantry distributions.
Berkshire Dream Center				X		X	X			Emergency Food Site with Mobile food pantry distributing at 9 sites between Pittsfield and North Adams where residents are lacking access to food including senior housing and food dessert neighborhoods. In process outfitting a second truck that has refrigeration.
Berkshire Interfaith Organizing								X		Priority Research Teams in Food Insecurity and Transportation. Large network of congregations to mobilize for advocacy (especially at the state level). Worked hard to support an increase in MEFAP funding and the Mass Food Trust.

Organization/Affiliation	Areas of work										Programs and services provided	
	Production	Education	Policy	Processing	Funding	Emergency Food Resources	Distribution	Retail	OTHER	OTHER	OTHER	Include notes from the Bubble Chart, and information you have about each organization/stakeholder
Berkshire Hills Regional School District		X				X						Free and reduced lunch for eligible students during the school year. Free lunch during summer programming. Backpack program-delivers bag full of non-perishable food to 100 families by following school bus route.
Project Sprout	X	X				X						School garden program, heirloom and organic vegetables and fruit orchard. Produce is distributed to the school cafeteria, the backpack program and food pantries.
Great Barrington Farmers Market								X				Has HIP vendors and a double SNAP, WIC and Senior coupons program. Walkable from downtown.
Indian Line Farm	X							X				medium sized organic farm, HIP vendor at GB farmers market and on-site CSA with subsidized shares.
Volunteers in Medicine (VIM)		X							X			Social service and health agency serving primarily immigrants and Latinos, many undocumented. Refers patients to food pantries and farmers markets but many don't take advantage of these

											programs. Shared medical appointments with education on healthy cooking, grocery store tours, prediabetes screenings.
Greenagers	X	X									Front lawn food program. Encourages home owners to grow their own organic produce. Greenagers provided seeds, soil, fertilizer and instruction, to help plant and grow 40 beds in the community. For each bed purchased one is donated. Also runs after school programs for ESL students about healthy eating and food resources.
Berkshire South Community Center		X			X						The TONE program is a teen outreach program (ages 13-18) including nutrition education, cooking classes, variety of fitness programs, and incentives including community service hours and free teen gym membership. Year round pre-school including healthy snacks and recipes to take home as well as after-school programming and childcare for school age children. Corporate wellness programs. Food drives to collect donations for the People's Pantry and meal programs. Community supper prepared by local chef volunteers on Monday nights, attended by 80 people weekly. Leftover food is provided to CONSTRUCT. Also runs

										community garden on site.
Berkshire Agricultural Ventures				X						non-profit funding organization supporting The New England Food Vision by 2060 plans to provide >50% of food in New England for local consumption. Currently, regionally about 12% of food is provided locally.
Fairview Hospital		X								Runs an eating mindfully class series exploring the behavioral side of eating.
Backyard Bounty of the Berkshires	X					X				Gleaning program that collects fruit from area trees and distributes to local emergency food sites. Collects extra food from farmers at the end of the FM and distributes as well.
Berkshire Co-op Market		X		X			X			The Co-op Market donates \$1000/month in Community card program providing grocery cards to local agencies to subsidize food purchases. They also provide nutrition/affordability tours, to educate people on how to shop affordably at any market. In store and in schools

											cooking/nutrition education programming for kids. Runs cooking/nutrition programming at the House of Corrections.
GB Health Department		X	X					X			License all the places that sell food and could be a good resource for marketing.
Berkshire Grown			X			X	X	X			Western Mass retail partners in HIP program. Share the Bounty: subsidized CSA shares and farm food distribution to emergency food sites. Retail: south county winter farmers market once a month nov-march.
Community health Programs (CHP)		X			X	X					Hosts monthly mobile food truck from the Food bank of western mass. Provides support services for signing up for SNAP and WIC.
Peoples Pantry					X						Emergency food pantry runs one morning a week
Berkshire Health Systems		X			X						Outreach programs run monthly education clinics and blood pressure screenings at Peoples Pantry.
											Rural health planning grant: funding to establish a comprehensive health network of stakeholders in southern Berkshire county. Food Access will be a focus in the final plan.

Simon's Rock		X									Hosts annual Think Food conference. Runs a Food Studies program with a focus on local agriculture and STEM but also includes Food Justice and political ecology. Dining hall using a high percentage of local produce in season. Community garden on site.
Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation					X						Recently published a report (A closer look) based on a 1 year strategic planning process. Plan included challenges and assets. BTCF partner and funder in Columbia County Fresh Food For All. Fund Green Pastures grant annually.
Long Table Harvest				X			X		X		Large scale gleaning program in Columbia County distributing to 32 sites. Coordinating partner in Fresh Food for All Plan; facilitates core residents group in Hudson where challenges in food accessibility are explored and solutions are piloted. (i.e. Seafood buying club pop-up and mobile market).

Woven Roots

Work trade program- offer soil or other skills to get access to food; education – land based. Programs at Montessori school; agriculture, outdoor education and nutrition, wholesome food hot lunch and sandwich program - led by 7-8 graders in school – to create more wholesome opportunities for eating. Partners with Berkshire Co-op become empowered with food choices and teach savvy shopping to students; (order in bulk, sale prices); and entrepreneur experiences. South County Assistance with project sprout and Greenagers High School through college; interns at farm; and turn into employment. Emergency food resources donates plant starts and leftover CSA food is donated out.

ⁱ American Planning Association Policy Guide on Food Planning. <https://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>

ⁱⁱ Berkshire Health Systems Community Health Needs Assessment 2018. <http://www.berkshirehealthsystems.org/documents/Health%20Needs%20Assessment/Berkshire%20County%20Health%20Needs%20Assessment%202018%20Final.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Age Friendly Berkshires Action Plan, Berkshire Regional Planning Association <http://berkshireplanning.org/projects/age-friendly-county/>

^{iv} Food Bank of Western Massachusetts Berkshire County Impact

^v ACS 2011-2015 SNAP enrollment by County

^{vi} Feeding America Map the Meal Gap Data <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/map-the-meal-gap/2014/2014-map-the-meal-gap-tech-brief.pdf>

^{vii} Sherman, BA, Arloc, Brandon DeBot, BA, Chye-Chinf Huang, LLM. "Boosting Low-Income Children's Opportunities to Succeed through Direct Income Support." *Academic Pediatrics*, April 2016; Mabli, James. 2014. "SNAP Participation, Food Security, and Geographic Access to Food." US Department of Agriculture; Mabli, James and Jim Ohls. 2015. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation is Associated with an Increase in Household Food Security in a National Evaluation." *Journal of Nutrition* 145(2): 344-351; Mabli, James and Julie Worthington. 2014. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Child Food Security." *Pediatrics* 133(4): 1-10

^{viii} US Census (2015 and 2016). Income and Poverty in the United States: 2016 <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2017/demo/P60-259.pdf>