



# A Healthy Community of Choice

*Food Access Working Group,  
Fall 2014*



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### SPECIAL THANKS TO

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United Way of Central Ohio

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## PROJECT SUMMARY

Since 2010, Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT) has remained dedicated to continuous community engagement and two-way dialogue designed to help identify needs unique to the Near East Side neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio. Through initiatives that promote a holistic culture of health and well-being (outlined in **The Blueprint for Community Investment**), PACT will continue to convene new partnerships to strategically implement community-led solutions.

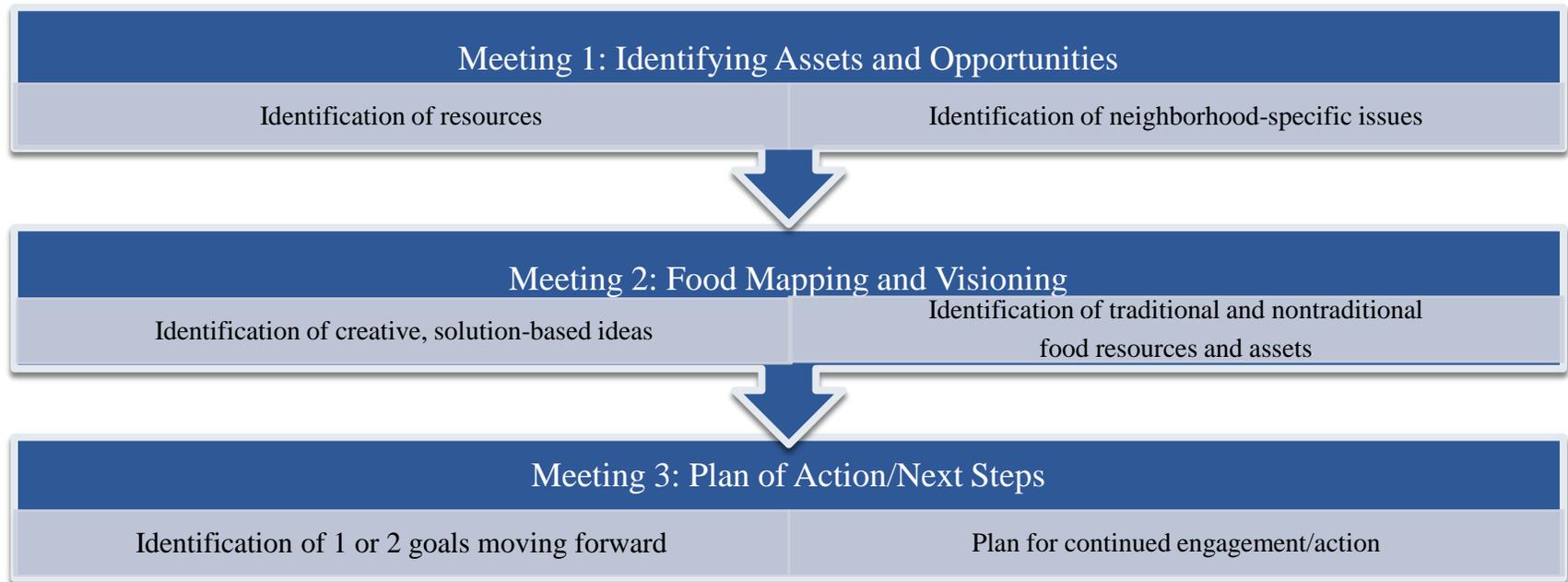
In the fall of 2014, PACT engaged Local Matters (a local nonprofit organization committed to improving healthy food access, education and community engagement) to assist with the facilitation of three small group meetings with community organizations, stakeholders and residents to explore solutions and define potential next steps for improving access to healthy food and nutritional education on the Near East Side. The primary goals of the three-meeting community engagement process were:

- *To collect, share and gather information on food-related neighborhood assets - such as food education and food access - identified by participants.*
- *To map points of healthy food access and education that will display gaps in access and opportunities for improvement relative to community need.*
- *To engage individuals in generating visions of what they want and need in their community relative to food access, food production, and food education.*
- *To make recommendations for next steps according to the priorities identified by the neighborhood food planning process participants*

This report provides information on the processes, data, and ideas for exploration shared during the community engagement process. PACT will use this information for continued engagement of participants in the development and implementation of local strategies that represents the community's collective vision for improving access in the area and meets the specific needs of the Near East Side (PACT geographic neighborhood) of Columbus, Ohio.



## OUR PROCESS



Local Matters has been integral in the development of a neighborhood food plans on the west side of Columbus, Ohio, and used similar strategies for community engagement and participation in the PACT geographic area. The first phase of the community engagement process for the *Visions for Healthier Communities* project was to work with PACT to identify participants that represented a true cross-section of the community. In addition to organizations and individuals who had previously been engaged by PACT and Local Matters in similar efforts, outreach efforts for participation in the meetings were expanded to include neighborhoods in key areas of the PACT geography. This approach provided a diverse mix of perspectives, socioeconomic statuses and ensured that the community's collective voices were represented during the process.

### MEETING 1: AUGUST 12, 2014 AT FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY

The purpose of the first meeting was to build relationships among the group and better understand individual roles in the local food system. This meeting provided an opportunity for engage community leaders, business owners, service providers and residents to share existing outlets for healthy food access and food education. During the meeting, attendees were asked to reflect and share their current work related to healthy food access, education, and engagement. The information shared by Meeting 1 attendees regarding their roles in the local food system and food related interests, has been included as an appendix to

this document. Participants also discussed gaps in food access, and opportunities for increased food access, so they could begin to explore how the group would work together to develop community specific suggestions and solutions.

**Lessons learned/Observations**

- Participants were engaged with one another and eager to build relationships and identify resources available amongst the group members. We expected that many of the participants would have already known one another but found that to be untrue
- The variation in what participants expected as the meeting’s outcome – some participants were prepared to provide solutions, others were hopeful that PACT and Local Matters had already determined solutions.

**Significant Successes**

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Building rapport among participants	Open dialogue format, small group project
Identification of resources	Working Group Conversation (individuals sharing their roles and experiences)
Identification of neighborhood specific issues	During the conversation, some group members shared their personal experiences with lack of access to food such as limited store hours and lack of transportation and their frustration with wanting a grocery – not necessarily a large store – that will have more diverse food options than currently available in stores

**MEETING 2: SEPTEMBER 9, 2014 AT FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY**

In PACT’s *Blueprint for Community Investment*, the community’s desire for a grocery store, and the health conditions of residents pointed to a need for quality choices and education. The primary purpose of the second meeting was to engage community leaders, business owners, service providers and residents to map food based assets – food access, food production and food education - providers and locations in the Near East Side neighborhood (PACT geographic neighborhood) and to brainstorm ideas for developing a collective vision for improving access in the area. The second meeting encouraged participants to expand their exploration of possibilities for improving food access including, and beyond, a neighborhood grocery store. It is important to note that Meeting 2 also included discussion of the term “healthy” as it related to the local food community; a clarification the group felt was important to future efforts. Participants noted that there are different interpretations of the word “healthy,” and that the group’s true goal was to improve access and availability to a variety of foods. Defining “healthy” was determined to be a barrier to educating people about healthier food preparation if certain foods were automatically deemed unhealthy (such as macaroni and cheese, collard greens and other traditionally African American soul foods). Rather, the group found there to be significant value in educating community members about healthier substitutions such as whole grain instead of white pasta, utilizing healthier oils, etc.

**Lessons learned/Observations**

- Participants expressed concern that defining “healthy” (as it relates to foods) would present barriers to achieving the group’s goals of improving food quality and access given the different interpretations of the word “healthy.”
- Participants were engaged with one another and eager to identify existing community assets and solutions for the future.

- Participants in the second meeting included several residents who were not present at the first meeting. This brought different perspectives and insights on the area’s food climate and future possibilities.
- Many of the participants were unaware of the number of food providers and resources that currently existed in the community. Participants later determined it was the type, and not number of food based assets that presented a challenge in the community.
- A communications gap between participants regarding existing food based assets was discussed by the group. This communication gap exists between organizations, businesses and residents.

**Significant Successes**

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Increased Involvement of Residents	Several additional community residents attended the second meeting
Identification of Resources Beyond Traditional Sources	Working Group Conversation, Mapping and Visioning revealed community solutions such as informal food sharing programs and personal gardens.

**MEETING 3: OCTOBER 7, 2014 AT FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY**

The purpose of the third meeting was to review the neighborhood map, develop creative solutions to primary problems raised in the previous meetings, and streamline the final approach moving forward. The group also reviewed the top 5 ideas from the 37 ideas discussed in Meeting 2. The top 5 ideas were then further revised and condensed to 2 actionable items the group would like to explore for improving healthy food access and education in the PACT geographic neighborhood:

**Focus Area 1: Improve the Quality of Food Available at Corner Stores**

The group’s initial idea to “establish and improve standards at convenience stores” was refined given the barriers that would exist in enacting timely policy changes, and to ensure the group’s goal would be actionable and increase the likelihood of success and timely improvement. Through an existing partnership between United Way of Central Ohio and many other stakeholders, the Fresh Foods Here project has been successful in improving the availability and quality of fresh produce in corner stores. The group is hopeful that the model can be replicated on the Near East Side through a partnership between Fresh Foods Here and The Neighborhood House.

**Focus Area 2: Increase Community Food Education and Awareness**

3 of the top 5 ideas focused on increasing community education, awareness and engagement as it relates to food resources and the local food economy. Participants combined these ideas recognizing the overall need to educate the community about existing resources and healthier food meal preparation. Members of the working group identified community led solutions to increasing community education and awareness that will require partnerships from local businesses, churches and community centers. The goal is to consolidate and leverage resources to maximize impact. PACT will lead the group in exploring their stated goals.

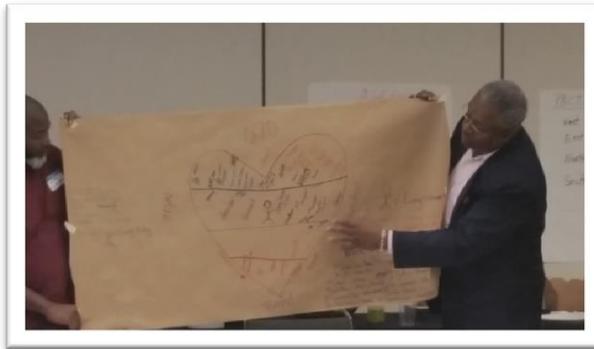
**Lessons learned/Observations**

- Participants were engaged with one another and eager to identify feasible, short-term solutions to improving healthy food access and education in the area.

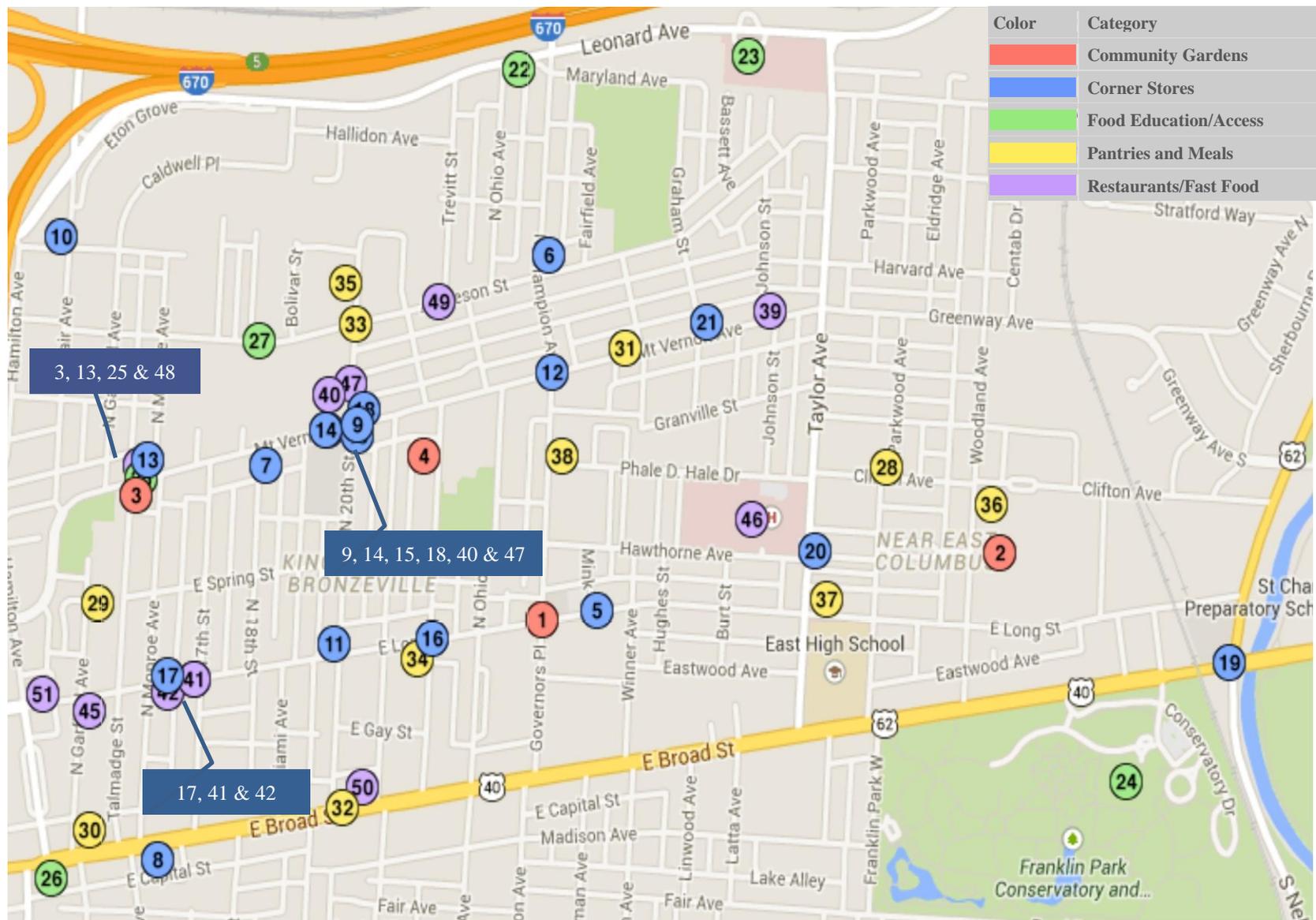
- Participants in the third meeting included two city council members, and a local business owner who did not attend the first two meetings. This provided different, fresh perspectives to the group's planning process
- Some of the participants were ready to move forward with a plan prior to the release of the final report. They were encouraged to continue to consider existing resources and possibilities to aid in PACT's future work. The group ultimately decided that a grocery store was not a feasible option at this time, and chose to focus on expanding healthy food options in corner stores instead.

**Significant Successes**

Project Success	Factors That Supported Success
Increased involvement of elected officials	City Council Members Priscilla Tyson and Shannon Hardin attended the final meeting
Identification of feasible short-term goals	The final workgroup activity and discussion resulted in the group narrowing its future focus to feasible goals



# NEAR EAST SIDE FOOD MAP



*COMMUNITY GARDENS*

- 1. Corner Garden
- 2. Eldon & Elsie Ward YMCA
- 3. King Arts Complex
- 4. NOBO Community Garden

*CORNER STORES*

- 5. 5 Brothers Corner Store
- 6. Atcheson Market
- 7. Dollar Plus
- 8. Duchess Gas Station
- 9. Edwards' Drugs
- 10. Fast and Friendly Mart
- 11. Long & 20th Carryout
- 12. Nathan's Drive Thru & Chief's Market
- 13. Nick's Quick Stop Food Market
- 14. Piece of Chicago Carryout & Pizza
- 15. Pierce & Son Grocery
- 16. Shawn's Market
- 17. Silver Mini Mart
- 18. Stewards Food Mart & Deli
- 19. Turkey Hill
- 20. Village Food Carryout
- 21. Wheatland Foods Carryout

*FOOD EDUCATION AND ACCESS PROVIDERS*

- 22. Calvary Tremont Baptist Church
- 23. CarePoint OSU East
- 24. Franklin Park Conservatory
- 25. King Arts Complex
- 26. Local Matters
- 27. Neighborhood House, Inc.

*FOOD PANTRIES AND MEALS*

- 28. Asbury North United Methodist Church
- 29. Bethany Presbyterian Church
- 30. Broad Street Presbyterian Church
- 31. Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church
- 32. Nation of Islam/Muslim Free Food Group (Daddy Grace)
- 33. Refuge Baptist Church
- 34. Rehoboth Temple
- 35. St. Dominic Catholic Church
- 36. St. Phillip Episcopal Church
- 37. St. Phillip Lutheran Church
- 38. Union Grove Baptist Church

*RESTAURANTS AND FAST FOOD*

- 39. Amina's Kitchen
- 40. Asian Wok II
- 41. Café on Long
- 42. Canabar
- 43. Creole Kitchen
- 44. Gene Walker's Café on Long
- 45. Los Potosinos Taco Truck
- 46. OSU East Food Trucks
- 47. Subway
- 48. Triumph Temple No. 1
- 49. Watermelon Man
- 50. Wendy's
- 51. Zanzibar Brews

## PLACES RESIDENTS ACCESS FOOD OUTSIDE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

*\*Distance calculated from PACT Office (211 Taylor Avenue Columbus, Ohio 43203)*

### GROCERY STORES

- Sav-A-Lot 1.2 miles** 1179 E. Main Street Columbus, OH 43205
- Kroger (Main St./Alum Creek Dr.) 1.8 miles** 2000 East Main Street Columbus, OH 43205
- IGA (Parsons Ave.) 2.5 miles** 704 Parsons Ave. Columbus, OH 43206
- Columbus Meat Market 2.7 miles** 317 South 5th Street Columbus, OH 43215
- Giant Eagle (Victorian Village) 3.6 miles** 777 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43215
- North Market 3.8 miles** 59 Spruce Street Columbus, OH 43215
- Aldi 5.1 miles** 2395 Silver Drive Columbus, OH 43211
- Giant Eagle (Easton) 7.8 miles** 160 Easton Town Center Columbus, OH 43219
- Trader Joe's (Easton) 8.1 miles** 3888 Townsfair Way Columbus, OH 43219
- GFS (Brice Rd.) 9.8 miles** 3675 Tussing Road Reynoldsburg, OH 43068
- Restaurant Depot (Wilson Rd/Broad St.) 9.8 miles** 270 North Wilson Road Columbus, OH 43204
- GFS (State Rte. 161) 12 miles** 5400 Cleveland Avenue Columbus, OH 43231
- Whole Foods (Sawmill) 15.8 miles** 3670 W. Dublin Granville Road Columbus, OH 43235

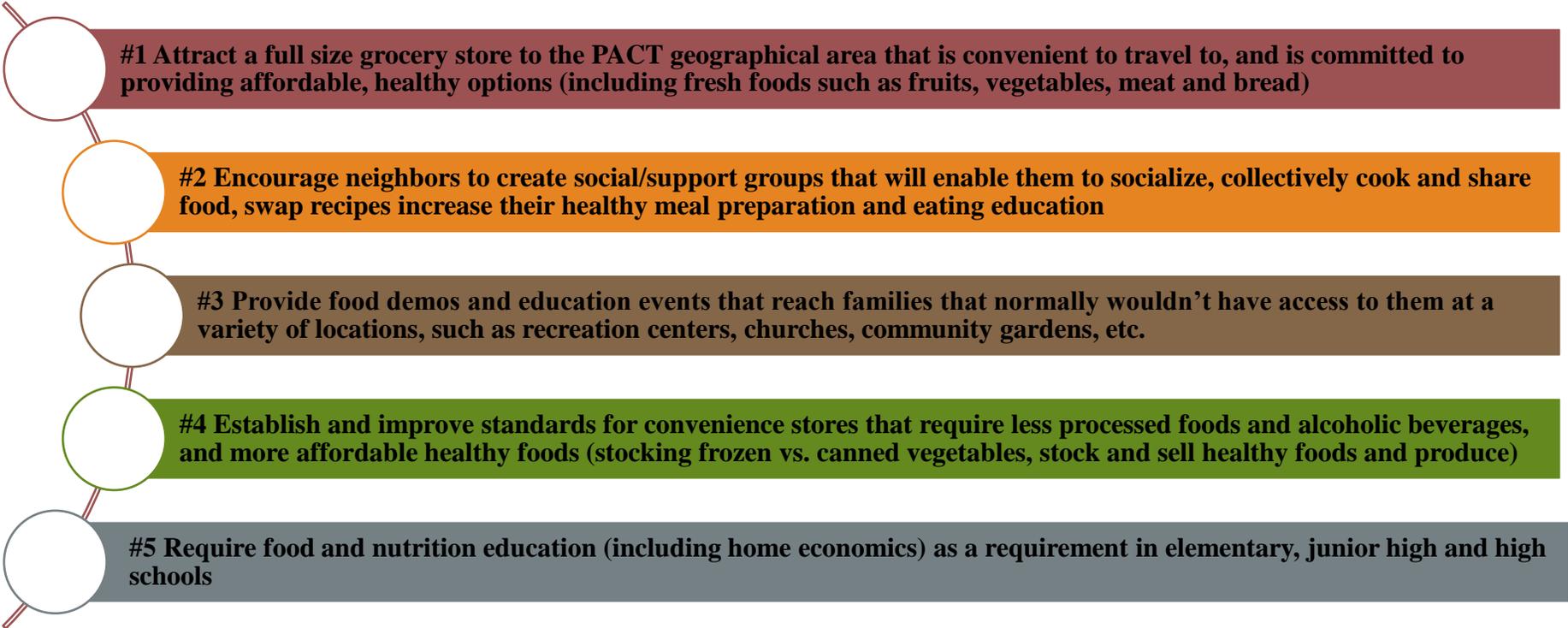
### SUPER STORES

- Costco 8.1 miles** 3888 Stelzer Road Columbus, OH 43219
- Sam's Club (Morse Road) 8.6 miles** 3950 Morse Road Columbus, OH 43219
- Wal-Mart (Morse Road) 8.7 miles** 3900 Morse Road Columbus, OH 43219

### OTHER STORES

- Turkey Hill (Nelson Rd.) 0.9 miles** 1880 East Broad Street Columbus, OH 43203
- Dollar Plus (Mt. Vernon) 0.9 miles** 993 Mount Vernon Avenue Columbus, OH 43203
- Near East Side Cooperative Market 1.0 miles** 1117 Oak Street Columbus, Ohio 43205
- Dollar General (Main Street) 1.4 miles** 1391 East Main Street Columbus, OH 43213

## TOP 5 IDEAS FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY OF CHOICE



**#1 Attract a full size grocery store to the PACT geographical area that is convenient to travel to, and is committed to providing affordable, healthy options (including fresh foods such as fruits, vegetables, meat and bread)**

**#2 Encourage neighbors to create social/support groups that will enable them to socialize, collectively cook and share food, swap recipes increase their healthy meal preparation and eating education**

**#3 Provide food demos and education events that reach families that normally wouldn't have access to them at a variety of locations, such as recreation centers, churches, community gardens, etc.**

**#4 Establish and improve standards for convenience stores that require less processed foods and alcoholic beverages, and more affordable healthy foods (stocking frozen vs. canned vegetables, stock and sell healthy foods and produce)**

**#5 Require food and nutrition education (including home economics) as a requirement in elementary, junior high and high schools**

## TOP 2 IDEAS/FINAL GOALS FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY OF CHOICE

During Meeting 3, participants refined this list to 2 ideas. Noting the complexities and longer timeline for attracting a full size grocery store, the group chose to concentrate their efforts on shorter term, actionable goals. The ideas were refined as illustrated below:



## VISIONS FOR A HEALTHIER FOOD COMMUNITY

### **A full, major grocery store**

on Broad or Mount Vernon will make it easier to buy better food

### **Teach children the importance of growing their own food**

for a healthier community, which includes the ability to create jobs

### **Neighborhood shopping groups**

to share food, recipes and provide transportation

### **Mobile food trucks**

at community gathering places - churches, schools and community centers.

### **Quality food in corner stores**

fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, etc.

### **Food demos and education events**

that reach families that normally wouldn't have access to them.

### **Increase African-American ownership**

of corner stores and other food-related businesses.

Meeting 2 provided participants an opportunity to share ideas and discover similarities regarding a collective vision for improving food access, availability and education in their community. Of the thirty-four ideas presented, several topics overlapped and revealed the key goals of the overall group. Participants began the visioning process by individually preparing a list of ideas, which were then shared with the group. During the group session, participants' specific, yet unique, supporting visions that aided in identifying specific goals associated with various ideas. Bolded items reflect the top 5 ideas based on participant responses.

### **Visions for Education**

- 1. Encourage neighbors to create social/support groups that will enable them to socialize, collectively cook and share food, swap recipes increase their healthy meal preparation and eating education**
- 2. Provide food demos and education events that reach families that normally wouldn't have access to them at a variety of locations, such as recreation centers, churches, community gardens, etc.**
- 3. Require food and nutrition education (including home economics) as a requirement in elementary, junior high and high schools**

4. Collaborate with library, OSU, churches and recreation centers to establish a farm/garden curriculum that teaches community members how to grow their own food  
*Also listed under “Visions for Production/Gardening #4”*
  - a. Example: Inter-generational program in the Bed-Stuy area of Brooklyn, NY where youth assist seniors as they garden
5. Plan and advertise grocery store tours to help residents understand the value of shopping the perimeter of the store (where healthier foods are typically stocked), and plan and choose healthier foods and meals

#### **Visions for Increased Access to Healthy Food**

1. **Attract a full size grocery store to the PACT geographical area that is convenient to travel to, and is committed to providing affordable, healthy options (including fresh foods such as fruits, vegetables, meat and bread)**
2. Establish a weekend Farmers Market in the community where people can use SNAP benefits
3. Establish a food truck/cart park
4. Attract and establish healthy, locally sourced restaurants with “life” food (local, fresh produce) and meals from various cultures
5. Offer second hand produce via food trucks (example: Philly Truck)
6. Attract and establish specialized grocery stores that offer foods that are common to the community’s culture (example: stores that offer traditional African American foods, spices, etc.)

#### **Visions for Production/Gardening**

1. Increase the number of community gardens to support produce accessibility, food education and healthy meal preparation for participating neighbors and their children
2. Establish local hydroponic farms in neighborhoods to produce fresh vegetables and fruits with reduced costs during the winter
3. Introduce edible landscaping to the area
4. Provide free gardening resources for area residents, including free horticulture lessons *Also listed under “Visions for Education #4”*
5. Introduce the community to the concept of aquaponics (growing produce with water instead of soil)

#### **Visions for Corner Stores – Standards and Quality**

1. **Establish and improve standards for convenience stores that require less processed foods and alcoholic beverages, and more affordable healthy foods (stocking frozen vs. canned vegetables, stock and sell healthy foods and produce)**
2. Improve the appearance of corner stores so they are more approachable – remove heavy window coverings, add plants outside, paint buildings, clean up/update signage
3. Improve the quality of food available in local grocery stores
4. Increase food choices for babies and children to eliminate childhood obesity or provide healthy food as an alternative to pharmaceutical treatments

#### **Visions for Communication**

1. Advertise community events about healthy eating on neighborhood marquees
2. Provide opportunities to take the questions raised in the PACT/Local Matters discussions closer to the targeted audience

3. Establish, design and distribute a food newsletter that informs the community about educational events, food pantries and access points and other food relevant topics

### **Visions for Community Partnerships/Business Development**

1. Increase African-American/minority community member ownership of corner stores and other food-related businesses
2. Increase law enforcement patrols to make corner stores safer and reduce criminal activity such as loitering and single cigarette sales
3. Encourage residents to support neighborhood businesses by shopping in the neighborhood
4. Establish food-related social entrepreneurship opportunities
5. Improve the quality of restaurants in area
6. Improve living wages to reduce reliance on pantries, churches and corner stores for food
7. Establish a full service gas station with a bakery

### **Miscellaneous**

1. Increase options for food, exercise, socializing and entertainment (i.e. baseball park, backyard activities and events, etc.)
2. Encourage physical activity with weight loss/exercise clubs and competitions
3. Increase the diversity of the types of restaurants and stores in the area (attract an ice cream shop, diners, soup houses, pizza shop)

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION: CASE STUDIES**

### **FOCUS AREA 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF FOOD AVAILABLE AT CONVENIENCE STORES**

#### **CASE STUDY 1: FRESH FOODS HERE – COLUMBUS, OHIO**

Led by United Way of Central Ohio, the Fresh Foods Here project is a comprehensive approach to increase healthful, affordable retail food offerings in Columbus, Ohio through store redesign, inventory and supply chain enhancements, and community engagement. Working with local community organizations and retailers to increase the availability of healthful, affordable foods at corner stores; by helping each store improve product selection the project is addressing a host of other health concerns that hinder residents' ability to make the healthy choice. The project will ultimately lead to healthier communities. The Fresh Foods Here project's primary objectives are to increase access to healthy foods, encourage healthy foods consumption and improve customer knowledge of healthy food options. Since 2010, the project has been effective in improving the quality of food offerings at corner stores and small retailers on West Side, with plans to expand to other areas of the city.

The following are resources for additional information:

FFH Executive Summary

[http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh\\_foods\\_here/FFH-Executive-Summary.pdf](http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh_foods_here/FFH-Executive-Summary.pdf)

## FFH Summary Report

[http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh\\_foods\\_here/FFH-Summary-Report.pdf](http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh_foods_here/FFH-Summary-Report.pdf)

## FFH Retail Report Executive Summary

[http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh\\_foods\\_here/FFH-Retail-Research-Executive-Summary-FNL-2.pdf](http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh_foods_here/FFH-Retail-Research-Executive-Summary-FNL-2.pdf)

## FFH Retail Report

[http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh\\_foods\\_here/FFH-Retail-Research-Report-FNL-2.pdf](http://liveunitedcentralohio.org/download/initiatives/fresh_foods_here/FFH-Retail-Research-Report-FNL-2.pdf)

### Additional Case Studies:

Additional examples of grocery store models for accessing healthy food in low-income communities can be found at the Healthy Food Access Portal (<http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/retail-strategies>).

## FOCUS AREA 2: INCREASE COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

### CASE STUDY 1: JUST FOOD, NYC

The Community Food Education (CFE) Program works with NYC communities to facilitate and multiply interactive Food Education Workshops. These workshops teach CSA members, community gardeners, youth, seniors and other community members new, creative cooking skills and storage options, emphasize the direct relationship between wellness and food, provide easy to use nutrition information and explain the value of local foods and sustainable food systems. The CFE program trains volunteers to be Community Chefs and teaches community neighbors how to select, store and preserve fresh produce. They also help people to prepare healthy, delicious and affordable meals that are culturally appropriate. For more information on Just Food's Community Food Education Program, contact Angela Davis, the CFE Program Coordinator by phone at (212) 645-9880 ext. 239 or by email at [Angela@justfood.org](mailto:Angela@justfood.org). Information can also be found online at <http://www.justfood.org/community-food-education>.

### CASE STUDY 2: LOCAL MATTERS, COLUMBUS, OHIO

Local Matters works with community members, partners and stakeholders to improve healthy food education through their Food Matters, Growing Matters and Cooking Matters programs. *Food Matters* is a 24-week food and ecology curriculum (14 & 10-week programs now available) that provides children with an understanding of what healthful food is, where it comes from, how it grows, and how to prepare it. *Growing Matters* is an innovative food production program that provides resources, education and support for partners and community members to create and care for food-production gardens (ranging from container gardens to urban farming). Through a partnership with national nonprofit Share Our Strength, *Cooking Matters* works to end child hunger and obesity by providing the

knowledge and skills for healthy eating to parents and families. With the help of volunteer culinary and nutrition experts, Cooking Matters course participants learn how to select nutritious and low-cost ingredients, and prepare them in ways that provide the best nourishment possible to their families. For additional information on these programs please visit <http://local-matters.org/what-we-do>.

## NEXT STEPS

As a result of the small group meetings, the participants expressed their desire to focus on two of the ideas presented. Future exploration of these ideas will be led by PACT, who will lead the efforts to bring the plans brought forth in the community meetings to fruition with continued engagement of food access working group members and other interested stakeholders. Additional information and updates will be provided online at [www.eastpact.org](http://www.eastpact.org).

Building upon the planning and community engagement initiated over the past year, Local Matters has partnered with Franklin County and the City of Columbus to develop the Franklin County Food Action Plan - an effort to create a stronger, more sustainable local food system. The Franklin County Food Action Plan will focus on:

- improving access to nutritious, affordable food, and education about healthy food
- increasing the role of food in economic development
- preventing food-related waste
- coordination and communication among existing food resources and agencies

The plan, expected to be released in the summer of 2016, will incorporate the input of local food experts and stakeholder groups to develop recommendations that will make it easier for Columbus residents to access nutritious foods. Additional information and updates will be provided online at [www.local-matters.org](http://www.local-matters.org).