The Minneapolis Staple Foods Ordinance: An innovative policy to improve healthy food availability in small food stores

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CREATING A HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM IN MINNEAPOLIS

• Growing interest in community gardens, farmers markets, urban agriculture, and healthy food.
• Increased collaboration between local government, schools, non-profits, neighborhoods, and hospitals.
INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

• Minneapolis Health Department efforts focused in areas with limited access to healthy food and poor health outcomes.

• Improving healthy food availability in:
  • Retail outlets
  • Food shelves
  • Restaurants
  • Schools
  • Worksites
  • Parks
MINNEAPOLIS HEALTHY CORNER STORE PROGRAM

- Provided intensive technical assistance to 35+ stores
- Participating stores saw increased inventory and sales
- Difficult for stores to make and maintain significant changes
- Needed policy approach to achieve widespread, sustainable improvements
THE STAPLE FOODS ORDINANCE

- Originally adopted in 2008
- Set very minimal food standards
- Limited effectiveness due to:
  - Vague and confusing ordinance language
  - Minimal education and training for stores
  - Lack of capacity to rigorously enforce
  - Too many exemptions and loopholes
MULTI-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS

• Policy change required collaboration with:
  • Elected officials
  • City regulatory staff
  • Small business owners and business associations
  • Residents and community groups
  • Academic researchers

• Revised policy needed to be:
  • Easy to monitor and enforce
  • Realistic for a variety of stores
  • Sufficient enough for customers
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

• Internal meetings with regulatory staff, City Council champion, and nutrition researchers to develop draft language
• Industry meetings with small business owners and business associations to gather input
• Outreach to community members and organizations to generate support
• Educational meetings with City Council members to provide details
• Public hearing to solicit feedback
FINAL POLICY LANGUAGE

• Comprehensive food requirements (based on WIC)
• Applied to most food retailers (fewer exemptions)
• Strongly supported by stakeholders, including many small food retailers
• Unanimously adopted by City Council
• Ordinance details can be found at: www.minneapolismn.gov/staplefoods
# IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January - March 2015</td>
<td>Communications with store owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2015 – March 2016</td>
<td>Education, training, and compliance checks without enforcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2016 – ongoing</td>
<td>Education, training, and compliance checks with standard enforcement</td>
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ONGOING STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

• Convening *Community Advisory Committee* to guide implementation and evaluation efforts
• Continuing dialogue with store owners and business associations
• Providing regular trainings to Business Licensing staff and Health inspectors
• Conducting multi-year impact evaluation with University of Minnesota researchers
• Presenting progress reports to City Council
WORKING WITH:
SMALL FOOD RETAILERS

• Successes:
  • Proactive engagement of small businesses
  • Deep understanding of small store culture
  • Early identification of compliance challenges and technical assistance needs

• Challenges:
  • Overcoming stores’ fundamental resistance to more government regulation

• Lessons learned:
  • Highlight evidence of consumer demand
  • Focus on the support and resources available
  • Offer a “no enforcement” transition period
WORKING WITH: REGULATORY STAFF

• Successes:
  • (Initial) willing participation by regulatory staff
  • Productive transfer of knowledge and ideas

• Challenges:
  • Achieving consensus on policy language due to differing priorities

• Lessons learned:
  • Identify and focus on common goals
  • Offer solutions without compromising on proposed standards
WORKING WITH: ACADEMIC RESEARCHERS

• Successes:
  • Capacity to collect baseline data on healthy food availability in at-risk stores
  • Accurate understanding of potential impact of ordinance changes

• Challenges:
  • Balancing rigorous research with flexible implementation

• Lessons learned:
  • Build relationships early to allow for baseline data collection and real-time evaluation
  • Highlight evaluation resources in negotiations with stakeholders