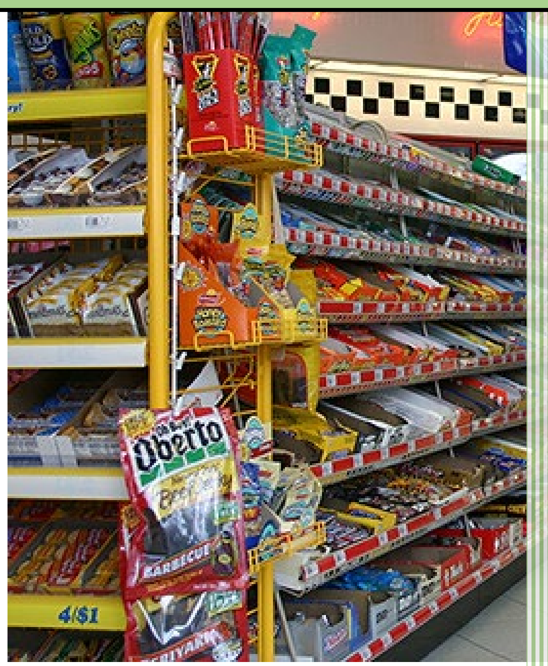
2021

City of Henderson Convenience Stores: Accessing & Providing Healthy Foods



Nevada Institute for Children's Research & Policy

Project REACH

4/1/2021

The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing children's issues in Nevada.

As a research center within the UNLV School of Public Health, NICRP is dedicated to improving the lives of children through research, advocacy, and other specialized services.

NICRP's History: NICRP started in 1998 based on a vision of First Lady Sandy Miller. She wanted an organization that could bring credible research and rigorous policy analysis to problems that confront Nevada's children. But she didn't want to stop there; she wanted to transform that research into meaningful legislation that would make a real difference in the lives of our children.

NICRP's Mission: The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy (NICRP) looks out for Nevada's children. Our mission is to conduct community-based research that will guide the development of programs and services for Nevada's children.

For more information regarding NICRP research and services, please visit our website at: http://www.nic.unlv.edu

NICRP Staff Contributors:

M. Amaris Knight, Ph.D, M.Ed.
Research Analyst

Sierra Spendlove
Research Assistant

Amanda Haboush-Deloye, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy
School of Public Health, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
4700 S. Maryland Parkway, Suite 335
Las Vegas, NV 89119
(702) 895-1040
http://nic.unlv.edu

This report was supported by Cooperative Agreement #NU58DP006578 [Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH)] awarded to the Southern Nevada Health District Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services. The Chronic Disease Prevention Program encourages and supports policies, systems, and environmental change efforts that facilitate and support healthy behaviors and environments.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Henderson is in the process of updating its development code which provides an opportunity to add requirements for new convenience (c-stores) stores. The City of Henderson's definition for convenience stores is defined in the City's development code as, "*a small retail self-service store selling a limited line of fast-moving food and nonfood items, usually with extended hours of operation and usually with a high volume of customer traffic comprised of quick transactions of a small number of items"* (Ord. 3388 § 4.36.010, 2017).

One goal of this project was to determine barriers preventing c-store owners and operators carrying fresh, healthy foods and ways to incentivize more consumers to purchase healthy foods from their stores. As decision-makers for the types of items offered for sale in c-stores, it is important to assess store owners' opinions on potential changes that could be made to the city's zoning code that would encourage or require c-stores to carry or increase the number of healthier fresh and staple foods in their stores. An additional goal of this project was to learn about the types of healthier foods that consumers would like to see offered in c-stores, and use that information to work with the City of Henderson and convenience stores to increase access to healthy foods.

For the purposes of this project, staple foods are defined as: those food items intended for home preparation and consumption, in the four staple food categories: (1) fruits or vegetables, (2) meat, poultry, or fish, (3) dairy products, and (4) breads or cereals.

METHODS

To better understand factors that affect the offering and purchasing of staple healthy foods at c-stores, this project conducted interviews with storeowners and focus groups with Henderson residents in June and July of 2020. To identify factors that affect consumers' ability to purchase staple healthy foods at c-stores, this project also conducted intercept surveys at three unique convenience stores in February of 2021. NICRP staff worked in collaboration with staff from the City of Henderson and the Office of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Southern Nevada Health District to develop questions for both c-store owners and consumers. Each set of questions included information about the types of food typically purchased at c-stores, barriers and facilitators to stocking or purchasing healthy foods, and recommendations for increasing access to healthy foods at c-stores. Copies of questions for both storeowners and consumers can be found in Appendix A. In addition, intercept survey instruments can be found in Appendix C.

RECRUITMENT

Owner Interviews

Fifty-seven locations were identified by City of Henderson staff as convenience stores located within city limits whose input would be valuable for this project. NICRP staff called and emailed individual stores and identified store owners to request participation in a brief virtual interview. Of these, nine stores did not have available working contact information, and one store had closed permanently. Of the seven owners that agreed to participate, only two people confirmed and completed their interviews.

Consumer Focus Groups

Flyers were created targeting Henderson residents that frequent convenience stores. The flyers indicated the time and location of the focus group, the purpose, social distancing guidelines including that masks would be available to participants, and stated that snacks and a $20 gift card would be provided as a thank you for participating. Due to COVID-19, participation in the focus group was restricted to 10 individuals in order to maintain appropriate social distancing. The City of Henderson was responsible for advertising the focus group. The weekend before, if registration was low, NICRP staff were going to distribute flyers in key locations identified by City of Henderson staff, however, by the Friday prior to the focus group, registration had reached 16 potential participants and was sufficient and no additional recruitment was conducted. Participants were asked to RSVP for the focus group by completing an online registration form or calling or emailing staff at NICRP to provide their information. A copy of the recruitment materials can be found in Appendix B.

Consumer Intercept Surveys

To confirm c-store locations at which intercept surveys could occur, the City of Henderson staff contacted various convenience-store owners for permission to survey customers. These particular stores were identified by City of Henderson staff as those that primarily serve REACH priority zip codes. As customers entered or exited the store, they were asked to participate in a brief survey. Participants were offered a free face mask, lip balm, small first aid kits, and hand sanitizer in exchange for their participation in the survey.

PROCEDURES

Owner Interviews

The two storeowners that confirmed a time and date to participate in interviews were provided a link to the Webex virtual platform, hosted by UNLV. Conducting interviews virtually ensured that social distancing and quarantine orders could be properly followed, while allowing for more personal interaction between participants and research staff. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was recorded with permission from participants to ensure all data was captured accurately.

Consumer Focus Groups

The location of the focus group was secured by the City of Henderson staff. Two members of the research team were present during the focus group. Focus group participants were email a confirmation about their registration to the focus group just after registration, sent another email two days prior as a reminder, and a final email the afternoon of the focus group in addition to a reminder phone call. Upon arrival, participants were asked to complete a brief demographic form and were informed that the group discussion would be audio recorded to help staff ensure that all data is captured accurately. The focus group lasted approximately 45 minutes and had four participants.

Consumer Intercept Surveys

Consumer intercept surveys were scheduled at three c-stores located within the City of Henderson. Surveys were conducted over four days in February 2021. Surveys were administered by members of the research team for approximately two to five hours each day in order to gather responses on different weekdays and at different times. While entering or exiting each c-store, customers were asked to complete a brief survey administered on paper. To maximize safety the following COVID-19 protocols were followed: members of the research team wore face masks, those completing the survey all wore face masks, participants stood 6 feet away from staff while taking the survey, participants used a clean pen they were able to keep to take the survey, and the clipboard holding the survey was cleaned with Clorox wipes after each survey.

Data Analysis

Owner Interviews
Interviews were recorded via WebEx, virtual meeting platform, to ensure accurate representation of participants' input. Additionally, NICRP staff present at the interview took notes about responses during the interview process. Information collected through the recordings and notes were organized by question and topic for analysis.

Consumer Focus Groups
Focus groups were audio recorded and reviewed to accurately report participants' thoughts and ideas as presented during the group discussion. This review in addition with notes taken by group facilitators about participants' responses during the discussion were used for analysis.

Consumer Intercept Surveys
Survey responses were entered in to IBM SPSS Statistics software and analyzed by the research team.

RESULTS: Store Owner Interviews

Two owners of convenience stores located within the City of Henderson were interviewed to better understand the current purchasing practices of people who frequent their stores, what barriers and facilitators exist that impact the selling of healthy foods, and what advertising practices can be employed to promote the purchase of healthy foods at their stores. One storeowner represented eight Henderson c-stores, while the other represented one store located in Henderson. However, both participants also represented additional stores located throughout the Las Vegas valley. The following sections provide a breakdown of responses collected from both interviewed storeowners in each of those categories.

CURRENT PURCHASING PRACTICES
Storeowners were asked about what their current customers most frequently purchase from their stores to get a better understanding of consumer demand. Owners indicated a significant shift in the types of items purchased during quarantine versus what was often purchased before COVID-19 prevention measures were put in place. Pre-quarantine, most purchases consisted of products to satisfy "immediate needs" or quick "take-home" items with an average of 7 to 10 items per purchase. However, owners have noticed that more consumers are now switching to purchasing staple, non-perishable items – such as paper goods and canned items.

When asked specifically about food purchases, storeowners noted the following items as those most frequently bought by consumers:

Beverages	**Quick Meals & Snacks**
• Energy Drinks • Water • Beer	• Hot grill items or sandwiches • Fresh fruits • Donuts

Additionally, storeowners were asked about the decision-making process used to determine the types of food and beverage items to keep in stock. Federal standards provide guidelines for the types of merchandise each store needs to stock, especially to be able to accept SNAP cards from consumers and maintain membership in the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS). They also reported the importance of sales, seasonal needs, and customer feedback as primary sales drivers. New items are considered through pilot tests completed by vendor partners.

BARRIERS & FACILITATORS TO HEALTHY FOODS IN STORES

Storeowners were also asked to describe their current offerings of healthy foods available at their stores. Owners described their current stock as including three of the four staple food groups. Fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, and breads and grains were reported to be offered at all stores. However, any meat or fish described was only included in a limited selection of sandwiches or salads. Products highlighted in each of the three stocked categories as well as beverages, include the following:

Fruits & Vegetables	Dairy Products	Breads & Grains	Beverages
• Bananas • Apples • Oranges • Canned vegetables	• Protein drinks • Full line of Anderson dairy products*	• Cereals • Nutrition/Breakfast bars	• Water • Zero calorie drinks • Alkaline water • Isotonics

**Only reported at Green Valley Grocers*

Storeowners also described the moderate sales of healthy foods within their stores, and noted that purchases seem to be increasing. They reported that more people are apt to purchase healthier varieties of their go-to snack foods when larger companies offer those options (i.e., baked vs. fried potato chips). This was attributed to consumers' tendency to opt for brands they are familiar with.

Additionally, storeowners were asked to describe the types of healthy foods that are not currently sold in their stores, but would want to be able to offer to their consumers. One owner mentioned feeling there is no need to provide more healthy options, since they have "different consumers than Whole Foods" and who are often travelling and looking for something quick. However, another owner described the desire to be able to offer consumers a healthy "grab and go" section for packaged produce. This owner also described the need for healthier options to be available to accommodate consumers who stop at convenience stores to charge electric vehicles. When asked about current reasons for not being able to sell healthy foods at their stores, three main categories were mentioned: cost, distributors, and consumer preference.

Cost	Distributors	Consumer Preference
• "Sticker shock" – items priced higher at convenience stores than in grocery stores • Location does not accept EBT • Cost prohibitive for consumers, not store owners	• Will not offer some items to c-stores, since they are smaller and cannot order large quantities • Fresh items spoil quickly	• Low purchase rates of salads and fresh-cut fruit • Preference for items that can be easily consumed while driving

To further understand the effect of cost on a store's decision to offer healthy foods, storeowners were asked to provide additional details about how items are priced and what stores do with food waste.

Cost to Consumer	Cost to Store	Food Waste Practices
• Key deciding factor for what items to purchase • Increased cost yields decreased demand • Fresh items cost more than frozen	• Can only store small quantities, so items cost more from distributors • Difficulty selling out minimum quantities to recoup costs • Many staple food items must be sold below cost	• Foods with guarantee are returned to vendor if spoiled • 10% of fresh food goes to waste • Donated or thrown away*

**One storeowner has a partnership with Three Square to donate unsold food. The other described removing food on the expiration date and throwing away anything spoiled.*

One storeowner described the need for c-stores and vendors to work together to make marketing and operational changes to help facilitate offering more healthy food choices in stores. Many vendors require a minimum purchase quantity of fresh food items that is cost-prohibitive and difficult to store in small c-stores. Additionally, some vendors maintain a weekly schedule for stocking fresh food and removing expired food from stores, even though some items are coded by the local health district to expire in less than one week. Ultimately, this owner described the need for c-stores to provide food options that cater to their nearby and frequent consumers. For stores that are located nearest to office buildings, food options should appeal to the “lunch crowd,” while stores close to freeways can focus more on items easy to eat while travelling.

ADVERTISING HEALTHY FOODS

When asked about ways in which stores currently advertise healthy foods to consumers, both storeowners described following the guidance received from individual vendors. Certain vendors will often provide a featured display for the most popular items, and stores will include promotional information inside stores regarding items currently on sale. Additionally, advertising methods outside of the store – for example, in windows or on screens at gas pumps – focus on name recognition of certain brands or items. One storeowner described the increase of their use of social media to promote information about deals and programs to their potential consumers.

RESULTS: Consumer Focus Groups

One focus group was held on July 13, 2020 with four individuals. The following section provides an overview of participant demographics and a breakdown of the responses provided during the focus groups for the questions asked.

FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants were asked to complete a 13-question demographic form at the start of the focus group. Demographic questions asked about the participant’s age, gender, race/ethnicity, level of education, and a few questions about their grocery shopping preferences. The participants include two females (50%) and two males (50%), between the ages of 50 and 60, who all identified as white with one also identifying as Hispanic. All participants had at least some college experience, and most (75%) had an annual household income over $80,000.

All of the participants’ indicated that the most important factors when shopping for food included price, quality, and product selection, all participants use a car when shopping for groceries, and all participants indicated they shop at neighborhood markets or grocery stores outside of their neighborhood. Finally, when asked what type of stores they want to see offer healthy foods in their neighborhood, all participants indicated a grocery store, and a farmers’ market, with one participant also indicating a convenience store.

MEANING OF EATING HEALTHY

Participants explained that eating healthy includes fresh fruits and vegetables or having anything fresh, food items that are not processed, and to have a meal that is well balanced (proteins, carbs, vegetables).

TYPICAL MEALS

Participants were varied in the types of food that are most often eaten at home. Some indicated that they always try to have some type of meat and fresh vegetable and try to avoid carbohydrates. Others preferred to have more ethnic food such as Cuban, Italian, and/or Mexican food, and meals included rice and pasta. Some did indicate they attempted to eat a lighter meal for dinner such as salad.

ACCESS TO FOOD

The participants in the group did not seem to have many issues with accessing their desired foods. It was common among all participants that to get the food they desired they often had to travel to several different grocery stores, however, they all owned a car so expressed it was not an inconvenience.

SHOPPING AT CONVENIENCE STORES

The participants in the focus group did not use convenience stores as a place to do regular grocery shopping, and did not often frequent convenience stores. They indicated that they most used convenience stores when stopping to get snacks to go out of town, stopping for ice, drinks, or to use the ATM. The participants said they did not think of the convenience store as a healthy place to shop or a place to shop in general for regular grocery store items. Participants indicated that they would get some items there if it was an emergency, such as milk or eggs, because in general these food items were more expensive at the convenience store. In addition, they had to use a regular grocery store for other needs so did not have a need to purchase items such as milk or eggs on a regular basis from the convenience store.

When asked if they would purchase fresh fruits or vegetables from a convenience store on a regular basis, most indicated that they would only make these purchases if it was an emergency. They also indicated that their perception of a convenience store is not to obtain healthy food and said that because of the look of the displays, they would tend to question the freshness of the items.

When asked if they would prefer to purchase single serve fresh meals from a convenience store, some indicated that if they were stopping in for a quick meal just for themselves then they would consider it, but not for the family. They also indicated at that point, the prices were not a factor as they expect to pay more at a convenience store, prices are similar to fast food, and it is not a regular habit to shop for meals at this location so the prices for meals were not a problem.

RESULTS: Consumer Intercept Surveys

INTERCEPT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

A total of 88 surveys were collected across the three convenient store location.

Table 1. Location of C-Stores (N=88)

C-STORE LOCATION	N	%
American Pacific – Green Valley Grocery	29	33.0%
Boulder Highway – Green Valley Grocery	29	33.0%
Boulder Highway – Vegas Valley Mart	30	34.0%

Of the 88 individuals who completed the survey, more than half (61.4%) were between the ages of 35 and 64. Respondents were also mostly male, Caucasian, and currently residing within the City of Henderson. To determine household financial and food security status, respondents were asked whether they ate less than they felt they should in the past month because there was not enough money for food, and to choose a statement that best described their level of financial security. Three quarters of respondents indicated they were not food insecure, and over half (54.6%) indicated they were either financially very comfortable or able to make ends meet without much difficulty.

Table 2. Survey Respondent Demographics (N=88)

AGE	N	%
18 to 24	8	9.1%
25 to 34	15	17.0%
35-49	27	30.7%
50-64	27	30.7%
65+	10	11.4%
Missing	1	1.1%

GENDER	N	%
Male	57	64.8%
Female	28	31.8%
Missing	3	3.4%

PLACE OF RESIDENCE	N	%
Henderson, NV	56	63.6%
Las Vegas, NV	16	18.2%
Boulder City, NV	3	3.4%
Out of State	3	3.4%
Pahrump, NV	1	1.1%
North Las Vegas, NV	1	1.1%
Missing	8	9.1%

RACE/ETHNICITY	N	%
African American/Black	10	11.4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1	1.1%
Asian	0	0.0%
Caucasian	51	58.0%
Hispanic	12	13.6%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	2.3%
Multiracial	6	6.8%
Other	4	4.5%
Prefer Not to Answer	2	2.3%

FOOD SECURITY	N	%
Ate Less, Not Enough Money for Food	19	21.6%
Did Not Eat Less, Enough Money for Food	66	75.0%
Missing	3	3.4%

FINANCIAL SECURITY	N	%
Very Comfortable and Secure	30	34.0%
Able to Make Ends Meet	18	20.5%
Occasionally Have Some Difficulty	19	21.6%
Tough, But Keeping My Head Above Water	13	14.8%
In Over My Head	5	5.7%
Missing	3	3.4%

SHOPPING AT CONVENIENCE STORES

When asked about the frequency of their visits to convenience stores, almost half (46.6%) indicated shopping there daily. The convenient location of these stores was cited as the most relevant factor (71.6%) for choosing to shop there.

Table 3. Frequency and Reasons for Shopping at Convenience Stores (N=88)

FREQUENCY OF SHOPPING	N	%
Daily	41	46.6%
Several Times Per Week	30	34.0%
Once Per Week	8	9.1%
Several Times Per Month	4	4.6%
Less Than Once Per Month	4	4.6%
Missing	1	1.1%

REASONS FOR SHOPPING	N	%
Convenient Location	63	71.6%
Time	13	14.8%
Variety of Products	11	12.5%
Missing	8	9.1%
Other	0	0.0%

Note: Respondents could select more than one response, therefore total percentages may equal more than 100%

To better understand the shopping habits of those who frequently visit convenience stores, respondents were asked about the type of goods they typically purchase during their visits, as well as what they would like to see more of in the future. The most frequently purchased goods reported by respondents were snack foods (67.0%), tobacco products (47.7%), alcoholic drinks (37.5%), and non-alcoholic drinks (37.5%) (see Table 5).

Table 4. Types of Goods and Products Purchased at Convenience Stores (N=88)

PRODUCTS PURCHASED AT C-STORES	N	%
Snack Foods	59	67.0%
Tobacco Products	42	47.7%
Alcoholic Drinks	33	37.5%
Non-Alcoholic Drinks	33	37.5%
Sweets (Baked Goods or Candy)	30	34.1%
Dairy Products	29	33.0%
Fresh Fruits or Vegetables	18	20.5%
Bread, Grains, Pasta, Flour, Etc.	12	13.6%
Toiletries	11	12.5%
Over-The-Counter Medicines	8	9.1%
Newspapers and Magazines	6	6.8%
Poultry, Meat, Fish, Etc.	4	4.5%
Other *(specified as gas, ice, and pet food)*	3	3.4%
None of These	2	2.3%
Missing	0	0.0%

Note: Respondents could select more than one response, therefore total percentages may equal more than 100%

Since snack foods translate to mostly processed and pre-packaged goods, it was important to determine whether respondents were interested in purchasing healthier options at convenience stores. The most popular items that respondents would like to see or purchase include fresh food items (vegetables and fruits) (37.5%), dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, etc.) (33.0%), and unprocessed food and snacks (29.5%) (see table 6).

Table 6. Foods Respondents Would Like to See or Buy at A Convenience Store (N=88)

FOODS RESPONDENTS WOULD LIKE AT C-STORE	N	%
Fresh Food Items (Vegetables and Fruits)	33	37.5%
Dairy Products (Milk, Cheese, Yogurt, Butter, Etc.)	29	33.0%
Unprocessed Food and Snacks	26	29.5%
Bread, Grains, Pasta, Flour, Etc.	21	23.9%
Poultry, Meat, Fish, Etc.	15	17.0%
Cultural Foods *(specifically, "more hot food")*	5	5.7%
Other *(specified as bacon & eggs, frozen meals, wine, and pet food)*	6	6.8%
Missing	8	9.1%

Note: Respondents could select more than one response, therefore total percentages may equal more than 100%

Additionally, the majority of respondents (67.0%) indicated they would be willing to pay slightly more for these healthier options, and that they would be more likely to purchase single serve, premade fresh foods (56.9%) if they were offered at a convenience store (see Table 7).

Table 7. Respondents Willing to Pay Slightly More for Preferred Foods (N=88)

RESPONDENTS WILLING TO PAY MORE	N	%
Yes	59	67.0%
No	22	25.0%
Missing	7	8.0%

Table 8. Foods Respondents Would Purchase More Frequently If Available (N=88)

FOODS RESPONDENTS WOULD PURCHASE IF AVAILABLE	N	%
Single Serve, Premade Fresh Foods (e.g., Premade Salad)	43	48.9%
Fresh Food Ingredients (e.g., Ingredients to Make a Salad)	26	29.5%
Both	7	8.0%
Missing	12	13.6%

ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Lastly, respondents were asked about their challenges in accessing healthy or fresh foods for themselves or their family. The most common barriers reported include the lack of these items at convenience stores (34.1%) and the high cost of health/fresh foods (22.7%) (see Table 9).

Table 9. Reasons Respondents Cannot Access Healthy or Fresh Foods (N=88)

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTHY OR FRESH FOODS	N	%
Not Offered at Convenience Stores	30	34.1%
Costs Too Much	20	22.7%
Lack of Access to Transportation	10	11.4%
Location(s) Do Not Accept SNAP/EBT	3	3.4%
Not Interested	16	18.2%
Other	2	2.2%
Not Applicable – I Can Access Healthy Foods	16	18.2%
Missing	3	3.4%

Note: Respondents could select more than one response, therefore total percentages may equal more than 100%

DISCUSSION

Convenience store owners recognized the importance of providing healthy food options, but also described the necessity of catering to the demands of each store's primary population of consumers. Recommendations from storeowners include the increase of "grab and go" bundles that include both fresh and healthier staple or snack items, so that offerings are not restrictive and can appeal to more people. One storeowner provided additional information about changes to c-store products and consumers since the beginning of the COVID-19 quarantine orders in March of 2020. For those without the ability to travel outside their neighborhood or use public transportation, c-stores became a "filler" for consumers looking to purchase small quantities of grocery items, including rice, flour, and yeast. Overall, the cost of healthy foods – to both the storeowner and consumer – is a major contributing factor in the decision of what items to stock. Minimum quantity requirements from vendors, limited storage space, and the quick expiration dates of fresh foods present challenges to increasing the offering of fresh and healthy staple food items. Ultimately, storeowners expressed the desire to work with the city, local health departments, researchers, and vendors to brainstorm and pilot test ways to provide healthier food options to their consumers.

Participants in the focus groups greatly appreciated the opportunity to contribute their experiences and opinions regarding convenience store items. Much of the feedback given determined that the participants of this focus group did not use convenience stores as a place to do regular grocery shopping and due to their perceptions of convenience stores, would not likely think of them as a place to do this even if the inventory changed. The image of a convenience store would need to be altered to that of a small neighborhood market with a redesign of the store in order for these participants to use them on a more regular basis. However, even with this redesign approach, it seems unlikely all their shopping would be conducted there as currently all the participants shop at multiple stores to meet their grocery needs.

Lastly, intercept survey respondents generally reported interest in healthier options offered at convenience stores, with the majority of survey participants stating that they would be willing to pay slightly more for their preferred food items. As the most commonly reported barrier to accessing healthy food items was a lack of availability in convenience stores, offering healthier options in c-stores may offer opportunities to increase access to healthy food and encourage increased purchases from consumers. Nearly half of survey respondents shopping at convenience stores daily, and most commonly reported purchasing snack foods, tobacco products, and alcoholic drinks. However, survey respondents also reported wanting to see or buy fresh food such as fruits and vegetables at c-stores, and would be more likely to purchase single serve, premade fresh foods if they were offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a few limitations to this study. First, participants who chose to attend the focus groups, participate in interviews held, or complete intercept surveys for this study may potentially be more interested in health-related topics than those who chose not to sign up. In group settings, participants may choose not to contribute as much feedback or engage in the conversation in comparison to a setting where they were asked questions in confidence, and researchers have less control over the conversations in the room and the data produced by them (Gibbs, 1997). In addition, individuals who were interested in attending may not have had the means to transport themselves to the focus group or the focus group time was not convenient. Second, many individuals may have been hesitant to attend an in-person focus group, regardless of the safety practices followed in the focus group due to fear of transmission of COVID-19. Finally, even though there were 16 people who signed up for the focus group, the attrition rate was very extreme in that only 4 individuals participated. Additionally, while there were eight stores represented by those who participated in owner interviews, only two individuals provided their feedback, limiting the scope of opinions and experiences represented. Therefore, the sample size is very low. Research looking at the effectiveness of focus group data collection found that conclusions can be drawn from targeted populations that participated in focus groups but cannot be generalized to the entire population (Bradley, Jorgensen &

Robert, 2014). Due to limits on time, this was the only focus group that was held, and the only method used to collect data from the community. Future efforts could include hosting additional focus groups in more targeted locations in order to increase attendance from individuals who more frequent convenience stores. In regard to intercept surveys conducted, individuals may have been hesitant to complete the survey if they did not have time to participate or due to fear of transmission of COVID-19. Because survey responses were collected at a total of three c-stores, the scope of opinions and experiences represented may also be limited. In the future, surveys could potentially be distributed electronically to storeowners to encourage more individuals who shop at various c-store locations to provide their input at a time that is most convenient for them.

NEXT STEPS- HEALTHY CORNER STORE INITIATIVE

The City of Henderson has decided to move forward with the information gathered from these efforts to implement another project, implementing a pilot program of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative. In 2004, The Food Trust piloted the Healthy Corner Store Initiative to motivate youth and adults to purchase healthier items through classroom education and direct marketing in the corner stores. The initiative has grown dramatically since 2010 in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health's Get Healthy Philly initiative, with additional support from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Representative Dwight Evans, the Philadelphia Department of Commerce, the AstraZeneca HealthCare Foundation and the Jefferson Center for Urban Health.

The Healthy Corner Store Initiative works to increase the availability and awareness of healthy foods in corner stores through a multifaceted approach including:

- Increasing store capacity to sell and market healthy items in order to improve healthy options in communities
- Training and offering technical assistance to store owners to provide the skills to make healthy changes profitable
- Marketing healthy messages to youth and adults to encourage healthy eating choices
- Hosting in-store community nutrition education lessons
- Educating youth in schools near targeted corner stores to reinforce healthy messages and provide nutrition education
- Linking corner store owners to community partners, local farmers and fresh food suppliers to create and sustain healthy corner stores.

The City believes implementing such a program could spur convenience stores being more aware of the need to carry fresh and healthy food. The City will seek to partner with a local convenience store chain to implement the Healthy Corner Store Initiative. The City of Henderson received funding from the Southern Nevada Health District to implement this initiative and expects to pilot this program in early 2022.

REFERENCES

Bradely, M., Jordensen, S., Robert, K. (2014). Greater Nashua Community Health Assessment Focus Group Summary Report. *City of Nashua Division of Public Health and Community Services.*[PDF file] Retrieved from https://www.nashuanh.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2513/2014-Focus-Group-Summary-Report-PDF?bidId=

Gibbs, A. (1997). Focus groups. *Social research update*, *19*(8), 1-8.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW & FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Annotated Agenda for City of Henderson
C-Store Fresh Foods Focus Group
Meeting with Operators (Updated May 26th, 2020)

Purpose: The City of Henderson is in the process of updating its zoning code which provides an opportunity to add requirements for new convenience (c-stores) stores. The goal of this interview is to identify barriers that prevent c-store operators from carrying fresh, healthy foods as well as staple foods, and how to incentivize more consumers to purchase healthy foods from c-stores. As a c-store operator we are asking you to provide your opinion on changes that can be made to the zoning code that would encourage or require a c-store to carry or increase the number of healthier fresh and stable foods in their store, ultimately increasing access to healthier food for City of Henderson residents.

For the purpose of this interview, staple foods are defined as: those food items intended for home preparation and consumption, in the four staple food categories: (1) fruits or vegetables, (2) meat, poultry, or fish, (3) dairy products, and (4) breads or cereals.

1. Opening Remarks (5 min)

Hi! My name is ___________, I work at ______. We are asking you today about fresh food and staple foods in convenience stores. Your input will help the City of Henderson further explore existing conditions and realistic goals.

2. Interview Questions:

- In general, what are people coming into your store to purchase? What are the top 3/5 most sold food items at your store?
- How does your store decide what merchandise to bring into the store?
- What kinds of healthy foods do you currently sell at your store?
- How well do healthier foods sell at your store?
- What kinds of healthy foods would you like to sell at your store, but currently do not?
- What are some reasons you're not currently able to sell these foods?
    - Cost too high for store
    - Cost too high for consumer
    - Not enough available from supplier
    - Not enough demand from consumer
    - Not enough space in store
    - Other
- Does your store have capacity to store and sell (more) fresh produce?
    - If no, what are the barriers and what would your store need in order to sell more fresh produce (equipment, supplies, etc.)?
- Is price point of sale to the consumer an important factor when considering fresh food and staple food options in your store?
- Is cost to the store of supplying an important factor when considering fresh food and staple food options in your store?
- If your store is concerned about food waste/lost profit, would your store consider donating food about to expire to local food pantries?
    - If yes, what would you need to make that happen?
- How does your store decide what to advertise?
    - What display inside the store (i.e. to put on end caps of aisles)?
    - What to display in windows or circulars outside the store?
- What barriers might prevent you from increasing advertising for healthier foods inside and outside of your store?
    - Cost of developing signage
    - Lack of location for posting signage
    - Corporate restrictions
    - Other

4. Closing Remarks and Next Steps (5 min)

- Thank you for participating, your input is greatly appreciated. This information will be used to help the City of Henderson update their current development code as it pertains to convenience stores. If you would like to be updated on the progress of this process, please let the interviewer know.

Annotated Agenda for City of Henderson
C-Store Fresh Foods Focus Group
Meeting with General Public (Updated May 26th, 2020)

Purpose: The City of Henderson is in the process of updating its zoning code which provides an opportunity to add requirements for new convenience (c-stores) stores. The City of Henderson's definition for convenience stores is defined in the Cities development code as, "*a small retail self-service store selling a limited line of fast-moving food and nonfood items, usually with extended hours of operation and usually with a high volume of customer traffic comprised of quick transactions of a small number of items"* The goal of the focus group is to identify barriers that prevent c-store operators from carrying fresh, healthy foods as well as staple foods, and how to incentivize more consumers to purchase healthy foods from c-stores. We've invited you here today to learn about the types of healthier foods you'd like to see offered in convenience stores and use that information to work with convenience stores to increase access to healthy foods at convenience stores.

For the purpose of these focus groups, staple foods are defined as: those food items intended for home preparation and consumption, in the four staple food categories: (1) fruits or vegetables, (2) meat, poultry, or fish, (3) dairy products, and (4) breads or cereals.

1. Opening Remarks (5 min)

Welcome, everyone. My name is ____________, I work at ______. As you know, this focus group is to discuss getting more fresh food and staple foods in convenience stores. Your input today will help the City of Henderson better understand what consumers are looking for from convenience stores.

2. Introductions (15 min)

Let's go around the table. Please introduce yourself to the group and tell us:

- Your name
- Ice breaker question: Favorite food to cook? If you don't cook, just favorite food to eat?

3. Food Choice & Access Questions:

- What does eating healthy mean to you?
- What foods do you and your family eat regularly?
- Please share what types of foods you would like to eat but cannot because of lack of access.
  - If none, is there any issue with food quality?
- Can you get the type of food you'd like to eat easily?
  - If no, what are the barriers that keep you from accessing the food you'd like to eat?
- How often do you shop at convenience stores?
  - Daily
  - More than once per week, but not everyday
  - Once per week
  - More than once per month, but not every week
  - Once per month
  - Less often than once per month
- If so, what type of goods and products do you buy there?
- Would you buy fresh food and staple food if they were more available at convenience stores?
  - If yes, what fresh and staple food would you be most likely to purchase from a convenience store?
  - If no, why not?

- Would you be willing to pay slightly (around a dollar) more for fresh foods at convenience stores?
- Would you prefer single serve, premade fresh meals and snacks or just the raw foods?

4. Closing Remarks and Next Steps (5 min)

- Thank you for participating, please feel free to take more snacks and don't leave before receiving a small gift of appreciation from the City of Henderson.

APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

What's for Sale?

Come tell us about the types of products that YOU want at your local Henderson convenience store!

A Place To Call Home

When Monday, July 13, 2020 from 7:00 to 8:00PM

Where Black Mountain Recreation Center
599 Greenway Rd. Henderson, NV 89015

Groups will be limited to 10 individuals to abide by current social distancing guidelines.

Activities for a limited number of children will be available. Must RSVP to reserve spots.

Every participant receives a $20 gift card and refreshments will be provided.

Must be at least 18 years old and live in Henderson.

To participate, RSVP online at bit.ly/cohfg or scan

Questions?
Ask M.Amaris Knight at
m.amaris.knight@unlv.edu
or call 702-895-1040

Nevada Institute For Children's Research & Policy
NICRP

SNHD
Southern Nevada Health District

This project is supported by the Grant or Cooperative Agreement Number, 1NU58DP006578-01, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.

APPENDIX C: INTERCEPT SURVEY INSTRUMENT – ENGLISH AND SPANISH

City of Henderson Convenience Store Survey

The City of Henderson is conducting a survey of convenience store customers to identify shopping practices and barriers that prevent c-store operators from carrying fresh, healthy foods as well as staple foods, and how to incentivize more consumers to purchase healthy foods from c-stores. Your responses to this survey will remain confidential. Thank you for sharing your feedback.

1) How often do you shop at convenience stores?

☐ Daily ☐ Several times per week ☐ Once per week
☐ Several times per month ☐ Once per month ☐ Less often than once per month

2) What type of goods and products do you purchase at a convenience store? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, etc.)
☐ Bread, grains, pasta, flour, etc.
☐ Snack foods
☐ Alcoholic drinks
☐ Sweets (baked goods or candy)
☐ Toiletries
☐ Fresh fruits or vegetables
☐ Poultry, meat, fish, etc.
☐ Tobacco products
☐ Non-alcoholic drinks
☐ Over-the-counter medicines
☐ Newspapers and magazines
☐ Other (please specify): ________________________________
☐ None of these

3) Why did you choose to stop at a convenience store for this purchase, rather than a supermarket or other type of store?

☐ Convenient location ☐ Variety of products ☐ Time ☐ Other (please specify): ________________

4) Which of the following foods would you like to see or buy at a convenience store? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Fresh food items (vegetables and fruits)
☐ Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, etc.)
☐ Bread, grains, pasta, flour, etc.
☐ Poultry, meat, fish, etc.
☐ Unprocessed food and snacks
☐ Cultural foods, such as: ________________________________
☐ Other (please specify): ________________________________

5) Would you be willing to pay slightly more to be able to the foods you marked above at a convenience store?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6) Which would you purchase more frequently if regularly available at convenience stores?

☐ Single serve, premade fresh foods (e.g. premade salad) ☐ Fresh food ingredients (e.g. ingredients to make a salad)

7) If you cannot access healthy or fresh foods, what are the barriers that keep you from doing so? (Check all that apply.)

☐ Not offered at convenience stores
☐ Lack of access to transportation
☐ Location(s) do not accept SNAP/EBT
☐ Costs too much
☐ Not interested
☐ Other (please specify): ________________________________
☐ Not applicable – I can access fresh and healthy foods

The following questions are for classification purposes only.

8) What is your age?

☐ 18 – 24 ☐ 25 - 34 ☐ 35 – 49 ☐ 50 – 64 ☐ 65+ ☐ Prefer not to answer

9) What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to answer

10) What is your Zip Code?

____

11) What is your race/ethnicity?

☐ African American/Black ☐ Caucasian/White ☐ Other (please specify): ________________________________
☐ American Indian/Alaska Native ☐ Hispanic ☐ Prefer not to answer
☐ Asian ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

12) In the last 30 days, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there was not enough money for food?

☐ Yes ☐ No

13) Which of the following best describes (your/your household's) financial condition?

☐ Very comfortable and secure
☐ Able to make ends meet without much difficulty
☐ Occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet
☐ Tough to make ends meet but keeping my head above water
☐ In over my head

Encuesta de Tiendas de Conveniencia de la Ciudad de Henderson

La Ciudad de Henderson está realizando una encuesta a los clientes de las tiendas de tiendas de conveniencia para identificar la practicas de compra y las barreras que impiden que los operadores de las tiendas C ofrezcan alimentos frescos y saludables, así como alimentos básicos, y cómo incentivar a los consumidores a que compren alimentos saludables en las tiendas C. Sus respuestas a esta encuesta serán confidenciales. Gracias por compartir sus comentarios.

1) ¿Con qué frecuencia compra en tiendas de conveniencia?

- ❑ Diario
- ❑ Varias veces a la semana
- ❑ Una vez a la semana
- ❑ Varias veces al mes
- ❑ Una vez al mes
- ❑ Menos de una vez al mes

2) ¿Qué tipo de productos compra en una tienda de conveniencia? (Marque todo lo que aplique)

- ❑ Productos Lácteos (leche, queso, yogurt, mantequilla, etc.)
- ❑ Pan, granos, pasta, harina, etc.
- ❑ Antojitos
- ❑ Bebidas Alcohólicas
- ❑ Dulces (productos horneados o dulces)
- ❑ Artículos de aseo
- ❑ Fruta fresca o vegetales
- ❑ Pollo, carne, pescado, etc.
- ❑ Productos de tabaco
- ❑ Bebidas no alcohólicas
- ❑ Medicina sin receta
- ❑ Periódicos y revistas
- ❑ Otro (por favor especifique): ___________________
- ❑ Ninguno de los anteriores

3) ¿Por qué eligió pasar por una tienda de conveniencia para esta compra, en lugar de un supermercado u otro tipo de tienda?

- ❑ Ubicacion conveniente
- ❑ Variedad de productos
- ❑ Tiempo
- ❑ Otra (por favor especifique): __________________

4) ¿Cuál de los siguientes alimentos le gustaría ver o comprar en una tienda de conveniencia? (Marque todo lo que aplique)

- ❑ Alimentos frescos (vegetales y frutas)
- ❑ Productos lácteos (leche, queso, yogurt, mantequilla, etc.)
- ❑ Pan, granos, pasta, harina, etc.
- ❑ Pollo, carne, pescado, etc.
- ❑ Comida sin procesar y antojos
- ❑ Comidas culturales, como: ________________________________
- ❑ Otros (por favor especifique): ________________________________

5) ¿Estaría dispuesto a pagar un poco más para poder comprar los alimentos que marco anteriormente en una tienda de conveniencia?

- ❑ Si
- ❑ No

6) ¿Cuál compraría con más frecuencia si estuviera disponible regularmente en tiendas de conveniencia?

- ❑ Porción individual, comida preparada (ej. Ensalada preparada)
- ❑ Ingredientes de comida fresca (ej. Ingredientes para hacer ensalada)

7) Si no puede acceder a alimentos saludables y frescos, ¿ Cuáles son las barreras que se lo impiden? (Marque todo lo que aplique)

- ❑ No se ofrece en tiendas de conveniencia
- ❑ Falta de acceso o transporte
- ❑ Las ubicaciones no aceptan SNAP/EBT
- ❑ Cuesta mucho
- ❑ No estoy interesado
- ❑ Otras (por favor especifique): _________________________
- ❑ No aplica – Tengo acceso a comida fresca y saludable

Las siguientes preguntas son solo para propósitos de clasificación.

8) ¿Cuál es su edad?

- ❑ 18 – 24
- ❑ 25 - 34
- ❑ 35 – 49
- ❑ 50 – 64
- ❑ 65+
- ❑ Prefiero no contestar

9) ¿Cuál es su genero?

- ❑ Masculino
- ❑ Femenino
- ❑ Otro
- ❑ Prefiero no contestar

10) ¿Cuál es su código postal?

____

11) ¿Cual es su raza/etnia?

- ❑ Afroamericano/Negro
- ❑ Indio Americano/Nativo de Alaska
- ❑ Asiatico
- ❑ Caucásico/Blanco
- ❑ Hispano
- ❑ Nativo hawaiano/Isleño del Pacifico
- ❑ Otro (por favor especifique): _______________________
- ❑ Prefiero no contestar

12) En los últimos 30 días, ¿alguna vez comió menos de lo que sintió que debía haber comido por falta de dinero para comida?

- ❑ Si
- ❑ No

13) ¿Cuál de las siguientes mejor describe su situación financiera (la suya o la de su hogar)?

- ❑ Muy cómoda y segura
- ❑ Capaz de llegar a fin de mes sin mucha dificultad
- ❑ Ocasionalmente tengo dificultad para llegar a fin de mes
- ❑ Es difícil llegar al fin del mes apenas con la cabeza sobre el agua
- ❑ Es demasiada carga para mi