

# Lessons learned in financing food projects

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In the realm of food policy, financing programs are under way at the local, state and national levels to incentivize healthy food retail development in communities classified as “underserved.” Credit: Paula Burch-Celentano

Cities and states are creating financial incentives for food stores to open in areas without access to adequate healthy, fresh food. And now a recent study gives guidance on implementing effective food retail programs to improve community health.

The study, authored by staff at The Food Trust and the Prevention Research Center at Tulane University, is published in the *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice*.

"Bringing communities [fresh food](#) retail access should be done thoughtfully and strategically to maximize the potential for both access

to fresh [healthy food](#) and economic development," said Kate Parker, former assistant director of the Prevention Research Center and an author on the study while at Tulane. "This paper, we hope, provides some insight, though we look forward to learning from other communities ways to accomplish these goals."

The Food Trust was instrumental in the New Orleans Fresh Food Retailer Initiative, which has supported three [food](#) retail projects since its 2011 launch. The loan program requires new food stores to serve areas that lack access to fresh, healthy foods.

"Here at The Food Trust, many people have asked us, 'How do I know if my food retail project qualifies as serving an area of need?'" said Julia Koprak, program manager at The Food Trust and a study author.

The paper establishes criteria for applicants, specifically that they must serve lower-income communities and align with community needs. To determine what areas lack healthy foods, incentive programs should rely on data on market areas and demographics using local research. In New Orleans, officials used local food store research from the Prevention Research Center, which is part of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

The framework outlined in the paper has broader implications, too.

"We hope to inform those who are struggling to identify areas most in need of fresh food retail and also hope that the methods described in this paper will be useful for other types of place-based programs to improve health and revitalize communities," Koprak said.

**More information:** "Moving From Policy to Implementation: A Methodology and Lessons Learned to Determine Eligibility for Healthy Food Financing Projects." Harries, Caroline MRP, AICP; Koprak, Julia

BA; Young, Candace MS; Weiss, Stephanie MPH; Parker, Kathryn M. MPH, PhD; Karpyn, Allison PhD. *Journal of Public Health Management & Practice*, 3 March 2014. [DOI: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000000061](https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000000061)

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