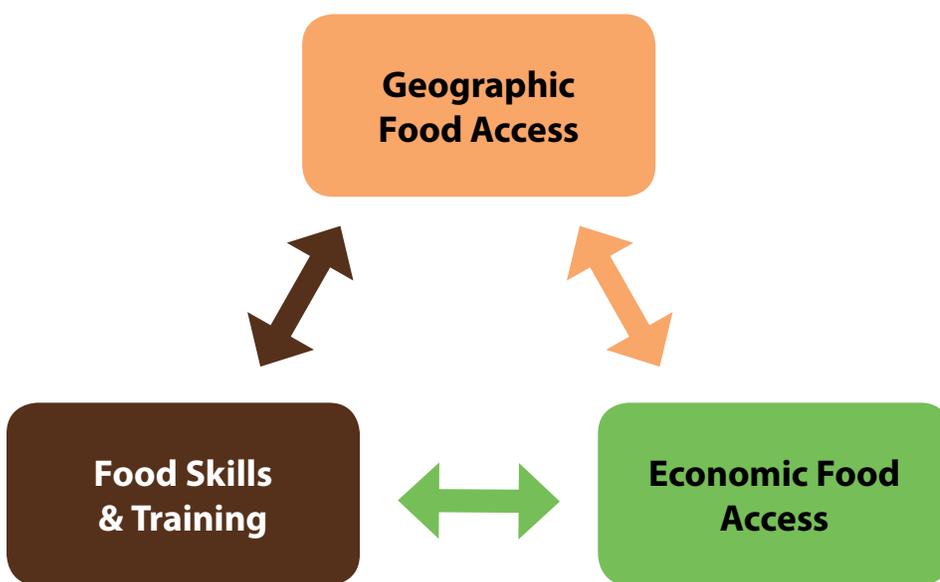


Downtown Winnipeg Community Food Assessment



With the closure of three grocery stores in the past two years, the food landscape of downtown Winnipeg has changed dramatically. Access to healthy, affordable foods has plunged, forcing downtown residents to rely on stores with fewer healthy options, pay more for food, and travel long distances to access the food they need. However, downtown's food challenges go well beyond geographic considerations. Many people live with limited incomes and face economic barriers to accessing food. As a consequence, hunger and poor nutrition are an unfortunate reality for some downtown residents. In addition, many families and individuals have developed an increased dependence on processed and fast foods as a result of busy schedules and trying to find quick and easy ways to eat meals. The Downtown Community Food Assessment (CFA) assessed these barriers and challenges, identified existing resources and assets, and developed recommendations.

The Key Challenges for Food Security Downtown



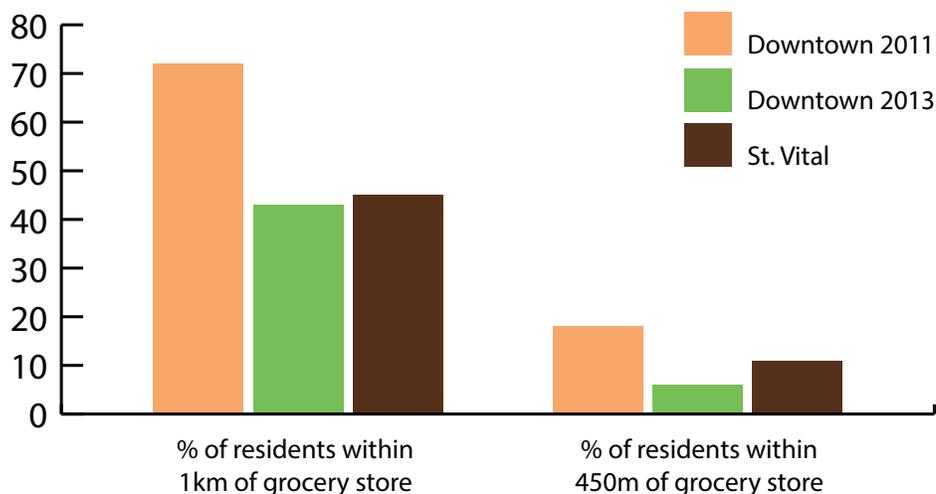
Community food security is a "situation in which all community residents obtain safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."

- Hamm & Bellows, 2003



Geographic Food Access

Access to affordable healthy food was identified as the top priority for downtown residents. With the closure of three grocery stores downtown – Extra Foods, Riediger’s Supermarket, and Zellers – in recent years, downtown now has few full-service grocery stores.



“Since Zellers closed I have to take the bus to the nearest full-service grocery store. It costs more so I can’t carry very many groceries at a time so it has become quite a challenge trying to get everything I need.”

- Downtown Resident

DOWNTOWN FACTS:

Downtown is a bustling community. Not only do **30,000** people call downtown home, but **70,000** workers and **16,000** students travel to downtown every weekday - **17%** of Winnipeg. These **116,000** residents, workers, and students spend around **\$350 million** on groceries annually, yet only **15-20%** of this stays downtown. The rest – **\$297.5 million** – is lost to large supermarkets outside of downtown.

Why does increased distance to a grocery store matter?

- Loss of economic investment in downtown
- Higher costs associated with public transportation, taxis, and grocery delivery charges
- Increased reliance on convenience stores and fast food restaurants
- Less frequent shopping trips leads to a preference for frozen, canned, and prepared foods
- Fewer opportunities for social interactions within the downtown community

What can be done to increase geographic access to fresh, healthy food?

- Establish a full-service grocery store downtown.
- Establish a year-round fresh food market that prioritizes local food sources and vendors.
- Expand existing grocery store shuttles and increase awareness of the services available.
- Identify and develop additional garden plots.
- Develop a Healthy Corner Store initiative to increase access to fresh, healthy food.
- Expand existing bus routes in order to include stops at grocery stores.

Economic Food Access

The **Public Health Agency of Canada** recognizes that one of the major reasons food insecurity exists is due to low income and financial insecurity. The Downtown CFA looked at a variety of measures to understand the economic situation in which downtown residents find themselves.

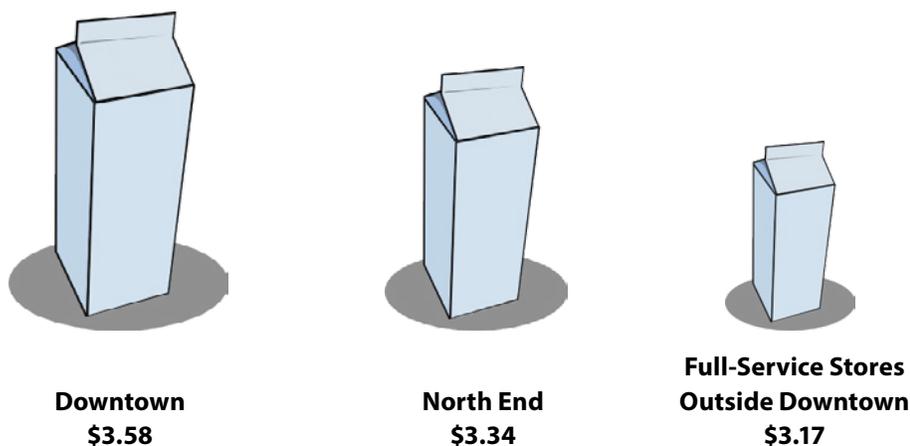
Market Basket Measure:

- In 2005, a family of four in Winnipeg needed \$24,415 to maintain a “modest, basic standard of living” but the median household income for downtown was \$18,802.

Milk Prices:

Milk is one of the basic staples that all, particularly young families, rely on for a healthy diet.

- In Downtown that average price of a 2-litre container of 2% milk was \$3.58, higher than prices in surrounding grocery stores outside of downtown and higher than other inner city neighbourhoods.



What can be done to increase economic access to fresh, healthy food?

- Increase the minimum wage and economic and income assistance in order to ensure that individuals have an adequate income in order to be able to afford basic necessities such as food, housing, clothing, and transportation.
- Encourage development of housing that is affordable and meets the needs of the population of Winnipeg.
- Promote access to affordable, healthy, fresh food by becoming a drop-off location for a Good Food Box program.

“I work full-time, some weeks more. After I pay the rent and bills I have just enough money left over for 3 weeks worth of food in a month. So I depend on food banks to make sure my kids have food on the table.”

- Single Mother with Two Kids

DOWNTOWN FACTS:

The average income of downtown residents (**\$23,847**) is less than half the City of Winnipeg (**\$63,023**). The unemployment rate for people 25 years or older is **11%**, compared to **3.9%** in the City of Winnipeg. More than **11,000** people live in low-income households downtown and are consequently at a higher risk for food insecurity and diet related disease.

Food Skills & Training

Learning how to cook food, read nutrition labels, and understand food safety rules has impacts on health and economic well-being for all members of society, though newcomers, Aboriginal peoples, seniors, and low-income families may benefit the most.

The CFA found that downtown residents benefit from food skills & training in a variety of ways.

Health Benefits:

- Healthier food choices can help manage and prevent chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension
- Nutrition initiatives can support mental health by enhancing social inclusion, self-reliance, self-determination, food security, healthy body image, and reducing health and social inequities
- Community meal sharing and cooking classes foster social interaction and learning opportunities

Economic Benefits:

- Ability to access job opportunities in the food sector
- Ability to start up businesses involving food production
- Gardening reduces grocery costs and supplies vegetables not readily available in Winnipeg

What can be done to increase food skills and training opportunities?

- Promote universal access to food skills and knowledge by providing classes on how to prepare healthy, low-cost meals.
- Integrate traditional Aboriginal recipes and food into classes and snack programs for youth.
- Provide healthy eating information at community events and food markets.
- Provide information and programming to allow people to make the most of emergency food provisions.
- Provide opportunities for newcomers to take food handlers' training and certification with appropriate EAL learning techniques.



"It's one thing to learn about eating healthy, but it's a completely different experience getting into a kitchen and really getting to know how to work with different foods."

-Focus Group Participant

DOWNTOWN FACTS:

Downtown is considered to be a **"least healthy"** neighbourhood in Winnipeg. The community has a higher proportion of residents living with diabetes, at **10.3%** than the City of Winnipeg average, **8.2%**. The rate of downtown residents receiving treatment has increased **25%** between **1998** and **2006**. There are over **30** programs downtown that focus on healthy eating and nutrition education, but only **1** community kitchen is available for public use.