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## **The Feasibility of a Community Food Center in Downtown Lewiston**

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# **The Feasibility of a Community Food Center in Downtown Lewiston**

**Completed in Partnership with St. Mary's Nutrition Center**

**Tamsin Stringer & Kate Loughlin**

## **Executive Summary:**

This report provides insight into the feasibility and potential elements of a Community Food Center (CFC) within Downtown Lewiston, Maine in collaboration with St. Mary's Nutrition Center. The feasibility of this project was assessed based on several benchmarks, which included the necessity of economic sustainability within the center and the need for expressed personal benefit in purchasing local and low-to-no-cost goods, depending on varying income levels. Survey responses and focus groups were conducted with a diverse group of residents from both Lewiston and Auburn. Focus within this study was on residents outside of the Tree-Streets area. The results of our surveys and focus groups yielded several important and informational themes. Residents were not only interested in the potential benefits of local and healthy low-cost foods but recognized the potential for the CFC to increase a sense of community within the downtown. Many great ideas were presented including a desire for increased food education, rentable event spaces, and community kitchens. Overall, our findings concluded that this preliminary research sufficiently supported the feasibility of a Community Food Center within the downtown area.

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## **Introduction**

The United States has long had a reputation of producing food in excess, boasting about its big AG programs and its place as one of the world's largest food exporters. The large expanses of agricultural production in the midwest and the incredible amount of food wasted daily gives the illusion that access to food is not something communities across the United States struggle with. However, in 2018, “11.1 percent of households were food insecure at least some time during the year, including 4.3 percent (5.6 million households) that had very low food security” (USDA, 2018). Food Security implies that healthy and nutritious foods are available for all people at all times, and that access is possible without resulting in stealing or emergency food supplies. Food Insecurity exists whenever “the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain”(Anderson, 1990). Food insecurity is often tied to low-income households as individuals are not able to access food due to lack of money or transportation. It is also higher in single-parent, minority households, and large metropolitan areas (Coleman-Jensen, 2010). Food insecurity also leads to many severe health issues, including doubling the odds that an infant or toddler growing up in a food insecure household will have poor health and will then be hospitalized (Cook, 2004).

There are ways in which communities have adapted to food insecurity. One of the primary ways has been the implementation of community food hubs. There are many definitions of community food hubs, but for our purpose they are defined as “networks and intersections of grassroots, community-based organizations and individuals that work together to build increasingly socially just, economically robust and ecologically sound food systems that connect farmers with consumers as directly as possible” (Blay-Palmer et al., 2013). One establishment that implements food hubs is the Community Food Centres of Canada. Located in larger cities, Community Food Centres Canada “offers numerous programs and assets such as community meals, affordable-price produce markets, and food distribution programs, community kitchens, gardens and food-related after-school programs” (The Community Food Centres, 2020). This organization has recorded that “77% of community members have made healthy changes to their diet since they started coming to the CFC” (Impact, 2020). Along with this, their participants have found an immense increase in belonging within their own community. The Community Food Centres of Canada are just one example of already established community food centers, which are making a great difference in the health and well being of its participants. Another establishment is the Daily Table, non-profit retail grocery chain started in Dorchester, located in a low-income Boston neighborhood. The Daily Table’s mission is to make healthy food choices available to everyone at affordable prices. By consciously buying “misfit” and surplus produce from local farms, the non-profit can buy more produce for less, creating a sustainable financial model for the organization (Adams, Forbes, 2017). All food sold is also SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) eligible, making healthy food accessible to those who are food insecure. The store also sells “heat and eat” prepared meals, includes

community kitchens at several locations, and has a large commitment to reducing food waste. These models are now being replicated in many U.S. cities.

The city of Lewiston, Maine is a community that has been struggling with food insecurity issues similar to Dorchester, Massachusetts. Poverty and food insecurity in the Tree Streets, a low-income neighborhood close to downtown, are some of the highest in the state. Lewiston Maine was originally founded as a mill town on the Androscoggin, as there was great economic profit in harnessing the waterpower of the river for textile production. However, at the turn of the 20th century when production moved overseas, there was a large economic collapse for these industrial towns on the river as thousands of jobs were lost (Colgan, 2006). Lewiston's downtown now has a high population density with particularly high poverty levels, making food insecurity more prevalent in the community (Harris et. al, 2014). Alongside those food insecure households, there is also a large and growing number of subsistence and small-scale market farmers who live in the Tree Streets who lack a place for food storage or processing.

Many organizations are spearheading efforts to provide high-nutrition food at discounted costs. St. Mary's Nutrition Center, a chapter of the St. Mary's Covenant Health System, believes that access to healthy food is a fundamental right and the organization "intentionally uses food as a tool for community building, leadership and youth development, and neighborhood revitalization" (St. Marys, 2019). Local Foods Local Places is also another organization working to strengthen the local food economy, with goals of increasing equitable ownership of land for farmers, integrating local food systems into city planning, and expanding access to local food (Local Food Local Places, 2020). Lewiston is also in the process of developing a "Growing Our Tree Streets" transformation plan which is focused on the creation of healthier neighborhoods, including "affordable, safe and lead-free housing, access to medical care, healthy food and nutrition education, safe places to exercise and play, and available employment and training" (Growing Our Tree Streets, 2020). This has been motivated in part by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Choice Implementation grant that's currently being developed.

The logical next step has been to consider the creation of a community food hub in Lewiston. Funded by this same grant, St. Marys and these other organizations are actively working on the feasibility of a community food center. In this report, we hope to use background on these various case studies and to inform their initiative regarding the feasibility of a community food center in Lewiston, improving the health and wellbeing of all involved.

## **Research Aims, Objectives and Deliverables**

### **Aim:**

To assess whether there is sufficient support for future economic and social participation in a Community Food Center, through the distribution of surveys and facilitation of focus groups with Lewiston-Auburn residents from all neighborhoods.

### **Objective 1:**

Recruit participants from the Tree Streets of Lewiston, neighborhoods within walking distance of downtown Lewiston, and surrounding neighborhoods that are reached by vehicle in Lewiston and Auburn from downtown, in order to gain a broad list of participants for data collection.

### **Objective 2:**

Administer an online survey to specific listservs and individuals who frequent the Lewiston Farmers' Market, recruited through our participant recruitment. Along with this, transcribe conversations from two focus groups conducted at St. Mary's Nutrition Center and the Root Cellar.

### **Objective 3:**

To identify larger themes and patterns from the data collection that support the feasibility of the implementation of a Community Food Center. This will ultimately assist in supporting the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant associated with our partner, St. Mary's Nutrition Center.

### **Deliverables:**

A document and presentation of overall responses and opinions from participants in the three methods of data collection. We will use the responses to create pie charts, interview analysis and discuss overall trends from all three forms of data collection. This presentation will be used in support of the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant through St. Mary's Nutrition Center.

## **Methodology**

### **1. Literature Review and Background**

To educate ourselves on national food insecurity issues and gain a better understanding of root causes, we reviewed literature on the topic of community food centers and food access. This information gave us good grounding in creating conversation through community research pertaining to the Lewiston and Auburn residents' thoughts on the goal of a new Community Food Center in Lewiston. Along with understanding food insecurity, we selected two case studies to focus on. The Daily Table of Dorchester Mass and Community Food Centres of Canada were two pre-existing Community Food Hubs we were able to take a deeper look at. These two case studies presented real concepts and ideas, and structured our understanding of the potential a CFC could have in Lewiston-Auburn.

### **2. Data Collection**

#### **2.1 Focus Groups**

Our community partner, an established member of the St. Mary's Nutrition Center, had several groups of people they knew who would be beneficial to interview through focus groups. Most of these participants were frequent visitors to the center, and rely on the center for their own food on a daily basis. Successfully recruiting pantry clients and understanding their needs and preferences was crucial for understanding the impact that a potential community food center could have in the downtown neighborhood.

We were able to attend two focus groups, conducted by St. Mary's Nutrition Center. These focus groups consisted of conversations with 6-10 regular clients of the center. At the focus groups, a set of leading questions were asked, pertaining directly to understanding desired benefits from the introduction of a Community Food Center. These conversations were transcribed by our group members. Full transcripts of these focus groups can be found in Appendix 1.A and 1.B.

#### **2.2 Online Survey**

We collaborated with our community partner at St. Mary's Nutrition Center and Francis Eanes to create a 23 question online survey, through a platform called Qualtrics. This platform made it possible for our survey to be sent out through various channels. Through workshopping questions, taking into account our audience and overall goals, we were able to create a sufficient survey. For the full list of survey questions, please refer to Appendix 1.C.

At the Lewiston Farmers Market we conducted conversations with locals. We discussed what the center could incorporate, and described how influential their survey responses would be. If the participant was interested, we recorded their email address, which was used to send out our online survey a few weeks later. Conversing with locals at the market was very beneficial, especially in the beginning stages of our project, when we were still gaining a true understanding

of our project. A few weeks later, we were also able to distribute links and a QR code to Farmer's Market customers interested in completing our survey. These participants were able to bring the link home and complete the survey at their convenience, online.

In an effort to gather the needs and ideas from an expansive group of potential food center patrons, we sent the survey to members of two email listservs with broad reach across the Lewiston-Auburn area. One listserv contained the contacts of many Bates College Employees, while the other focused on the residents of Lewiston-Auburn. The participants received a link to our survey in their email, and were able to complete the survey electronically. Through the use of these two lists, we were able to gain a broader demographic, and hear from many people from all areas of Lewiston-Auburn. In total, 127 online survey responses were collected as of October 16, 2020 at 1 p.m..

### **3. Synthesizing Findings and Assessing Feasibility**

Working through synthesizing our results, we understood that the idea of assessing feasibility was the main goal. For our project, the following baseline criteria were considered as part of the overall assessment of the project's feasibility.

- The center needs to be financially feasible
- Residents express an interest/desire for healthy foods at a reduced rate or healthy foods at full price - looking for an audience of both to ensure offset price reductions
- Consideration of introducing beneficial elements within the community, that do not exist prior (community kitchen, event space, nutrition education etc.)
- Potential/Accessibility to come to Downtown Lewiston to shop
- Desire space to store produce - for farmers

To be able to conclude this potential Community Food Center is considered feasible by members of the Lewiston-Auburn Community, we needed to make sure all the community elements are active, and will appeal to a diverse group of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. This is the only way it can be financially viable, and benefit the community as a whole.

## **Results**

In the following sections we summarize the demographics of the survey respondents, and describe key themes that emerged from both the focus groups and survey responses. Taken together, these themes illuminate the preferences and needs of prospective community food center patrons, and lay the foundation for what would make a future food center feasible.

### **Demographics:**

**Race:** 89% of survey respondents were white, with the remaining percentage being made up of several Congolese, Somalian, Hispanic, and French individuals.

**Language:** English was the first language of the vast majority of survey respondents.

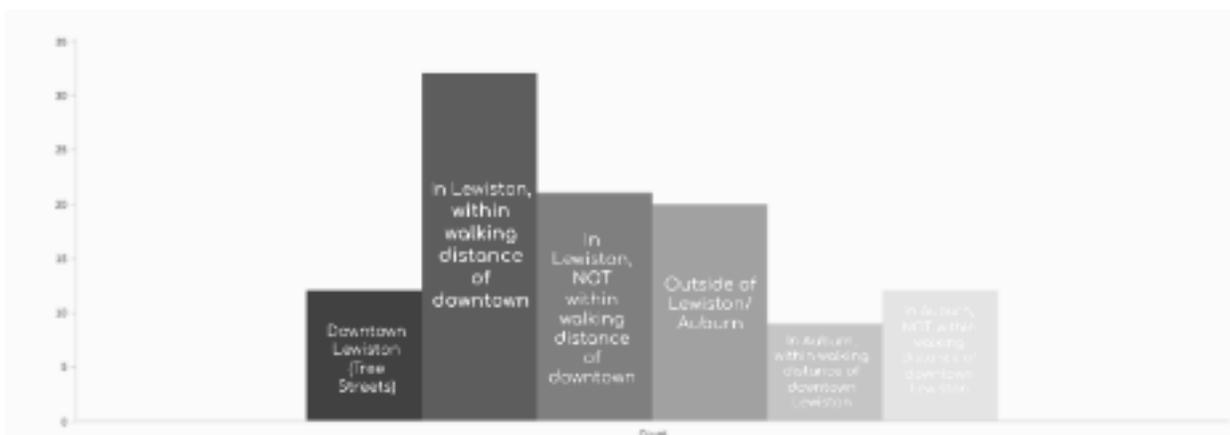
**Household count:** 74% of survey respondents had 1- to 3 members in their household.

### **Age:**



We had an older sample population, with a large majority (79%) of survey participants being 36-75.

### **Residence:**



Based on the survey, 49% of survey participants could walk to a community food center located downtown, while 51% of participants would need reliable transportation. The variation in residences is primarily due to the different listservs we used to gather participants. Some listservs

included Bates faculty and staff and farmers market guests, many of whom actually live outside Lewiston/Auburn, while other listservs were primarily made up of individuals living in the Tree Streets neighborhood.

### **Income Distribution:**



The graph above shows the income distribution of survey respondents. There is a very large gap between those who earn over \$150,000 a year and those who earn less than 10,000. 26 % have an income upwards of 100,000 a year. This is why finding a balance between affordability and FLOSN is very important.

These are mostly statistics for the survey. The focus group conversations included many different voices, and there were some language barriers, but all participants resided in the tree streets.

## **MAJOR THEMES**

### **1. Preference for grocery food offerings**

- FLOSN Produce (Fresh, Local, Organic, Seasonal, Non-GMO)
- Local Meats & Bulk Items
- Diverse Options

When analyzing the results of the survey we found that affordable, fresh, and local produce was a number one priority for the majority of survey participants. 71% of survey participants claimed it was “very important” to buy food from local farms and businesses. However, as many participants pointed out, the store cannot just have fresh produce, it must also include commodities such as rice, beans, and pasta to “stretch meals”. One participant wrote: “excess or “ugly” produce from area farmers & gardens should be gathered to make big batches of hearty (& healthy!) “harvest soup” which people can purchase as take-out for lunch at

the office or brought home for dinner, paired with a loaf of fresh-baked multi-grain bread. Any soup that is not consumed right away can be easily frozen for later purchase.”

There was also an overarching demand for local meat and bulk items. One survey participant wrote: “Having access to good local meat is important to me as well. I don't buy meat unless I know how it was raised, and the options at the farmer's market are somewhat limited, and it's not always convenient for my schedule.” Another focus group participant brought up that because she has a larger family with 4 younger children to take care of, she likes to buy things in bulk as she gets more subsistence for her money. Many participants who had big families were interested in bulk items, making it something to seriously consider. Most participants who were sustainability oriented were also interested in bulk cereal, grains, pasta, etc.

There was a general consensus across focus groups and in the survey that for the CFC to be a success, there needs to be a diverse food selection. As one participant stated: it needs to be “a place that sells prepared food from the various immigrant communities in L-A”. One Somali participant also wrote that his family would shop at the store if there was a selection of “corn meal (foufou), fish (tilapia, thomson) and African vegetables ( lenga lenga, bibwabwa, mutete)”.

It is important to point out that in a question regarding respondents number one grocery stores, 30% said they tend to shop at Hannafords. Compared to Save-A-Lot and Walmart, meat and produce prices are a lot higher, leading us to conclude that a large portion of survey participants are fairly affluent. We can also see this trend in household income, in which more than a third of participants make more than \$100,000 a year. This means that in terms of income, this subgroup of participants have more money to spend on natural foods. We received a lot of requests for a “whole foods” kind of store. This disparity is something to consider when finding a middle ground between low-cost and organic food.

## **2. Community Space**

- Community Kitchens
- Community Events

Community space was a vital aspect of responses we were looking for from survey participants. Not only would this center potentially provide food support, we also hope it would bring the community closer, and provide areas that involved spaces that invited residents to gather together. Participants stated they were not as likely to rent spaces for personal or community events, but could potentially make use of community kitchens. One focus group participant stated “there is nowhere in town for people to cook for a bday party or baby showers and gather. Having cooking space is really important (for a small fee, income based, sliding scale)”. Offsetting costs through rentable community space and community kitchens is a major factor in determining financial feasibility of the center.

Lewiston and Auburn, like any city, have separate neighborhoods, relating to splits in income, housing location and job type. Creating a space within the downtown that could provide

a space, as one survey participant stated “community space where meals can be shared”, may help to bring Lewiston-Auburn residents together. Some participants invited the ideas of having events like harvest dinners, food trucks or gatherings over coffee. There was also mention of the potential for downtown support groups, with one focus group participant stating “There is a lack of places within walking distance to downtown. Not just food, but community support groups”. These would all be great activities to meet neighbors and create new connections. This center has the potential to entice many to expand their understanding of Lewiston and Auburn as a community, and participate together in new events and programming.

### **3. Education**

- Cooking Skills
- Nutrition Education
- Multicultural Awareness

Education was a major theme throughout our discussions. Many focus group participants wanted an education initiative targeting highly-nutritious, locally-grown but typically underused vegetables. Participants mentioned that due to lack of time and lack of experience they have not historically been able to fully utilize the vegetables and fruits they have brought home from the pantry or the farmers market. Cooking classes taught by community members would be really beneficial in healthy food preparation education. Along with cooking skills, several survey participants mentioned that there should be a workforce training development and internship program to prepare community members for food industry jobs. There was also interest in the creation of a community recipe book for those who frequent the center. Finally, several focus group participants that had different dietary needs mentioned that they would really benefit from nutrition education from those educated in functional nutrition, and that food as medicine training would be very useful and important (ie. what healthy food to eat for low-fat diets).

There were also a large number of requests for an education on multicultural recipes, ingredients, and preparation. There seemed to be a broad understanding that different foods are valued by different ethnic groups and cultures present within Lewiston and among the New Americans in Lewiston. One participant mentioned there could be weeks that celebrate the diversity of the community (ie. Hispanic week , Somali week, etc.). There was also a demand for culturally traditional and/or diverse recipes. One survey participant wrote: “It should take into account the fact that we are feeding a multicultural community, and that there are different ways of eating and preparation depending on race. Latinos do not all cook the same meals. If you can find the things that are familiar to you and the center provides ingredients and produce for multicultural communities, that will be a success.”

#### **4. Food Processing**

- Farmer Storage
- Processing Equipment

Food processing was an original idea presented by our community partner. This concept would integrate farmers who may need more space to store their produce before market. This aspect of the center would involve vast space for produce organization, large cooler space and potentially equipment for food processing. From the online survey, 15% of participants stated they might be likely to “use shared equipment to process farm products”. While we had less of a response relating to direct needs associated with including food processing elements, there were a few respondents that really enjoyed the idea. Since this element would be more focused on a few beneficiaries, it’s still important and influential to hear a few participants could see it useful. Some participants mentioned wanting to use the space as a “canning facility so people can make preserves” and “access to storage facilities”. Access to storage could assist farmers in reducing waste and making sure all produce can be kept and sold thoroughly. Creating space for entrepreneurs to begin businesses was also an interest presented in focus groups conversations. We believe interest in food processing elements within the potential CFC will continue to grow, as more members of the Lewiston-Auburn community are able to participate in focus groups/online surveys.

#### **5. Affordability**

- Low cost food availability
- Membership Program
- Offset Pricing

One of the largest, overarching goals of the community food center is affordability. Creating a space that meets the needs of those within the community who rely on food assistance, is one of the main drivers of this project. We found several participants explaining particular “specials” or “deals” they would benefit from. Most of these ideas related to bulk foods, special, low to no cost goods depending on the day. Pre-made meal bags were also mentioned, which would provide instructions and exact amounts that would make cooking at home a lot easier. One survey respondent stated “I would love to see discount fruit and vegetables. Meals that are prepared to carry and go”. The idea of “misfit” or ugly produce left over from local farmers being sold at the center would reduce waste, while also providing low to no cost produce.

There were also a few questions asked relating to potential membership fees, and 56% of respondents said that if there was a low to no cost membership program that would offer discounts on products, they would likely use the program. It is likely a membership fee would be small, or dependent on a sliding scale for each member's varying level of income. This may also

be a way to create community within the space, creating a deeper sense of cooperative participation within the Community Food Center.

These affordability needs relate directly to those surveyed who make less than \$10,000 a year, who need free food on a regular basis. As stated previously when discussing feasibility, in order to have an economically efficient CFC, there must be a mix of community members supporting the center. Members who can buy at full cost are vital in order to offset prices for members who benefit from reduced, sliding scale pricing. This will be a drastically important aspect of the center, and allow the needs of almost all to be met.

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, the major themes extracted from data collection support the feasibility of the potential implementation of a Community Food Center in Lewiston, Maine. The participants of the survey and focus groups sufficiently supported interest in future economic and social participation in a Community Food Center. Support toward the benefit of access to low-cost foods, along with community space, and food education shows there is a need and desire from residents. Looking forward, this data will enhance the notion that a Community Food Center is feasible within the downtown.

### **Recommendations for Next Steps**

- The survey is still active, and our community partner will continue to gather responses from the survey.
- St. Mary's Nutrition Center is actively engaging with new focus groups and continuing to conduct interviews around feasibility. There will also be focus groups with translators so we can address the language barriers.
- Finally, St. Mary's continued research will inform the Choice Implementation grant, set out to be finished in November.

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# Appendix

## Appendix 1: Data Collection Transcripts

### 1.A. Focus Group #1 - Tree Streets Focus Group

Location: St. Mary's Nutrition Center Date: 9/19/2020 [# of Participants: 5]

#### BACKGROUND

##### Shopping habits

**1. Where do you get the majority of your groceries?**

Walmart

Save A Lot

*Participant #2:* I shop at 2 different food pantries and try to get all the sales because I am trying to feed a family of 5. I take any extra produce, like questionable apples and freeze them or turn them into applesauce. Our family also hunts and most of the meat we eat is deer and turkey.

One mile to the bus and transportation is an issue

Trinity, and St. Mary's food pantries

**2. Why are these your top choices?**

*Participant #2:* Budgeting for a big family

*Participant #3:* It's more accessible and available for her

*Participant #1:* more comfortable with the prices, bus & transportation, meats at wards but products are expensive convenience, dinner because it was convenient

*Participant #5:* Bus to Save a Lot, Wards is too expensive goes to bargains

**3. How often do you purchase pre-made or "heat and eat" meals and from where?"**

*Participant #2:* Twice a week, almost never, maybe once a month, try to cook ahead, once month to the china buffet

*Participant #1:* Buys the sandwiches at wards 2 times a week, Webb one pizza a week, a nice treat, inexpensive cheaper than dominos, sometimes chopsticks

*Participant #5:* 5 boxes of spicy wings, and frozen chimichanga from store

#### COMMUNITY FOOD CENTER VISIONING

##### Low-Cost Grocery Store

**1. Are there barriers to getting low cost, healthy foods in the Tree Street neighborhood and if so what are they?**

*Participant #2:* nothing available in her neighborhood, transportation (cab home but had to bring car seats) logistical issues, better produce at food pantry, only get to the store every week or two, cannot keep it as long

*Participant #1:* not normal barriers, cannot find fresh fruits or vegetables easily here- have to go to Walmart and save a lot

*Participant #3:* does everything at home from scratch

*Participant #5:* Buys enough to last a month because doesn't want to expose herself to Covid

**2. If there were a grocery store located in the Tree Streets Neighborhood that sold healthy foods at low prices what would make it successful?**

*All* - yes there should be a grocery store and they would all buy

*Participant #2*: Thought: you need to make that stretch- you have to have rice, pasta, beans to stretch into a healthy meal

*Participant #5*: The grains, fresh vegetables, bread

*Participant #1*: feeding a multicultural community, different ways of eating and preparation depending on race , latinos do not all cook the same, provide for multicultural communities, and attract communities, find the the things that are familiar to you

**3. Are name brands important?**

*Participant #2*: The brand doesn't matter as much for fresh produce "rice is rice"  
Snacks and spices name brands are better compared to the generic version

**4. Should the store have household items available ?**

*All*: Household items are so much more expensive in grocery stores- dollar stores where you purchase shampoos etc. buys once a month for the month, take buses  
Less stores you have to go to is better, but good food is worth the extra stops.

**5. What would a low-cost neighborhood grocery store need to have/offer for you to shop there over places like Wards, Webbs, Save-A-Lot, or Walmart?**

- Quality and good prices
- Education
- Recipes

*All*: A lot of people don't know how to stretch food, help the community money wise with education  
Good to offer recipes, suggestions on how to make food stretch, more education on how to use and cook different foods

*Participant #2*: Friend who won't eat butternut squash because it is too hard to peel, cooking beets like potatoes

Learn how in that culture you cook it, different ways of cooking, patience to educate people  
spanish, somalia francos, angoli

**6. If the store could offer a basic membership program that would allow you to get the food at discounted prices every time you shopped, would you join?**

- Time of day hours matter
- Overall yes
- Buy-in things you need
- Automatically give you a discount
- Depends on what the membership will be
- If it's only 3 times a year not worth it
- 5 dollars a month might be easier
- If it were reasonable, paying one time
- Free would be the best
- A little bit of dues can go a long way in terms of commitment and also the feeling of participation
- Like 10% at goodwill

**7. What would you like to see as part of membership offerings other than discounts?**

- Access to volunteer opportunities
- Time banking that would lead to further discounts

- Community meals
- More information, recipes
- Access to volunteer opportunities
- Fall classes , to teach kids teenagers stocking shelves

**8. As a community store, how could the store best serve the tree street community with opportunities to connect with neighbors as a community?" -- Probe: education opportunities, community center space, etc.**

*Participant #1:* Happens automatically

From Puerto Rico 6 years ago heard Spanish at walmart and ran over to them brought up history , and say hello,

Get acquaintances automatically

*Participant #3:* of course! Invites them to her church

Naturally, picking up a food how do you cook that

*Participant #2:* Family is Italian artichokes, every time picked up the vegetable, people asked her they what do you do with those, what do they taste like,

Community happens naturally for those who want it to.

*Participant #5:* People are hard to talk to sometimes, people are pessimistic, community settings like this works

**9. If you could get most or all of your food discounted, what kinds of free food (if any) would you still seek out? probe: How often would you still seek out free food?**

- Fresh food cannot afford even at half of, not unless farmers market or food bus
- Fruits and veggies
- Even after using food pantries, grocery bill is still 300 a month
- Have all food and pectin, and sugar
- Free food as far as the fresh produce
- Canned foods
- Some assistance to get through it at the end of every month

*Participant #1:* would still come to the pantries because fruits and veggies are expensive prices fluctuate all the time especially during holidays, wouldn't do it as often but would still appreciate free food

- Membership benefit , phobia of not having enough food in the house, have you know if there is enough for a week
- The daily table

## Community Kitchen

**1. When you hear the term "community kitchen" what do you think of?**

*Participant #2:* You get to learn how to cook the ratings

Community Cookbooks- raise money for grocery store

*Participant #1:* People sharing together a meal without segregating because you are not of that culture  
Very important

*Participant #5:* canning or freezing, place where we could process tomatoes or whatever  
share different recipes, online

**2. How interested would you be in cooking alongside neighbors...." and add a probe like**

*All:* Both!! All help washing jars, planting tomatoes

- Food is always a good bridge, a good way to get to know people, free fridges
  - Stores at center , stews and freeze it
3. **How often would you be interested in doing this?**
  4. **What kinds of meals would you be interested in cooking?" (or something like that)**
  5. **How interested would you be in renting the kitchen to cook weekly meals or for a big event for your family?**  
*All: interested in Questions 3-5*
  6. **Would you want to use a commercial kitchen to help start a food business?**  
*Participant #5: entrepreneurs out there that would use it*
    - Community business open
    - Dining hall attached booming rental service, large reunion
    - Rental for dining hall attached
    - Get to eat a couple times a week
    - A group of people for the week- made extra sell frozen meal to other families, real food to heat back up
  7. **How interested would you be in taking cooking classes ?**

## CLOSING

1. **Are there questions we should be asking that we haven't today?**
  - Where would you be sourcing all the food from?
  - Hunters might have meat to donate
  - Local farmers can see their produce
  - Selling things that are being made, store could have its own line of products, - jams and jellies

## 1.B. Focus Group #2 - Tree Streets Focus Group

Location: Root Cellar Date: 10/7/2020 [# of Participants - 10]

### **Where do you get the majority of your groceries?**

Walmart, Save-A-Lot, food pantries, farmers market

### **Do you shop at neighborhood stores like Wards and Webb's?**

*Participant #10: yes Ward's does for good meat, great quality*

*Participant #5: people like sales sandwiches*

*Participant #1: In summer, we do the wednesday Italian sub deal*

### **If there were a grocery store located in the Tree Streets Neighborhood that sold healthy foods at low prices what would make it successful? What would it need to have?**

Everyone would shop there

*Participant #2: Like fresh native food, from locally sourced places- fruits and veggies from farmers we know*

*Participant #3:* Sources of protein ( most expensive- beans and meat) and a kitchen would offer classes- foods that she hasn't tried before. Also a canning facility so people can make preserves

*Participant #10:* Toilet paper, basic stuff

*Participant #9:* Focusing on one thing- Wards certain thing (ie. italian subs), have something where you can claim this is what we do best

*Participant #1:* I buy things in bulk, Lots of time at BJs for big family, specials everyday

- Cooking classes offer the things that people have cooked, feature food available
- Interesting for someone who wants to try different foods or veggies
- Education around starfruit, papaya etc.
- Africa corn etc.

*Participants #8 + #9:* Ethnic weeks- hispanic, Somali celebrating different cultures

*Participant #8:* Produce (tropical mangos, banana, chips, chocolate, milk) & daily necessary hygiene kind of stuff

*Participant #5:* Education around diets and Healthy foods for low fat diet Mac diets. Also food support groups

**If the store could offer a basic membership program that would allow you to get the food at discounted prices every time you shopped, would you join?**

*Participant #1:* yes

*Participant #4:* What does a membership mean? Is it expensive? Some people are just getting by and adding to that would not be good. (be cognisant of people who don't have the money for that)

Newsletters, updates Not a prohibitive membership Volunteering, classes,

*Participant #5:* Early access to certain things, percentage that you can get off, trade system

*Participant #9:* Farmers where you are a member, motivational piece, go see a farm partnership , transport out their , field trips, learning and building community

*Participant #5:* You can learn from each other

*Participant #1:* volunteering to keep store clean and looking the way it should, to keep ownership of it  
Community events

**If you could get most or all of your food discounted, what kinds of free food (if any) would you still seek out? probe: How often would you still seek out free food?**

*Participant #3:* Meat, sugar

*Participant #2:* Staples - ie flours, potatoes onions

*All:* Fruits and veggies

**How interested would you be in renting the kitchen to cook weekly meals or for a big event for your family? Would you use a community kitchen?**

*Participant #5:* I would and I would bring my kids to.

*Participant #5:* There is nowhere in town for people to cook for a bday party or baby showers and gather, Having space is really important For a small fee, income based, sliding scale

*Participant #4:* Some of the churches around will rent out a space- 200-300 dollars for a space. Too expensive

*Participant #10:* There is a lack of places within walking distance to downtown. Not just food, but community support groups

*Participant #5:* Teen activity council - kids have different interests

*Participant #10:* how do you staff the store?

*Moderator:* Workforce training development, internship, in food industry

*Participant #5:* What is amaranth ? Okay I have this what should I do int it? People with gardens can bring it to the center

## 1.C. Online Survey Questions

Platform: Qualtrics through Bates College

Where do you live?

- Downtown Lewiston (Tree Streets)
- In Lewiston, within walking distance of downtown
- In Lewiston, NOT within walking distance of downtown
- In Auburn, within walking distance of downtown Lewiston
- In Auburn, NOT within walking distance of downtown Lewiston
- Outside of Lewiston/Auburn

How do you best describe your race, ethnicity, or cultural group (for example, Puerto Rican, Somali, Angolan etc.)? Please use only 1-2 words.

What is your preferred language (i.e. the language you speak most often)? Please use only 1-2 words.

What is your age range?

- 12-18
- 19-25
- 26-35
- 36-50
- 51-75
- 75+

How many people are members of your household, including you?

How many members of your household are dependents (children or elderly)?

Which range best described your annual household income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$20,000
- \$20,000 - \$34,999
- \$35,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,000
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$150,000
- \$150,000+

If a Community Food Center opened in Lewiston and offered the following services how likely would you use one or more of the services?

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Not at all Likely
Fairly priced, full selection grocery store that carried Maine grown and made products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A low to no cost membership program that would offer discounts on products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commercial kitchen: available to rent to start a small business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community kitchen: available to rent in order to cook food for a personal or community event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A casual event space: available to rent for personal or community gatherings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community cooking classes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community meals open to the public	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food related job training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shared cold storage for farm products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shared equipment to process farm products	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much do you agree with the following statements regarding downtown Lewiston before COVID?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	× Not Applicable
I live in downtown Lewiston	<input type="radio"/>				
I work in downtown Lewiston	<input type="radio"/>				
I have a friend or family member who owns a business downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
It is convenient to shop downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
I eat at restaurants downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
I shop at global/ethnic markets downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel safe when I go downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
It is easy to park downtown	<input type="radio"/>				
Other <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>				

In an average WEEK, how much do you think you spend on household groceries?  
Sliding scale from \$0 - \$200

Does your family receive SNAP/EBT benefits?

- Yes
- No

----> If so, how much money does your household receive in SNAP/EBT benefits?

Sliding scale from \$0 - \$500

In an average WEEK, what percentage of your household food supply is from free food sources (e.g., from a garden, neighborhood pantry, religious institution, neighbor or friends)

- 0% (None)
- 0-25% (A little)
- 25-50% (Some)
- 50-75% (More than half)
- 75-100% (A Large Amount)

Where do you shop most frequently for food? If you shop at any of the following stores, please rank them, starting with “1” as the store you go to the most often. If you do not shop at a store do not rank it.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Walmart
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hannaford
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shaws
<input type="checkbox"/>	Save-A-Lot Foods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family Dollar/Dollar Store
<input type="checkbox"/>	Axis Natural Foods
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trader Joe's (Portland)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Whole Foods (Portland)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Blackie's Farm Fresh Produce
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wards Neighborhood Market (Bourques)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Corner Store(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Global, Ethnic Stores
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmers' Markets (in Lewiston-Auburn)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmers' Stands (in Lewiston-Auburn)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="text"/>

How much of your grocery dollars does your household spend at your “number 1 store” (from the previous question) in an average WEEK?

- A little (0-25%)
- Some (25-50%)
- More than half (50-75%)
- All / almost all (75-100%)

What items do you typically purchase at your “number 1 store” (from the previous question) in an average WEEK? Select all that apply.

- Meat and Fish
- Milk/Dairy
- Eggs
- Fresh Fruits and Veggies
- Frozen Foods
- Packaged Groceries (Canned, etc)
- Baked Goods
- Ready to Eat Meals
- Paper Goods
- Brand Name Foods My Family Likes
- Maine Made/grown foods

How often do you eat pre-made (ready-to-eat) meals? (For example: a meal that you can warm up in the microwave or oven purchase from a restaurant)

- Rarely if ever
- 1-2 times a month
- Once a week
- 2-4 times a week
- Once Every Day

How often do you include fresh fruits and vegetables in your meals and snacks?

- Rarely
- A few times a month
- 1-2 times a week
- Every other day
- At least once every day
- Two to three times a day

How important is it to you to buy food from local farms and businesses?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not at all important

How frequently do you shop in downtown Lewiston on and around Lisbon Street

- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

If you could envision a Community Food Center for Lewiston-Auburn what would you like to see it include?

Open Response Question:

If you would like to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift certificate to the Lewiston Farmers Market or the Good Food Bus, please enter your name and email address here.

Open Response Question: