

# Healthy Food Access

A Cross-County Assessment

2015

## Methodology

This project collected Manatee and Sarasota county food desert residents' perspectives on assets, barriers, and preferred interventions for healthy food access and consumption. Qualitative and quantitative data was gathered, allowing for meaningful evaluation of community needs.

Seven food desert census tracts were targeted with consistent data collection tools. Department of Health (DOH) staff began the project by **interviewing key informants** from each neighborhood. Insight from these leaders contributed to resident engagement strategies and focus group development. One to two **focus groups** were held in each target food desert and transcripts were analyzed for themes.

Next, an **oral survey** was developed based on focus group themes. Multiple rounds of piloting ensured culturally-appropriate language was used. The survey was deployed **door-to-door throughout food deserts**, using a randomization tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Throughout the year, **residents were provided cameras** and asked to document their experience of life in a food desert. Concurrently, students from the New College of Florida completed **recorded personal narratives**, interviewing people who live and work in local food deserts.

Survey data, pictures and videos allow residents to share their voices and opinions with community members and decision makers while the **Manasota Food Action Council** works to improve access to and consumption of healthy food across Sarasota and Manatee counties.

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*“In this community, there’s not really stores, there are ‘food stores,’ or whatever but it’s just like going to a gas station.”*

*Food Desert Resident,  
Manatee County*

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- Key Informant Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Randomized Door-to-Door Survey
- Photo-voice
- Recorded Personal Narratives

## Focus Group Questions

1. Let's talk about a typical week. What are you and your family eating? Who is preparing it?
2. Do you and your families' food choices vary throughout the month? How and why?
3. Where do you get your food and how frequently do you go get it? Why?
4. What are your priorities when choosing the food you or your family eats?
5. Can you share examples of what your community has that helps you eat healthy foods like fruits and vegetables? What makes it difficult?
7. Imagine that you have the opportunity to do something in your community to help your family have an easier time getting and eating the types of foods they want or need. What would you do?

## Manatee Focus Group Locations

- Rubonia Community Association Meeting
- Pine Village
- Visible Men Academy
- Washington Garden Neighborhood Association
- Tillman Family Center
- Dream Center
- Samoset Elementary
- Gospel Temple Church

## Manatee County Focus Group Themes

**Samoset** –The participants expressed interest in (1) a centrally-located farm stand that accepts credit/debit and EBT (2) nutrition and cooking classes that teach families how to incorporate healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables into recipes traditional to African American, Hispanic, and Haitian customs.

**East Bradenton** – Focus groups participants expressed interest in (1) more centrally-located produce options (that accept EBT and debit/credit cards, as well as (2) nutrition classes geared toward children.

**Washington Gardens** - Participants prioritize cooking traditional recipes, so they would like (1) education regarding easy ways to incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables into their traditional recipes customary and (2) small community gardens attached to churches.

**Rubonia** –During focus groups, this community's themes focused on lack of accessible and affordable options for fresh foods. Residents resoundingly expressed interest in (1) community gardens, interest and (2) more affordable and conveniently located produce (such as a farm stand that accepts EBT and/or has low prices.)

**Pride Park** –Focus group participants expressed interest in (1) working in a community garden where they could grow their own vegetables, as well as (2) having a farm stand that accepts EBT. Focus group participants also expressed interest in (3) educational classes that would teach nutrition and healthy meal planning on a budget, as well as healthy meals for children.



## Sarasota Focus Group Locations

- Children's First
- Senior Friendship
- Children's First
- Jockey Club
- Atwater Elementary



Focus Group in Newtown

## Sarasota Themes

**Newtown** – Participants in Newtown reported price as a major barrier to healthy eating and expressed quality as high importance. They are willing to “shop around” to get the best deal. Focus group participants expressed interest in (1) raised awareness of existing community assets such as gardens and farm stands as well as (2) education, particularly on the topic of meal planning.

**North Port** - This community's themes focused on the perceived high cost of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as the perceived time it takes to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables. Focus group participants expressed interest in (1) more centrally-located produce options (specifically farmers markets) that accept EBT and debit/credit cards, as well as (2) nutrition and healthy food preparation education classes.

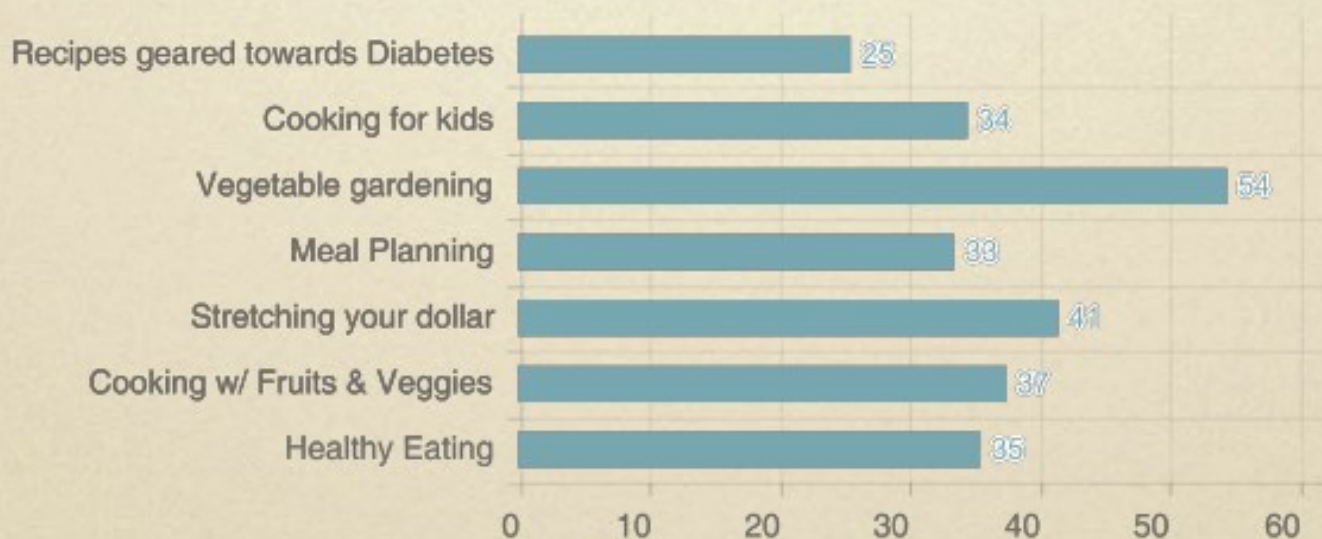
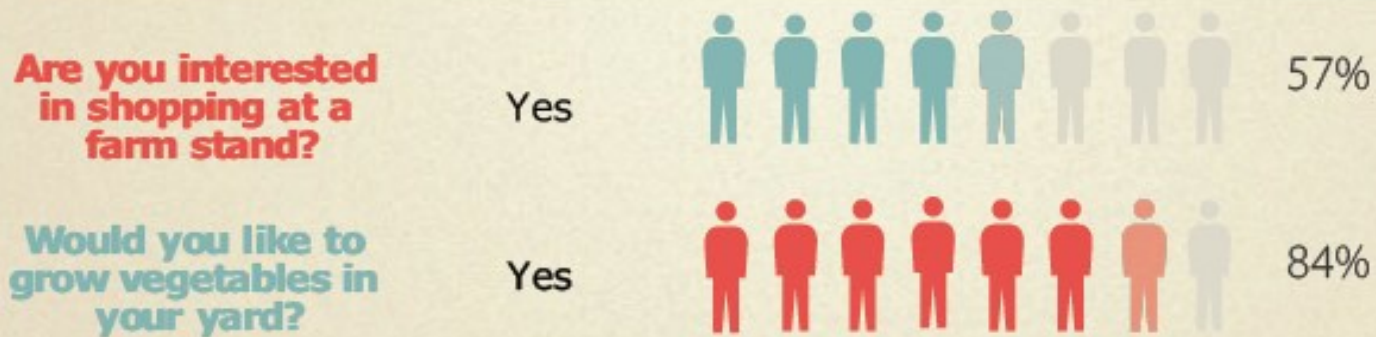




# Manatee County

Manatee County food desert residents' perspectives on assets, barriers, and preferred interventions for healthy food access and consumption.

## Survey Results

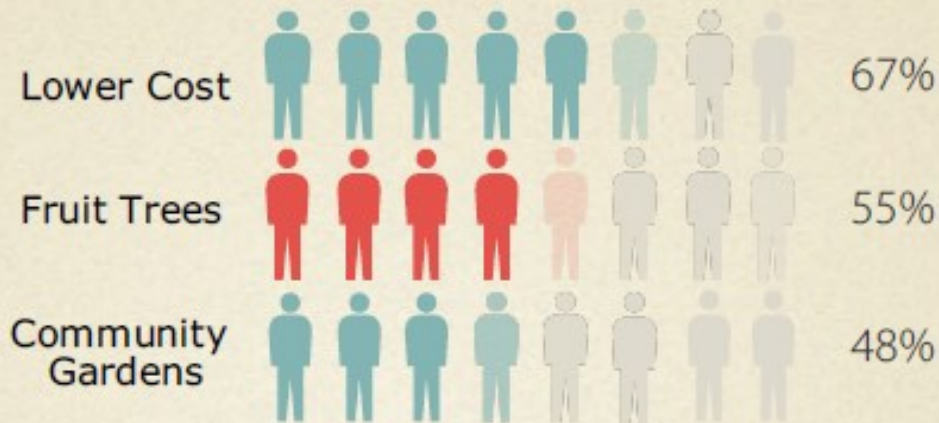


# Sarasota County

Sarasota County food desert residents' perspectives on assets, barriers, and preferred interventions for healthy food access and consumption.

## Survey Results

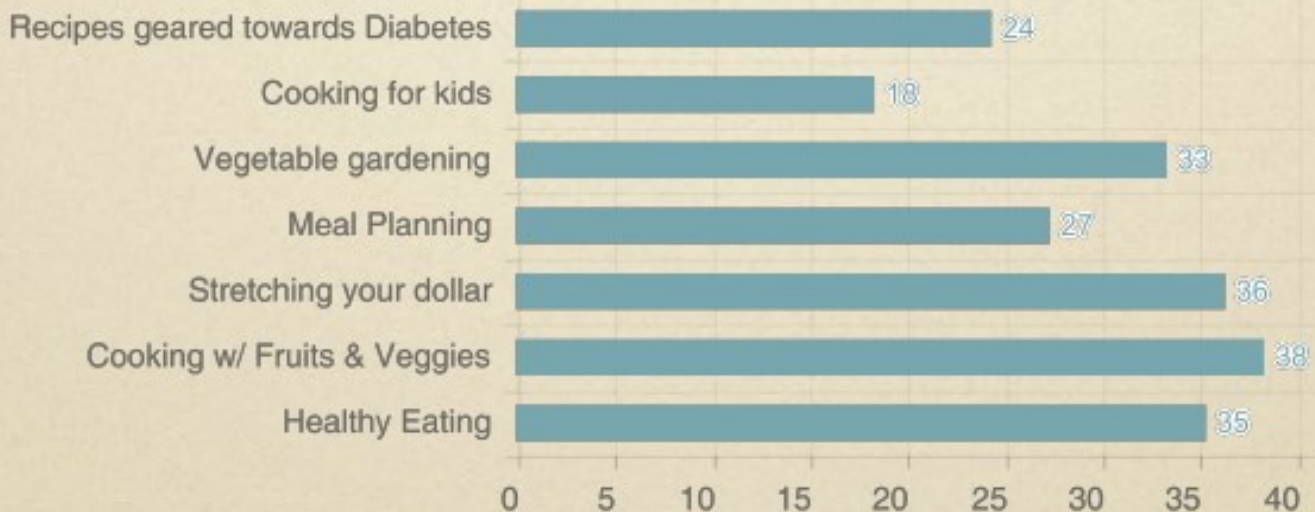
**What would help you access fruits and vegetables?**



**Are you interested in shopping at a farm stand?**



**Would you like to grow vegetables in your yard?**





# Manasota Food Action Council

The Manasota Food Action Council was developed in October 2015 to implement findings from the Manasota Healthy Food Access Assessment. The Council includes residents and decision-makers from Sarasota and Manatee counties. Presently, the Council is working on initiatives including the development of a mobile market, community garden and home garden support, and more!

Meetings are held monthly. Contact Department of Health employee Amber Mills to see how you can get involved.



## Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our assessment or the Manasota Food Action Council.

**Florida Department of Health in Manatee County**  
410 Sixth Avenue East  
Bradenton, FL 34208  
(941) 748-0747

[Amber.mills@flhealth.gov](mailto:Amber.mills@flhealth.gov)

Visit us on the web at  
[www.flhealth.gov](http://www.flhealth.gov)

