Goal:
To increase healthy food availability in Milwaukee’s central city through community readiness assessments and concomitant strategic interventions based on real community capacity for change.

Award: $199,999
Project Dates: 1/1/2012 – 12/31/2013

Summary of Activities and Accomplishments:

Strengthen and sustain a partnership between the Lindsay Heights Healthy Corner Stores Initiative, the Milwaukee Health Department and MCW that promotes healthy food access

Project partners established workgroups to address the three primary strategy areas of the project: marketing/outreach, distribution and infrastructure.

Assess the barriers and incentives for Milwaukee corner store owners to stock healthier food inventory

During this reporting period, the partners conducted an asset-mapping activity to identify resources, expertise and interest areas of individuals and organizations engaged in the Healthy Corner Stores Initiative. Also, structured interviews of three corner store owners were conducted to identify barriers and facilitators to healthy food access. This information will inform specific demonstration strategies to implement in the stores.

Conduct and evaluate demonstration projects in three corner stores utilizing distribution, infrastructure and marketing strategies

Project partners engaged students from the Boys and Girls Club to create a 10’ x 6’ mural on an exterior wall of Eagle Foods. Also, neighborhood youth were trained to conduct healthy cooking demonstrations in the stores. The project also engaged a local youth group, MOVE (More Organic Vegetables Everywhere) Crew, who work in Alice’s Garden to grow produce for distribution in the three participating stores. Finally, the team leveraged resources to have time donated for the development of a project logo and architectural renderings detailing potential façade changes for each corner store.

Provide systematic evidence of best practices to promote healthy food access that maximizes economic health benefits

The project partners developed an evaluation plan to track effectiveness of objectives related to the three project strategies.

Partnership Development:

During this reporting period, project partners established a team structure consisting of various workgroups in order to most effectively fulfill project activities. In addition, project partners have become active partners with the owners of the three participating corner stores allowing the community voice to contribute to project planning and implementation.

Lessons Learned:

Project partners learned how property ownership issues influence store owners’ businesses and ability to make decisions. For example, some activities proposed by the project, while supported by the store owners, require buy-in from the landlords who own the buildings. Project partners are working to address these issues so that they will be able to gain landlords’ support to implement proposed infrastructure changes and improvement to aid in achieving project objectives.

Dissemination:

- Outreach efforts – 2 community events; 2 store demonstrations
- Highlighted in the Neighborhood News Service

Leveraging:

- LISC Milwaukee - $5,000
- Boys & Girls Club Service Project - $3,000 and 80 volunteer hours
- Architectural renderings for store improvements - $5,000
- Graphic design support for outreach materials - $1,000

Next Steps:

- Implement and evaluate demonstration strategies in 3 corner stores
- Determine a plan for team members to attend local, regional and national conferences, workshops and symposia to disseminate project progress/findings and learn best practices

Project Partners:

- Lindsay Heights Neighborhood Health Alliance
- Milwaukee Health Department
- Walnut Way Conservation Corp
- MCW Department of Family and Community Medicine