

Food Access Brief: Marshall, Wisconsin

April 2017

Summary

When food access¹ is limited, people are at increased risk of developing obesity and diet-related diseases (1). There is a strong association between supermarket access and populations with healthier diets and lower rates of chronic disease. Yet, even when food is available and transportation needs are met, there is no guarantee that available food is of high quality, that it meets consumer tastes and preferences, and that people have the knowledge, equipment and time to prepare it. All of these components influence consumer food choices and impact overall health.

Food security² affects both urban and rural communities (2). In fact, rural inhabitants are four times as likely as their urban counterparts to lack access to healthy food retailers (3). While Dane County ranks highly in health statistics among Wisconsin counties, Feeding America's "Map the Meal Gap" estimates that 11.6% of all people and 16.4% of children in Dane County are food insecure (4). Marshall, a village in eastern Dane County, is one such community facing barriers to food access. With the closure of their sole grocery store, local food options in Marshall are now limited to what can be found at village convenience stores. This is an issue of both access and equity that is deserving of County attention to protect the health of its residents.

Recommendations to Build Community Capacity

1. Connect key stakeholders and support coalition building to address food access barriers in Marshall.
2. Gather data via surveys, community town hall meetings, and key informant interviews to
 - a. Understand current food environment challenges and consumer preferences
 - b. Assess need for expanded food outlets, via local food retail, community gardens, and supplemental and emergency food assistance channels

Recommendations for Policy and Environmental Interventions

1. Pilot programs to provide funds and technical assistance to support retailers in expanding produce offerings, such as through subsidies to purchase produce coolers
2. Connect residents with transportation assistance to full-service grocers in Sun Prairie and/or Madison, such as with ride vouchers or a shuttle program
3. Support a farmers' market in Marshall during the growing season

¹ Food access: includes considerations of travel time to shopping, availability of healthy foods, and food prices.

² Food security: the state in which people have adequate access at all times to enough food to lead a healthy and active.

Community Description

The village of Marshall has a population of 3,920 people. Median household income is about \$60,500, and 24.5% of total households are estimated to have received SNAP benefits in the past 12 months (5). The overall poverty rate in Marshall is estimated to be 22.4%, a number which jumps to 38.6% for people under the age of 18. Compare with Dane County’s estimated poverty rate of 12.9%, and the statistics are alarming. Marshall is also home to a comparatively large Latino population (12.7%), requiring attention to translation and interpretation in service provision and potential access barriers due to documentation status. See Appendix A for a comparison of Marshall’s demographic information to that of Dane County and the state of Wisconsin.

Marshall has a variety of local government and public service departments that extend residential resources. Multiple parks and green spaces span the village, offering safe spaces for physical activity and community engagement. In the summertime, Marshall welcomes upwards of 60,000 visitors to its amusement park attraction, Little Amerricka. While the area is largely rural, the downtown area boasts a vibrant school district, a community youth center, and a public library. In January 2017, Prairie Ridge Health Center opened its doors on the village’s main thoroughfare, providing increased local access to health care. The clinic joins the neighboring businesses representing woodworking, automotive, and milling industries, among others.



Figure 1: Map of Village of Marshall (Source: Google Maps. 2017. *Marshall, Wisconsin.*)

Food Environment Assessment

An assessment of Marshall's food environment was conducted by two students of the Wisconsin Area Health Education Center/Cooperative Extension Community Health Service-Learning Class, and supervised by a Community Food Systems Educator from Dane County UW-Extension and a Food Security Policy Analyst from Public Health Madison and Dane County. Information used to develop a full length report was collected through a review of online resources, walking surveys, food retail site visits, and key informant interviews.

Findings confirm that no major grocery store outlets exist in Marshall. A small grocery store used to service the village, but closed due to lack of business, limiting local food retail options to the Dollar General store and the Kwik Trip market. Both stores offer some fresh food items including milk, eggs, and some fruit, while fresh vegetable offerings are slim to none. Both the Kwik Trip and the Dollar General accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) dollars, but neither accepts benefits from the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. The closest major grocery stores are located in Waterloo and Sun Prairie, requiring travel of no less than 5 miles. With no public transportation system, residents without access to automobiles rely on family and friends, community members, or expensive taxi services to travel to grocery outlets.

This Waterloo pantry is open Wednesdays and Saturdays for a total of 3 hours a week and serves roughly 102 households monthly. Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin's mobile market serves the Marshall area as well with a monthly visit. Initially intended as a complementary and temporary service, the need continues to be so high that they have permanently extended their service to this community. Second Harvest provides their patrons with about 60 pounds of food and extends Foodshare outreach services. Beyond these emergency food channels there are meal programs in place that target children and seniors. 45% of students in the Marshall school district qualify for free and reduced price lunch (6), but community health officials who work directly with families with school-age children believe this number is much higher in reality. Services for seniors are available through the Marshall Senior Meal Program complements of The Colonial Club, which serves a nutritious lunch once a week to people ages 60+ at meal sites and through home delivery. Marshall has no official farmers' market apart from an occasional unofficial farm stand in the summer. The village does support a community garden with 9 plots for residents, largely used by families as well as a few seniors.

References

1. Ver Ploeg, M. (Ed.). (2010). Access to affordable and nutritious food: measuring and understanding food deserts and their consequences: report to Congress. *DIANE Publishing*.
2. FAO, I. WFP (2015), The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress. *Food and Agriculture Organization Publications, Rome*.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). CDC health disparities and inequalities report. *MMWR Surveill Summ, 60*, 1-116.
4. Feeding America. (2014). *Data by County in Each State: Wisconsin*.
5. U.S. Census Bureau; *American Community Survey, 2011-2015, Economic Characteristics: Marshall village, Wisconsin*; generated using American FactFinder.
6. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2015). *Program Statistics: Enrollment and Participation Reports*.

Appendix A

| Comparative Demographics | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | Village of Marshall | Dane County | Wisconsin |
| Population | 3,920 | 510,198 | 5,742,117 |
| Race | | | |
| White alone | 91.7% | 84.4% | 86.5% |
| Black or African American alone | 5.6% | 5.2% | 6.3% |
| Asian alone | 0.4% | 5.4% | 2.5% |
| Some Other Race Alone | 2.4% | 1.9% | 1.7% |
| Hispanic or Latino, regardless of race | 12.7% | 6.2% | 6.4% |
| Unemployment rate (age 16 and over) | 7.0% | 4.9% | 6.3% |
| Poverty Status in 2015 for Children Under 18 | 38.6% | 13.9% | 17.8% |
| Poverty Status in 2015 for Population Age 18 to 64 | 12.4% | 14.0% | 16.6% |
| Poverty Status in 2015 for Population Age 65 and Over | 6.4% | 4.9% | 7.7% |
| No Health Insurance Coverage | 12.2% | 6.0% | 7.9% |

Source: Social Explorer - ACS 2015 (5-Year Estimates)

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