

**Better Food Closer to Home:
Key Learnings and Recommendations
on Access to Fresh Produce in the Mascoma Valley Region**

*Prepared by Vital Communities for UV HEAL
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1. From “Better Food Closer to Home” survey results, stakeholder interviews, past survey results, the community forum and other data sources, we see strong evidence that Mascoma residents are interested in attracting or developing a local “bricks and mortar” store that is large enough to provide quality, moderately priced fruit and vegetable options, as well as to serve as a primary grocery source for residents. We recommend additional work and organizing to identify a business model and potential vendors, as well as possible creative financing models to provide this service for the Mascoma region.
2. A number of residents have noted that they wish the Enfield Farmers’ Market would move back to Huse Park and perceive the Enfield Shaker Museum site as too distant and inconvenient. We encourage re-opening a community discussion on this topic to more fully understand the possibilities for the site of the farmers’ market.
3. Despite seeming consumer interest in farms and farmers’ markets, existing farm businesses have not generated substantial local viability. It is costly for farmers to staff weekly small markets, and difficult for consumers to shop at these markets unless they know enough product will be present. It may be worth considering a cooperative venture among farmers, farmers’ markets, and other organizations to create a more consistently open, staffed, and stocked farm stand for the region.
4. There is considerable interest in “Farm to School” options, including school/community gardens and educating children about produce. Farm to School can take a variety of formats depending on the interests and capacities of the schools involved. We recommend a Farm to School workshop in the near future that would inform educators and key community members about different types of programs and funding options.
5. Non-traditional retail operations, such as a mobile produce van or a student enterprise based at Mascoma High School, could be ways to expand access to the parts of Mascoma Valley that are further away from Enfield. Healthful foods could be made available in convenient locations, and engaging the students would have additional benefits. It would be worthwhile for school personnel and community members to explore such options.
6. Another way to improve access to outlying areas would be upgrading one or more convenience stores so that they could provide a better selection of fresh produce. Vendors and other community members could explore various models that have been used around the country and determine if one or more would work in the Mascoma area.

It should be noted that none of these options are mutually exclusive. Shorter-term solutions are needed even if a larger grocery store is ultimately attracted to the area. In addition, small-scale options may be the only feasible way to improve access for some residents of outlying parts of the Mascoma Valley.