

# FOOD RETAIL IN SHAWNEE COUNTY



In the past few decades, most families have purchased the majority of their food for home use at community grocery stores. That tradition is changing, however, as more large-scale 'big-box' stores devote significant sections of their store floor space to grocery items, and smaller convenience and discount stores and pharmacies also expand their offerings of food items.

In Shawnee County, food and grocery items for home use are sold by:

- 18 Grocery Stores
- 11 Specialty Food Markets
- 12 Pharmacies
- 7 Farmers' Markets
- 6 Supercenters or Big Box Stores (WalMart, K-Mart, Target)
- 1 Warehouse Club
- 18 "Dollar" stores
- 66 Convenience store/ gas stations

Restaurants are also an important component in the retail food environment. Shawnee County households spend about 38% of their food dollars on food away from home. In 2014, there were 96 full-service restaurants and 142 fast food restaurants operating in Shawnee County.

Food deserts are defined as areas without fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods. They are usually found in areas in which a substantial portion of residents who are low-income. This problem is magnified because while food deserts are often short on healthy foods, they usually have a wealth of inexpensive and unhealthy options at convenience or corner stores.

**18 grocery stores** In 2012:

**\$492 million** spent each year on food purchases

## Facts & Trends

- 30,834 people reside in census tracts in Shawnee County that are considered "food deserts".
- In 2014, there were 96 full-service and 142 fast-food outlets located within the borders of Shawnee County. On a per person basis, the density of fast food outlets in Shawnee County is somewhat higher than the Kansas and U.S. averages.
- More than 40 percent of food expenditures on food are for snacks and other processed food items; just 17 percent is spent on fruits and vegetables. Broken down, that calculates out to 89 cents per person per day spent on fruits and vegetables.

## Strengths

- 18 Grocery Stores
- Farmers Markets
- Double Up Food Bucks
- Senior Farmers Market Nutrition

## Challenges

- Affordability of healthy food
- Access to healthy food/ Food deserts
- Food swamps- places where unhealthy food options are far easier to buy than healthy options
- Insufficient production of fruits and vegetables
- Shawnee County has lost at least three grocery stores in recent years
- Limited access to grocery stores in rural parts of the County. There is no grocery store located in the southern third of the county

## Policy Needs

- Establishment of a Food and Farm Council
- Establishment of healthy food guidelines in public places
- Zoning, tax, and incentives for food retail and processing, particularly in underserved areas
- Comprehensive review of planning, licensing and zoning to ensure inclusivity of health, hunger and agriculture
- Remove sales tax on food
- Investment in a Community Health Planner that leads food system planning

## Community Needs

- Private sector buy-in for healthy guidelines and farm-to-fork food purchasing
- A local-minded approach to development
- A system-wide approach to healthy food
- More robust, safe, and convenient transportation options to food retail outlets and food pantries
- Increased investments in food deserts